



# Storytelling in Schools

- Quantitative Studies
- Innovative Projects

## A Reference Guide

Descriptions of a wide variety of educational programs (K-college) that demonstrate the value of using storytelling and storytelling techniques across the curriculum in traditional classrooms.

by Jackie Baldwin and Kate Dudding  
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[www.storytellinginschools.org](http://www.storytellinginschools.org)

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Karen Chace, Massachusetts  
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Jackie Baldwin and Kate Dudding

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# Storytelling in Schools

## Introduction

When you consider bringing a storyteller into your school to work with your teachers to support and enhance the standard curriculum, there are many questions that might come to mind. Has something like this been done before? Are there quantitative studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of storytelling as a classroom technique to help teach the curriculum? What kinds of innovative programs have shown positive results? How may teachers be trained to incorporate storytelling into their classrooms? For further information, how can you contact some of the administrators, scholars, teachers and storytellers who have been involved in and analyzed these educational programs?

This booklet addresses those questions. It features a wide variety of storytelling programs in schools across the country (and a few abroad) that have been designed and implemented to assist teachers in their classrooms with curricular subjects. Some are supported by measurements and statistical data; others are anecdotal in nature. All are considered successful.

The appendix contains position statements from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and The Youth, Educators and Storytellers Alliance (YES!) of the National Storytellers Network. These statements relate much of the history and background of the use of storytellers and storytelling techniques in classrooms. They answer such questions as: What is storytelling? Why include storytelling in schools? How do you include storytelling in schools? What are the benefits that come from the use of storytelling in the classroom?

In this first edition of the booklet, the curriculum applications are: art and music; cultural awareness and understanding; environment; history; language arts; mathematics, physics and science; oral interpretation and presentation, drama; classroom behavior/behavioral problems; student/teacher relationships; and teacher education. Programs sponsored by libraries and museums outside of the classroom are also included, when these programs address curricular needs as well as community outreach.

This booklet contains both Quantitative Studies and Innovative Projects.

**Quantitative Studies** comprise research papers that investigate the effects of storytelling on children's learning. Most of these projects:

- have been documented in master's theses, journal articles or books
- cover a range of subjects, including art, character building, history, language, mathematics, music and science

- are applicable from PreK through college
- deal with oral storytelling  
(digital storytelling is not included in this edition of the booklet)

For example, some research papers show quantitatively that storytelling improves students' attitudes toward science and history, and storytelling is more effective than story reading. Others measure the effectiveness of using storytelling techniques to help teach mathematics, science and social studies.

**Innovative Projects** are anecdotal and describe projects that can serve as role models for other schools and communities.

This section contains detailed descriptions of programs that help teachers bring history alive for students in exciting and memorable ways, as well as new approaches using storytelling to work with environmental studies, language arts and cultural understanding.

A web site accompanies this booklet. It contains much more detailed information than was possible here. As you read about the programs and want to learn more about any of them, go to the *Storytelling in Schools* web site and use the keywords to find that particular project and backup information online:

**[www.storytellingschools.org](http://www.storytellingschools.org)**

Whenever possible, we included full text descriptions of projects. When that was not possible, we posted all of the available information and then included instructions on the web site for obtaining follow-up data and reprints from journals, articles and books.

This is just the start of an ongoing project. Both the book and the web site will be updated on a regular basis so that you may stay current with exciting new storytelling programs in schools worldwide. As more information about the use of storytelling programs in schools is collected and entered into the booklet and web site, the curriculum applications will broaden. Please let us know your areas of special interest.

We hope you will become part of our network of contributors and advise us of any programs you know about that do not appear in this booklet. We will continue our independent research, but we also hope to receive new information as individuals learn about innovative endeavors. If you do bring storytellers into your schools because of this booklet and web site, please let us know the results.

If you have any questions or would like to contribute information about projects that demonstrate the value of storytelling in schools, please feel free to contact either of us. Any comments and suggestions are welcome. It will be a pleasure to hear from you.

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# Storytelling in Schools

## Curriculum Applications

Art • Music • Cultural Awareness & Understanding • Environment  
History • Language Arts • Mathematics, Physics and Science  
Oral Interpretation and Presentation • Drama  
Classroom Behavior • Student/Teacher Relationships  
Teacher Education • Libraries • Museums

Includes: Relevant Books, Journals, Organizations and Web Sites

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## Organization of Contents

Projects are listed in reverse chronological order.

QS = Quantitative Studies  
(Studies containing measurements, such as Pre- and Post-Tests)

IP = Innovative Projects  
(Projects with anecdotal descriptions)

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## For Further Information:

If you want to find out more about a particular project, go to

[www.storytellingschools.org](http://www.storytellingschools.org)

Click on Quantitative Studies or Innovative Projects.  
Then enter a partial title or keywords into the  
search box to go a specific project.

## Art and Music

- **Puppeteer Helps Troy Create Its Own Story - 2007 (IP)**

**Elementary school education**

The whole school year had been about stories, and kids had listened to many tales through the winter months. International travelers had shared stories. So had American Indians. By the time puppeteer Beth Nixon showed up, funded by a Pew foundation grant, the students were ready to tell their own stories of their town of Troy.

Keywords: Art, personal storytelling, community outreach, environment, puppets

- **Booker T. Washington Community Center Marks History Through Stories, Art - 2006 (IP)**

**Secondary school, university, community center**

Students are going to listen to the stories and then conduct follow up interviews with the storytellers. Based on their conversations with the community, students will develop sketches and after approval by the community, will create — inside and outside the building — community-based art embodying the stories they heard.

Keywords: History, art, community-based art, community center

- **Telling Stories With Clay - 1998 (IP)**

**Elementary school education, 4th grade**

Describes a fourth-grade art activity inspired by Cochiti Pueblo Indian Helen Cordero's storyteller figures and also gives historical background of the figures. Explains that students created a personal storyteller figure that told about ideas or things important to them. Provides an understanding of the art making process from idea to product.

Keywords: Art, creative expression, cultural awareness, Native Americans, history

- **Quilting Stories - 1998 (IP)**

**Elementary and middle school education**

In 1996 to 1997, Hyperion Books for Children and "Book Links" sponsored a story quilt contest inviting children across the country to make story quilts based on a historical event or a period in history.

Keywords: Art, social studies, history, storytelling, quilts

# Cultural Awareness and Understanding

- **Using Storytelling to Break the Silence that Binds Us to Sameness in Our Schools - 2006 (QS)**

- **Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- Findings suggested that (a) stories of urban educators contain historical and socio-cultural ideologies that have shaped American education; and (b) storytelling, if combined with opportunities for dialogue and inquiry, can help to break the silence surrounding cultural differences in schools.

Keywords: Cultural awareness and understanding, classroom behavior

- **Storytelling: A Bridge to Korea - 1995 (IP)**

- **Elementary school education**

- This paper recommends the use of Korean folk tales to help students understand Korean culture and gain insight into their own lives.

Keywords: Cultural awareness and understanding, Korea, history



# Environment

- **Abenaki Storytelling - 2007 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

Much of Joseph Bruchac's work draws on the land and his Abenaki ancestry. Among many other awards, he received both the 1998 Writer of the Year Award and the 1998 Storyteller of the Year Award from the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers.

Keywords: Environment, Abenaki, Native Americans, cultural awareness and understanding, language arts, Adirondacks, storytelling

- **Programs for Environmental Awareness and Cultural Exchange - 2007 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

Michael Caduto's participatory performances engage through the use of creative and theatrical storytelling, music, dance and guided imagery. His performances include natural history and environmental programs, multicultural and earth stewardship programs, as well as Native American tales.

Keywords: Environment, storytelling, oral presentation, music, dance, language arts, Native North Americans, guided imagery, theatre, cultural awareness and understanding, natural history

- **Tales with Tails Storytelling Programs - 2007 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

Award-winning artist, children's author and storyteller Kevin Strauss has programs to help you learn about the environment, prevent bullying, enhance critical thinking skills, inspire readers and improve writing skills at your school.

Keywords: Environment, character education, bullying, critical thinking, language arts, teacher education, natural world, natural history, storytelling, creativity, creative writing, classroom behavior

- **Environmental Education by the Pacific Northwest Fisheries Program, USDA Forest Service - 2007 (IP)**

- **Elementary and middle school education**

- Each year, the Forest Service Fisheries Biologists and education specialists host a variety of aquatic education programs, including the Salmon Storytelling Tent specially designed for children of all ages.

- Keywords: Environment, science, biology, Pacific Northwest Fisheries Program, USDA Forest Service, storytelling

- **Environmental Education Programs - 2007 (IP)**

- **Elementary and middle school education**

- Storyteller Louise Omoto Kessel knows wild places and has worked to protect them. She combines her love of the natural world and her experiences working as an environmental educator and activist, to create storytelling programs for outdoor settings, science curriculum, Earth Day celebrations, conferences, meetings, calls to action, and other awareness-raising events.

- Keywords: Environment, science, Earth Day, earth stewardship, storytelling

- **Telling River Stories 2007 (IP)**

- **College education**

- The Telling River Stories project aims to recover a “people's history” of the urban river in the Twin Cities. This history will be disseminated to the public in a series of creative, educational, interpretive installations constructed along the river itself, and through an array of ancillary materials that reinforce the stories told through those installations.

- Keywords: River, environment, community outreach, history, storytelling, Mississippi River, Minnesota

- **Stories-in-the-Making and Everyday Heroic Journeys 2007 (IP)**

- **Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- Beatrice Bowles encourages children to view their own lives as stories-in-the-making. For elementary students, she emphasizes delights of the written, spoken and heard word as shown in our rich heritage of wonder tales. With middle grade and older students, she focuses on themes in our heroic and yet everyday journeys. Follow-up projects can include writing and/or illustrating stories, planting and gardening projects or nature crafts for one or more sessions.

- Keywords: Science, environment, social studies, cultural awareness and understanding, language arts, classic literature, story types, personal development, arts and crafts, gardening, creative arts

- **Ojibwemowin Environmental Education Curriculum - 2006 (IP)**

- **Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- The purpose of this study is to develop an Ojibwe language (Ojibwemowin)-based environmental curriculum focused on the traditional methods of learning through storytelling for Native American students.

- Keywords: Environment, Ojibwe, Native Americans, science, language arts, water, earth, air, ecosystems, ecology, land use, American Indian, Minnesota, storytelling

- **Living Streams: Stories for Healthy Watersheds - 2006 (IP)**

- **Elementary school education**

- Living Streams* is a 50-minute storytelling assembly program for kindergarten through sixth grade students. It includes participatory stories; questions and discussions about healthy watersheds; and an online curriculum guide.

- Keywords: Environment, watersheds, living streams, ecology, ecosystems, storytelling

- **The Art of Storytelling - A Popular Tool Used by Native Americans for Communicating Environmental Messages - 1996 (IP)**

- **Elementary and middle school education**

- The art of storytelling has cultural roots and this can be employed to teach a culturally pluralistic curriculum. Stories can be selected from a variety of sources and used to match lesson objectives. Criteria for selecting stories should include the authenticity of cultural representation, the amount of cultural information, appropriateness, and the estimated interest of the learner, be it a child or an adult.

- Keywords: Environment, cultural awareness and understanding, Native Americans, storytelling

- **The Good Earth Tellers — A Unit on Environmental Storytelling - 1995 (IP)**

- **Elementary and middle school education**

- A story well told will take root like a seed in the heart of a child. The Good Earth Tellers is an award-winning project using environmental awareness books, such as *Keepers of the Animals* and *The Great Kapok Tree*, to promote an understanding of the relationship between man and the environment.

- Keywords: Environment, cultural awareness and understanding, ecology, community outreach, ecosystems, storytelling

# History

- **Historical Monologues in the Classroom: How to Make Kids Love History - 1995-2007 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

From 1995 to the present, teaching artist Pippa White has brought historically-based, one-woman shows into the Nebraska Public Schools to help students better understand history, language arts, social studies and interpersonal communication. She specializes in bringing these historical characters to life, speaking in their own words to describe their experiences.

Keywords: History, language arts, research, diversity, social studies, communication

- **History in the Schools - Twin City Tale Spinners - 2006-2007 (QS)**

**Elementary and middle school education**

The Twin City Tale Spinners worked during 2006 and 2007 to improve the telling of historical stories in local schools in McLean County, Illinois.

Keywords: Social studies, language arts, fine arts

- **Benefits of Storytelling Methodologies in 4th and 5th Grade Historical Instruction - 2006 (QS)**

**Elementary school education, 4th and 5th grades**

Students in the experimental group listened to and participated in oral narratives during their history lesson while students in the control group received conventional lecture and note-taking instruction. After collecting and analyzing the data, results indicate a significant increase in history affinity in the positive direction for the experimental group with no change in history affinity for the control group.

Keywords: Storytelling, history, social studies, oral presentation, critical thinking

- **“Telling Tales”: The Teaching of American History through Storytelling - 2005 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

By applying the metaphor of history as storytelling, the social studies teacher can relate to students the excitement, paradox, and importance of the adventure story that constitutes American history.

Keywords: History, social studies, critical thinking, American history, adventure stories

- **History Happens Day by Day - 2001 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

This paper contends that teaching students about history through storytelling enlivens the classroom and enables students to understand the past, their own history, and culture.

Keywords: History, cultural awareness and understanding, personal stories and heritage

- **History as Storytelling: Voices from the Past - 2000 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

This paper focuses on the use of storytelling as a means of teaching history, making it interesting and tangible for even the youngest child.

Keywords: History, storytelling, storytelling techniques

- **Breathe Life into History through Story in the Elementary Classroom - 2000 (IP)**

**Elementary school education**

This paper describes the use of autobiographical storytelling, personal myths, and visual imagery in preparing elementary and special educators for activist roles in creating effective, inclusive schools.

Keywords: History, social studies, myths, personal storytelling, critical thinking, teacher education

- **Story Upon Story - 1999 (QS)**

**Elementary school education**

This article discusses how stories can be used to "teach" history and science. Provides many examples of how this is done in the author's Montessori classroom. Explains the ramifications of using stories in classrooms and how it inspires children to research a topic in greater depth.

Keywords: History, science, social studies, research skills, critical thinking

- **Storytelling and History, Part 1 - 1998 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

This article draws a connection between the techniques of storytelling and the content knowledge of history.

Keywords: History, storytelling techniques, cultural awareness and understanding

- **Storytelling and History, Part 2 - 1998 (IP)**

- Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- Teachers can take advantage of the effectiveness and familiarity of storytelling to present history and to provide students with a useful framework in which to dramatically explore and understand people living in other times and places.

**Keywords:** History, cultural awareness and understanding, storytelling techniques, teacher education

# Language Arts

- **Storytelling as a Democratic Approach to Data Collection: Interviewing Children about Reading - 2007 (QS)**

**Elementary school education**

This paper examines how storytelling can be used as a method of collecting authentic and revealing research data from children. The results show that the children's storytelling gave access to their cultural models of reading.

Storytelling may be especially useful with poor readers as there are no literacy demands.

Keywords: Language arts, language attitudes, literacy, reading improvement

- **Reading, Writing, and Storytelling: A Bridge from the Middle School to the Preschool - 2007 (QS)**

**Preschool, elementary, middle and secondary school education**

Middle school students are writing original children's stories and then telling these stories to preschool children. Findings show that most of the preschool children read more books, select a wide variety of materials, maintain a desire to read, and tell their own stories. The middle school students increase their sensitivity for communicating with a unique audience and they report an improved awareness of children's ability to use and appreciate language.

Keywords: Language arts, children's literature, creative writing, storytelling, reading/writing relationship, improved communication

- **Storytelling for the Classroom - 2007 (IP)**

**Elementary school education**

In his normal work at the library, Nick Smith uses storytelling with elementary school children. Teachers have commented that: 1) Storytelling gets the kids excited about the material; and 2) The students recognize the difference between someone "just" reading them a story, and someone telling them the story.

Keywords: Language arts, personal and family stories, folklore, storytelling, story structure, critical thinking

- **Storytelling and Story Reading: A Comparison of Effects on Children's Memory and Story Comprehension - 2005 (QS)**

- **Elementary school education**

- Students in both the reading and storytelling groups improved on most measures. However, on some measures, notably those regarding recall ability, students in the storytelling group improved more than students in the reading group.

- Keywords: Language arts, storytelling, reading, comprehension

- **Listening to Nysia: Storytelling as a Way into Writing in Kindergarten - 2005 (IP)**

- **Elementary school education**

- In this article, the author shares what she is learning about the place of storytelling in beginning writing. In working closely with teachers and students, the author learns that: (a) Teachers must broaden their definitions of writing; (b) If teachers value storytelling as part of writing, they must build in supportive structures; and (c) Storytelling allows curriculum to be co-constructed between teacher and student.

- Keywords: Language arts, storytelling, oral interpretation and communication, reading, writing, student/teacher relationships

- **Stagebridge's 2004-2005 Storybridge Program - 2005 (QS)**

- **Elementary school education**

- Stagebridge's 2004-2005 Storybridge Program provided direct instruction and teacher training to eight 4th and 5th grade classes in three schools. Conclusions: Students showed improvement in language arts and listening comprehension skills as a result of the program. Participating teachers gained a deeper awareness and understanding of storytelling as an art form and its impact on the core subject matter curriculum.

- Keywords: Language arts, storytelling, oral presentation, listening, teacher training, community outreach

- **Storytelling and First Person Narrative Writing - 2005 (IP)**

- **Secondary school education**

- Donald Davis explains in *Writing as a Second Language* that hearing and speaking are easier and more natural for most students than reading and writing. Therefore, Mary Garrett used storytelling to help her sophomores in high school write their own personal narrative stories.

- Keywords: Language arts, oral presentation, storytelling, narrative writing, personal stories, family history, cultural awareness and understanding



- **Storytelling Magic: Enhancing Children's Oral Language, Reading, and Writing - 2004 (IP)**

- Elementary school education**

- Storytelling is an exciting way to engage children in listening, speaking, reading, and writing throughout the curriculum. We hope this article provides an invitation to incorporate the joy of storytelling into your classroom, so that both you and your students will live happily ever after.

Keywords: Storytelling, oral interpretation and communication, reading, writing, listening, teacher education

- **Motivating Children to Write Using Storytelling - 1994-2002 (IP)**

- Special education, elementary school education**

- This highly interactive, lively workshop grew out of eight years of work with special education students, their teachers and classroom aides. The presenter tells stories and uses a 12-page handout as a guide through word lists of verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Keywords: Language development, vocabulary building, research skills, interpersonal relationships, student/teacher relationships, community building, special education

- **Parent as Storyteller - 1990-2002 (IP)**

- Preschool and elementary school education**

- Since 1990, Joan Leotta has been working to help parents use story as a bridge to better parent-child relationships and as a door for children into the world of literacy.

Keywords: Language arts, literacy, cultural awareness and understanding, reading, storytelling, teacher education

- **The Importance of Oral Storytelling in Literacy Development - 1999 (QS)**

- Elementary school education**

- This paper provides specific suggestions as to how caregivers, teachers, and parents can help children become lifelong learners and readers through the use of storytelling.

Keywords: Reading improvement, language attitudes, storytelling, teacher education, parental involvement

- **The Effects of Storytelling versus Story Reading on Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge of British Primary School Children - 1998 (QS)**

**Elementary school education**

This study shows that children who witnessed storytelling scored higher on comprehension/vocabulary measures than did children who listened to story reading.

Keywords: Language arts, storytelling, reading, vocabulary development, oral communication, reading comprehension

- **Thinking and Doing Literature: An 8-Year Study - 1998 (QS)**

**Pre-kindergarten, elementary school education through adults**

A series of studies conducted over an 8-year period by the National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning examined the ways people think when they read literature and the ways in which instruction could support those kinds of thinking. Interactions with students convinced the researchers that literature and storytelling can play an important role in enriching students' understanding across subject areas.

Keywords: Language arts, literature, reading comprehension, storytelling

- **Into the Curriculum: Reading/Language Arts: Storytelling with Story Puzzles; Reading/Language Arts: In Favor of the Dictionary; Reading/Language Arts/Social Studies: Using Almanacs to Learn about the 1950s and 1960s; Science/Reading/Language Arts: Inventions and the Stories Behind Them; Social Studies: The Immigration/Integration - 1998 (IP)**

**Elementary and middle school education**

This article provides lesson plans for elementary and middle school reading, language arts, social studies, and science including activity sheets for story puzzles, almanacs, and inventions.

Keywords: Language arts, storytelling, reading, social studies, science, history

- **Storytelling in an ESL Classroom - 1997 (IP)**

**Elementary school education**

This paper discusses the efforts of an ESL teacher in a multi-age classroom to use storytelling to bridge language barriers as well as teach English, history and science.

Keywords: Language arts, ESL, history, science, oral communication, storytelling, writing

- **More or Less How to Do It: Tips and Hints to the Storyteller - 1995 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

Methods to incorporate stories into the classroom are listed for language, history and geography, science, art, music and math.

Keywords: Language arts, history, geography, science, art, music, mathematics

- **The Effects of Storytelling Experiences on Vocabulary Skills of Second Grade Students - 1987 (QS)**

**Elementary school education, 2nd Grade**

Second grade students in Waterloo, Iowa, were taught storytelling techniques and given opportunities to practice these techniques for six months. They significantly increased their performance on vocabulary and reading comprehension tests beyond what was expected for that six-month period.

Keywords: Language arts, storytelling, vocabulary building, reading comprehension, listening skills

# Mathematics, Physics and Science

- **Mathematics, Art, Research, Collaboration and Storytelling: The High M.A.R.C.S. Project - 2007 (QS)**

**Middle school education**

This article describes a curriculum integration project designed to help students better contextualize their learning, by linking mathematics, art, research, collaboration, and storytelling.

Keywords: Mathematics, art, research, collaboration, storytelling

- **Humanizing the Teaching of Physics through Storytelling: The Case of Current Electricity - 2006 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

This article discusses the potential role of storytelling in the teaching and learning of physics, using the discovery of current electricity as an example.

Keywords: Physics, language arts, human values, research, teacher education

- **A Little-Used Art of Teaching: The Case of Storytelling - 2006 (IP)**

**Elementary and middle school education**

Telling a mathematically-based story can be a break from the routine and can serve as literary mnemonics full of mental imagery that helps students recall in problem-solving steps.

Keywords: Elementary and middle school education

- **Telling the Stars: A Quantitative Approach to Assessing the Use of Folk Tales in Science Education - 2005 (QS)**

**Elementary school education**

During the final stage of testing, the revised instrument and methods found significant increase in positive attitude toward science after the presentations.

Keywords: Science, astronomy, folk tales, storytelling, assessment instrument

- **Storytelling and Teaching Mathematics: Pedagogical and Multicultural Perspectives - 2004 (QS)**

- **Elementary and middle school education**

- This book contains two case studies of teachers telling epic oral stories to teach math to elementary and middle school students. The book also includes theoretical discussions of essential elements of oral storytelling, multicultural education, how oral storytelling can help children who have difficulty learning mathematics, and mathematical problem solving.

- Keywords: Mathematics, epic storytelling, oral presentation, critical thinking

- **Storytelling Sagas: An Effective Medium for Teaching Early Childhood Mathematics - 2004 (IP)**

- **Elementary school education, Pre-K to Grade 2**

- This article describes a unique supplementary program that teaches early childhood mathematics (Pre-K to Grade 2), through a series of six problem-solving adventure stories. The mathematics concepts are taught to the children through the medium of oral storytelling sagas in an integrated approach that addresses language arts as well as early childhood mathematics competencies.

- Keywords: Mathematics, language arts, oral storytelling, critical thinking, sagas

- **The Cottonwood - 2001 (IP)**

- **Elementary school education**

- A well-told science story can bring acts to life, make abstract concepts concrete, and walk the listener through the process of scientific inquiry.

- Keywords: Science, storytelling, critical thinking, scientific inquiry

- **Figures, Facts and Fables: Telling Tales in Science and Math - 1996 (QS)**

- **Elementary and middle school education**

- This book stresses that classroom teachers can be storytellers and offers suggestions on how to be a good storyteller. Practical suggestions are offered on how teachers can use storytelling for science and mathematics. Rationale on how storytelling benefits learning and how students can best benefit from storytelling exercises is presented.

- Keywords: Science, mathematics, storytelling, teacher education

- **Using Stories to Enrich the Physics Curriculum - 1998 (IP)**

- **Secondary school education**

- This article contends that storytelling can motivate and encourage physics students. An example story is cited that describes a NASA satellite's discovery of ripples in cosmic background radiation.

- Keywords: Physics, NASA, storytelling, scientific inquiry, critical thinking

- **Teaching About Goods and Services Using Benny's Pennies - 1998 (IP)**

- **Elementary school education**

- This article provides a lesson called "Benny's Pennies," which is a story that (a) focuses on goods and services; and (b) prepares students to learn other economic concepts.

- Keywords: Economics, social studies, vocabulary building

- **Reform of the College Science Lecture through Storytelling - 1997 (IP)**

- **College science education**

- This article discusses innovating college science education by reforming the traditional lecture through the systematic introduction of storytelling as a way of teaching the core material in college science courses.

- Keywords: Science, storytelling, teacher education

- **Learning from the Land: Teaching Ecology through Stories and Activities - 1997 (IP)**

- **Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- This book aims to bring scientific facts to life by creating empathy for wild creatures and teach basic science skills by using creative writing and storytelling.

- Keywords: Science, ecology, language arts, critical thinking, problem solving, creative writing, storytelling, scientific inquiry

- **Mathematics and Science Curricula in Elementary and Secondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Native Students - 1991 (QS)**

- **Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- Issues related to the improvement of mathematics and science education pertain to Native students as well as to the general population. Native students are most successful at tasks that use visual and spatial abilities and that involve simultaneous processing. Storytelling techniques can be used to develop culturally relevant problems.

- Keywords: Mathematics, science, Native American, American Indian, Alaska Natives

- **Storytelling and Science - 1988 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

This paper claims that scientific knowledge can be kept alive for children through storytelling.

**Keywords:** Science, scientific inquiry, storytelling

## Oral Interpretation and Presentation, Drama

- **Storytelling for Middle Grades Students, Fastback 482 - 2001 (QS)**

**Middle school education**

This book offers tips for using storytelling in middle grade classrooms, noting that having students do the storytelling may have greater motivational benefit than having the teacher tell the stories to the students. The Fastback states that storytelling by students helps to develop higher-level thinking skills, such as analysis and synthesis, as well as skills in oral composition.

Keywords: Language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, storytelling, critical thinking, oral presentation

- **The Complete Storymaker: Improving student storytelling and writing through work with creative drama - 2007 (IP)**

**Elementary school education**

Dramatizing a well-known folktale provides a springboard to physically model verbs, build story action and character, develop vocabulary and, overall, improve student storytelling and writing.

Keywords: Language arts, social studies, creative drama, cultural awareness

- **Using Improvisational Storytelling in the Classroom - 2006 (IP)**

**Middle school education**

In this article, the author outlines a way of incorporating storytelling into instruction through the use of improvisational storytelling games. He suggests that teachers first lay out some ground rules regarding language, content, process and time limits, and behavior. He then suggests a variety of games that incorporate middle-level curriculum topics.

Keywords: Language arts, mathematics, research, cultural awareness, teacher training

- **Stories Tame the “Drama Class from Hell” - 2004 (IP)**

**Secondary school education**

Faced with a large group of belligerent, out-of-control teenagers in a drama class, teacher/storyteller Mary Garrett used all her storytelling skills and the right kinds of stories to achieve enthusiastic responses from students who learned to exhibit positive, cooperative behavior toward each other and the teacher as they told oral stories in performance.

Keywords: Language arts, oral presentation, dramatic art, writing, classroom behavior, student/teacher relationships



## Classroom Behavior/Behavioral Problems

- **Storytelling for Emotionally Challenged Children - 2000-2007 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

For seven years, professional performing artist David Ponkey has been bringing European myths to abused children in the Sunny Hills Children's Center, as well as associated group homes and schools throughout Marin County, California. He has come to believe that high-quality storytelling performances are the "pill" for attention deficit disorder.

Keywords: History, Biology, Geography, Astronomy, across the curriculum, disruptive behavior, peer group influence, storytelling techniques, self-esteem, solving social problems

- **STORIES: A Classroom-based Program to Reduce Aggressive Behavior - 2001 (QS)**

**Elementary school education**

This program used the peer group and story form as vehicles to improve social problem solving for aggressors, victims, and bystanders. Post-intervention reports show decreases in externalizing and antisocial behaviors for children not identified as aggressive, and increases for the identified children.

Keywords: Aggressive behavior, solving social problems, peer group influence, storytelling techniques, critical thinking, teacher education

- **How Does It Get Into My Imagination?: Elementary School Children's Intertextual Knowledge and Gendered Storylines - 1999 (QS)**

**Elementary school education**

Case study of children's responses to stories used poststructuralist theory to examine how students used their intertextual knowledge to understand and produce disruptive stories regarding gender.

Keywords: Language arts, storytelling, consciousness raising, gender considerations, critical thinking, teacher education

- **Establishing an Affective School Environment To Enhance Character Development in Pre-K-3rd Grade Students Using Storytelling Techniques - 1990 (QS)**

**Pre-K, elementary school education**

The purpose of this study was to socialize children in Prekindergarten through 3rd-grade classes to be cooperative, responsible and achieving individuals using storytelling techniques. Evaluation data indicated effectiveness in improving character development and decreasing behavior problems. An emphasis on story writing and storytelling resulted in over 600 works by students.

**Keywords:** Character development, decrease behavioral problems, enhance home/school relations, teacher education, nurturing affective environment

## Student/Teacher Relationships

- **Building Bridges: How Storytelling Influences Teacher/Student Relationships - 2001 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

These studies suggest that the activity of storytelling has an impact on participants' interpersonal relationships, empathy, and sense of "connectedness" in the classroom.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal relationships, empathy, community in classroom, critical thinking, oral storytelling

# Teacher Education

- **Storytelling as Pedagogy: An Unexpected Outcome of Narrative Inquiry - 2007(QS)**

**Elementary school education, preservice teacher education**

This study examines how the use of narrative research methods can benefit preservice teacher education.

Keywords: Language arts, narrative research, narrative inquiry, storytelling

- **The Storytelling Project: Teaching about Racism and Tolerance through Storytelling and the Arts - 2007 (QS)**

**Secondary school education**

This is an innovative, interdisciplinary curriculum model developed by a racially diverse team of artists, teachers, and university faculty and students. This interactive model is a framework for both curriculum and for professional development for educators interested in teaching/learning about race and racism.

Keywords: Racism, tolerance, storytelling, arts

- **The Storytelling Classroom: Applications Across the Curriculum - 2006 (IP)**

**Elementary and middle school education**

This book is an inspiring, practical and immediately applicable collection of pre-K through eighth grade lesson plans by and for teachers and media specialists who use storytelling in the classroom and storytellers who work in the classroom. Each lesson plan is linked to national education standards.

Keywords: Language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, lesson plans

- **Fairy Tales Fascinate Professor of German - 2006 (IP)**

**College education**

Professor Donald Haase, Chair of the German and Slavic Studies Department at Wayne State University teaches the course “Understanding the Fairy Tale,” started back in the mid-80s, which has closely linked Haase’s teaching with his research. “You feel you have to justify teaching and researching fairy tales,” he said, “because it seems unusual. But in fact, it couldn’t be more pertinent. You get to deal with social, cultural and political issues because fairy tales always turn up in the struggle over values.”

**Keywords:** Language arts, social studies, cultural awareness and understanding, political science, literature, Brothers Grimm

- **Storytelling with Young Children - 2005 (IP)**

**Elementary school education**

In this book, the author updates her earlier work on this topic and clearly explains the skills and methods needed to engage young children. Through storytelling, the children's imaginations are stimulated, their knowledge enhanced and language skills extended.

**Keywords:** Language arts, storytelling, oral communication

- **Helping Preservice Teachers Discover the Value of Storytelling Strategies in Language Arts Instruction - 2001 (IP)**

**Elementary school education, preservice teacher training**

The purpose of the workshop was to provide students an opportunity to explore and practice storytelling strategies that could be implemented in a language arts curriculum. The preservice teachers' responses indicated this innovative method could help bridge the gap between theory and real-world applications for children.

**Keywords:** Language arts, storytelling techniques, classroom behavior

- **Subjective Experience and the Preparation of Activist Teachers: Confronting the Mean Old Snapping Turtle and the Great Big Bear - 2000 (IP)**

**Elementary school education, special education**

This paper describes the use of autobiographical storytelling, personal myths, and visual imagery in preparing elementary and special educators for activist roles in creating effective, inclusive schools.

**Keywords:** Language arts, autobiographical storytelling, personal myths

- **What Makes a Good Case? Some Basic Rules of Good Storytelling Help Teachers Generate Student Excitement in the Classroom - 1998 (IP)**

**College education**

This study examines how stories touch our fundamental nature and explains what makes a "good case" in telling a story that creates excitement in the classroom. The author asserts that stories are embedded with instructions that guide us through the complexities of life.

**Keywords:** Language arts, storytelling, classroom techniques

- **Teaching Through Stories: Yours, Mine, and Theirs - 1998 (QS)**

- Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- This book describes classroom uses for teachers' and children's own stories, as well as stories from a multitude of outside sources. It offers a theoretical basis for the use of storytelling, gives practical tips on storytelling techniques, and provides practical storytelling activities for use across the curriculum in kindergarten through high school.

- Keywords: Language arts, art, music, social studies, math, science

- **Reform of the College Science Lecture through Storytelling - 1997 (IP)**

- College education**

- This article discusses innovating college science education by reforming the traditional lecture through the systematic introduction of storytelling as a way of teaching the core material in college science courses.

- Keywords: Science, storytelling, scientific inquiry

- **Storytelling and Virtue - 1997 (IP)**

- Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- This paper emphasizes the power of storytelling, particularly heroic stories of virtue, in moral education.

- Keywords: Language arts, heroic stories, virtue, moral education, character building, classic literature, epics

- **More or Less How to Do It: Tips and Hints to the Storyteller - 1995 (IP)**

- Elementary, middle and secondary school education**

- Methods to incorporate stories into the classroom are listed for language, history and geography, science, art, music, and math.

- Keywords: Language arts, history, geography, science, art, music, mathematics, storytelling techniques, teacher training

- **What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning: Storytelling - 1987 (IP)**

- Pre-K, elementary school education**

- The U.S. Department of Education published the following research findings: Telling young children stories can motivate them to read. Storytelling also introduces them to cultural values and literary tradition before they can read, write, and talk about stories by themselves.

- Keywords: Language arts, cultural awareness and understanding, personal stories, literature, oral presentation, imagination stimulation

## Libraries

- **Imagination River Storytelling Camp - 2003 (IP)**

- **Middle school education**

- The Imagination River Storytelling Camp project paired four middle schools each with a professional storyteller and their public librarian and taught 120 kids in four middle schools to be storytellers.

- Keywords: Language arts, oral presentation, library skills, teacher/student relationships

- **A Home for Toad: The Actual Story - 1998 (IP)**

- **Elementary school education**

- This article presents a story and song that can be used to teach Big6 research skills (task definition, information seeking strategies, location and access, use of information, synthesis, and evaluation) to elementary students. Both the story and the instructor's guide are available online.

- Keywords: Big6 research skills, story and song, puppets, language arts

# Museums

- **Storytelling with Stuff - 2007 (QS)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary education**

The Spurlock Museum has found that adding storytelling to its educational offerings is an effective way to increase both the Museum's offerings to the public and the range of visitors attending programs.

**Keywords:** World cultural awareness and understanding, relationship of folktales with exhibit objects, artifacts, story-based tours, storytelling

- **Picture Perfect, The Power of Storytelling in Museums - 2006 (IP)**

Storytelling in museums is the magic of making objects speak. Museum story artists wrap history in a cloak of tales, reveal the heart of scientific discovery tells the tale of an artist's life or brings life to characters within, and provides a verbal context for objects that enables visitors to engage more effectively with those objects (paintings, sculptures, hangings and more).

**Keywords:** History, science, biographies, paintings, sculptures, wall hangings, art, artifacts, storytelling

- **Museums of Memory - 2004 (IP)**

**Elementary, middle and secondary education**

With their storehouses of objects that enhance recall of personal memories, support storytelling, and may aid in psychological healing, and their places where people can meet and talk, museums and historic sites play a vital role in the process of remembering and making sense of the past, even memories of the darker chapters in human history.

**Keywords:** History, social studies, cultural awareness and understanding, cultural heritage, cultural diversity, storytelling, personal memories, intergenerational communication



## Relevant Books, Journals, Organizations and Web Sites

Research revealed a number of books, publications, organizations and web sites that advocate the use of storytelling and storytelling techniques across the curriculum in schools. They may be very helpful as you plan your own program. Here are a few of them.

### BOOKS

(listed alphabetically; all available from amazon.com)

- **Children Tell Stories: Teaching and Using Storytelling in the Classroom** by Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss — The authors provide compelling rationales for the value of storytelling, links to state literacy learning standards, detailed storytelling unit tips, easy ideas for storytelling throughout the curriculum, and carefully selected and extensive bibliographies. Considered the classic in the field, **Children Tell Stories** is useful to both experienced and novice teachers and storytellers who work with students from preschool through college.
- **Cool Story Programs for the School-Age Crowd** by Rob Reid — A storyteller and librarian has written yet another book loaded with fresh programming ideas. Eighteen well-developed plans with wacky themes that kids love will bring literature to life with a minimum of stress for public librarians, teachers, and school media specialists.
- **Day of the Moon Shadow: Tales with Ancient Answers to Scientific Questions** by Judy Gail and Linda A. Houlding. — It is a hardcover ISBN 1-56308-348-5 by Librarians Unlimited, Inc. The book is not only full of stories and songs, but each story section also contains scientific information. For instance, there is a story from the Inuit of Central Arctic that tells about the aurora borealis and how it is made: sun and earth interact near the magnetic poles to form the aurora borealis. That section is followed by a story called **Spirits of the Dancing Dead**, a folktale from the Inuit people to explain the phenomenon. There is a lullaby, complete with music and lyrics that follows. The book contains stories from around the world.
- **An Imaginative Approach to Teaching** by Kieran Egan — Offers practical help for teachers who want to engage, stimulate, and develop the imaginative and learning processes of children between the ages of eight to fifteen.

- **The Power of Story: Teaching Through Storytelling** by Rives Collins and Pamela Cooper — Storytelling plays a central role in empowering educators and learners to synthesize and verbalize personal experiences, communicate feelings, and construct meaning, all of which are processes vital to effective learning.
- **Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories, Storytelling, and Activities for Peace, Justice and the Environment** by Ed Brody (Editor), Jay Goldspinner (Editor), Katie Green (Editor), Rona Leventhal (Editor) and John Porcino (Editor) — An incredible sourcebook for storytellers, teachers, parents and healers, each story is followed by suggested activities and exercises, storytelling tips, and resources, all designed to deepen the storytelling experience. Includes an Age Suitability Index, a Thematic Index, and a Directory of Contributors. A new introduction focuses on storytelling in education.
- **Storyteller, Storyteacher: Discovering the Power of Storytelling for Teaching and Living** by Marni Gillard — A committed teacher, storyteller, and listener presents a highly readable how-to about involving both adults and students in storytelling. Includes suggestions for developing personal stories, discovering family tellers and emulating them, and checking out resources in the library, as well as ideas about how to tell, how to coach others, and how not to be afraid of the power of a story to move us all to tears.
- **The Storytelling Classroom** by Sherry Norfolk, Jane Stenson and Diane Williams — An inspiring, practical and immediately applicable collection of pre-K through eighth grade lesson plans by and for teachers and media specialists who use storytelling in the classroom and storytellers who work in the classroom. Each lesson plan is linked to National Standards in Language Arts, Social Studies, Math or Science and is accompanied by an essay that provides a glimpse of the alchemy that occurs when students, teachers and story are brought together: student engagement, classrooms that are alive with thinking students, LEARNING!
- **Storytelling in Emergent Literacy: Fostering Multiple Intelligence** by Susan Louise Trostle and Jeanne Donato — Perfect for early childhood educators, providers and students alike, this book creatively integrates multiple intelligences and related activities with methods of effective storytelling. Based on recent brain research and multiple intelligence theory, it combines the art of storytelling with popular selections from children's literature.
- **Tales As Tools: The Power of Story in the Classroom** by Sheila Daley through the National Storytelling Association — A practical guide to the use of storytelling across the curriculum in schools.

- **Teachers' Voices: Storytelling and Possibility (Issues in Curriculum Theory, Policy, and Research)** by Freeman Elbaz (Editor) — This book draws on ideas about the nature of teaching and teacher knowledge, teacher development and school reform, and narrative as methodology for understanding the lives and work of teachers. These ideas have been elaborated over the past 20 years or so by many researchers who see storytelling as the interactive process, which constitutes the site of the production of teachers' knowledge.
- **Teaching as Story Telling: An Alternative Approach to Teaching and Curriculum in the Elementary School** by Kieran Egan — A practical introduction to the use of story-forms in curriculum for young children. His model presents various possibilities in a range of fields for many kinds of teachers.
- **The Way of the Storyteller** by Ruth Sawyer — First published in 1942, this classic work is unique in its blend of literary history, criticism, analysis, personal anecdote, and how-to instructions. Sawyer examines storytelling as a folk art and a still-living art, tracing its evolution from the earliest narrative impulses that developed as stories were written down.
- **The World of Storytelling** by Anne Pellowski — Both a practical guide and a background reference for those who want to tell stories to children in libraries or schools. Reviews the practice of the art in many lands and historical periods.
- **Write Right!: Creative Writing Using Storytelling Techniques** by Kendall Haven — A breakthrough approach to creative writing uses storytelling techniques to enhance the creative writing process. This practical guide offers directions for 38 writing exercises that will show students how to create powerful and dynamic fiction. All the steps are included, from finding inspiration and creating believable characters to the final edit.

## JOURNALS

- **Folklorico: Journal of the Slavic and East European Folklore Association**  
Publisher: Slavic and East European Folklore Association (SEEFA)

SEEFA is a non-profit organization devoted to an exchange of knowledge among scholars interested in Slavic and East European folklore. It seeks to promote instruction, to organize panels at national and international conferences, to encourage the preparation of teaching materials and translations, and to foster exchanges, summer programs, and research in Slavic and East European Folklore and related fields such as anthropology, ethnic studies, history, literature, and musicology.

SEEFa publishes a journal twice a year.

Editor:

Faith Wigzell

Email: [f.wigzell@ssees.ac.uk](mailto:f.wigzell@ssees.ac.uk)

Folklorico is available free of charge as an Open Access journal on the Internet.

Content available in PDF format.

<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/SEEFa/>

• **Storytelling, Self and Society** — A double-blind peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal that invites scholarship addressing any topic related to storytelling -- from its role as performing art to contemporary applications in a variety of professional fields. They welcome manuscripts from scholars in humanities and social science disciplines, (including psychology, library science, literary studies, folklore, anthropology, sociology, communication, rhetoric, performance studies, theatre, history, feminist and queer studies, and ethnography) as well as from storytelling artists and practitioners, including those applying storytelling in the fields of education, health care, social work, business, law, peace-building and environmental education.

Storytelling is a hyperlink discipline, which stands at the headwaters of all disciplinary in education and cultural transmission. In the course of telling a story, one is able to yoke together issues of history, sociology, anthropology, literature, music, theatre, psychology, religion, law, medicine, communication, and more, all through the natural linkages of the narrative mode.

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## ORGANIZATIONS

• **National Storytelling Network** — The official site of the National Storytelling Network gives information on storytelling and storytelling resources, the National Storytelling Festival, producing a Tellabration, storytelling links, and more.  
<http://www.storynet.org/>

• **Waldorf Schools** — Waldorf Education approaches all aspects of schooling in a unique and comprehensive way. The curriculum is designed to meet the various

stages of child development. Waldorf teachers are dedicated to creating a genuine inner enthusiasm for learning, that is essential for educational success. All levels of the curriculum (K-12) include storytelling.

<http://www.awsna.org/index.html>

## WEB SITES

- **Learning Through Storytelling** — “Storytelling is a power tool for education. When storytelling comes to school, everybody wins!” From the beginning of time, storytelling has been the means by which cultures and societies have preserved and celebrated their memories, passed on their values and belief systems, entertained, instructed and reported. Long before there were written records, storytellers taught through the oral tradition.

<http://www.turnerlearning.com/turnersouth/storytelling/teachingwith.html>

- **National Literacy Project Telling Its Story in Evansville: Beyond Their Wildest Imaginations.** — There isn't much Mary Jo Huff loves more than a good story. When she's surrounded by children, with a puppet on her hand, the Newburgh grandmother is in her element. She tells the children their imaginations can take them anywhere they want to go. So Huff, an author, professional storyteller and former preschool director, is ecstatic that Evansville is the current stop on the Story Box Project's world tour...

<http://www.courierpress.com/news/2007/aug/30/story-in-a-box-beyond-their-wildest-imaginations/>

- **Storytelling in Classrooms** by Heather Forest — Educators have long known that the arts can contribute to student academic success and emotional well being. The ancient art of storytelling is especially well-suited for student exploration. As a folk art, storytelling is accessible to all ages and abilities. No special equipment beyond the imagination and the power of listening and speaking is needed to create artistic images. As a learning tool, storytelling can encourage students to explore their unique expressiveness and can heighten a student's ability to communicate thoughts and feelings in an articulate, lucid manner. These benefits transcend the art experience to support daily life skills. In our fast-paced, media-driven world, storytelling can be a nurturing way to remind children that their spoken words are powerful, that listening is important, and that clear communication between people is an art.

<http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/index.html>

- **Storytelling in the Classroom** by Linda Fredericks and Allison Cox — Stories help bind people together, forge group identities and create a sense of common culture and understanding. Usually, the first storytellers that children know are parents and

family members, so listening to stories is often a known, safe and culturally relevant method of imparting knowledge and important values. Whether the stories are family stories, folk and fairy tales, myths, legends, or from literature... if you can put the book down and simply tell the story to your students, you can connect with them through an ancient and compelling form of communication.

[http://www.dancingleaves.com/allison/articles/classroom/storytelling\\_in\\_the\\_classroom.html](http://www.dancingleaves.com/allison/articles/classroom/storytelling_in_the_classroom.html)

- **Storytelling: The Heart and Soul of Education** by Stan Koki — All people have a basic need to share stories. Stories organize experiences and record important happenings. As common forms of discourse, stories are of great interest and significance in language and literacy development, especially when considering the increased linguistic and cultural diversity of students in Pacific classrooms. Stories enable teachers to learn about their students' cultures, experiences, and meaningful relationships. Through the sharing of stories, teachers and children “create the potential for new connections that link them together inside a new tale”  
<http://www.prel.org/products/Products/Storytelling.pdf>

- **Storytelling Web Sites and Books for Teachers; Storytelling in Classrooms** — A compilation of resources for teachers integrating storytelling into their classrooms.  
<http://www.story-lovers.com/listssstorytellinginclass.html>

- **Taleypo the Storyteller** - Marilyn Kinsella — Workshop Handouts, Papers, and Study Guides, K-12. Detailed information across the curriculum for teachers.  
<http://www.marilynkinsella.org/TEACHERTELLER.htm>

# **APPENDIX**

## **Teaching Storytelling**

**National Council of Teachers of English  
A Position Statement from the Committee on Storytelling  
1992**

## **Storytelling in Education? YES!**

**The Youth, Educators, and Storytellers Alliance (YES!)  
A Special Interest Group of the National Storytelling Network  
A Statement Concerning the Importance of Storytelling in Education  
August 1, 2006**

# Teaching Storytelling

## National Council of Teachers of English

### A Position Statement from the Committee on Storytelling

1992

Once upon a time, oral storytelling ruled. It was the medium through which people learned their history, settled their arguments, and came to make sense of the phenomena of their world. Then along came the written word with its mysterious symbols. For a while, only the rich and privileged had access to its wonders. But in time, books, signs, pamphlets, memos, cereal boxes, constitutions—countless kinds of writing appeared everywhere people turned. The ability to read and write now ruled many lands. Oral storytelling, like the simpleminded youngest brother in the olden tales, was foolishly cast aside. Oh, in casual ways people continued to tell each other stories at bedtime, across dinner tables, and around campfires, but the respect for storytelling as a tool of learning was almost forgotten.

Luckily, a few wise librarians, camp counselors, folklorists, and traditional tellers from cultures which still highly valued the oral tale kept storytelling alive. Schoolchildren at the feet of a storyteller sat mesmerized and remembered the stories till the teller came again. Teachers discovered that children could easily recall whatever historical or scientific facts they learned through story. Children realized they made pictures in their minds as they heard stories told, and they kept making pictures even as they read silently to themselves. Just hearing stories made children want to tell and write their own tales. Parents who wanted their children to have a sense of history found eager ears for the kind of story that begins, "When I was little ...." Stories, told simply from mouth to ear, once again traveled the land.

#### **What Is Storytelling?**

Storytelling is relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gesture. It is not the same as reading a story aloud or reciting a piece from memory or acting out a drama—though it shares common characteristics with these arts. The storyteller looks into the eyes of the audience and together they compose the tale. The storyteller begins to see and re-create, through voice and gesture, a series of mental images; the audience, from the first moment of listening, squints, stares, smiles, leans forward or falls asleep, letting the teller know whether to slow down, speed up, elaborate, or just finish. Each listener, as well as each teller, actually composes a unique set of story images derived from meanings associated with words, gestures, and sounds. The experience can be profound, exercising the thinking and touching the emotions of both teller and listener.

#### **Why Include Storytelling in School?**

Everyone who can speak can tell stories. We tell them informally as we relate the mishaps and wonders of our day-to-day lives. We gesture, exaggerate our voices, pause for effect.



Listeners lean in and compose the scene of our tale in their minds. Often they are likely to be reminded of a similar tale from their own lives. These naturally learned oral skills can be used and built on in our classrooms in many ways.

Students who search their memories for details about an event as they are telling it orally will later find those details easier to capture in writing. Writing theorists value the rehearsal, or prewriting, stage of composing. Sitting in a circle and swapping personal or fictional tales is one of the best ways to help writers rehearse.

Listeners encounter both familiar and new language patterns through story. They learn new words or new contexts for already familiar words. Those who regularly hear stories, subconsciously acquire familiarity with narrative patterns and begin to predict upcoming events. Both beginning and experienced readers call on their understanding of patterns as they tackle unfamiliar texts. Then they re-create those patterns in both oral and written compositions. Learners who regularly tell stories become aware of how an audience affects a telling, and they carry that awareness into their writing.

Both tellers and listeners find a reflection of themselves in stories. Through the language of symbol, children and adults can act out through a story the fears and understandings not so easily expressed in everyday talk. Story characters represent the best and worst in humans. By exploring story territory orally, we explore ourselves—whether it be through ancient myths and folktales, literary short stories, modern picture books, or poems. Teachers who value a personal understanding of their students can learn much by noting what story a child chooses to tell and how that story is uniquely composed in the telling. Through this same process, teachers can learn a great deal about themselves.

Story is the best vehicle for passing on factual information. Historical figures and events linger in children's minds when communicated by way of a narrative. The ways of other cultures, both ancient and living, acquire honor in story. The facts about how plants and animals develop, how numbers work, or how government policy influences history—any topic, for that matter—can be incorporated into story form and made more memorable if the listener takes the story to heart.

Children at any level of schooling who do not feel as competent as their peers in reading or writing are often masterful at storytelling. The comfort zone of the oral tale can be the path

by which they reach the written one. Tellers who become very familiar with even one tale by retelling it often, learn that literature carries new meaning with each new encounter. Students working in pairs or in small storytelling groups learn to negotiate the meaning of a tale.

### **How Do You Include Storytelling in School?**

Teachers who tell personal stories about their past or present lives model for students the

way to recall sensory detail. Listeners can relate the most vivid images from the stories they have heard or tell back a memory the story evokes in them. They can be instructed to observe the natural storytelling taking place around them each day, noting how people use gesture and facial expression, body language, and variety in tone of voice to get the story across.

Stories can also be rehearsed. Again, the teacher's modeling of a prepared telling can introduce students to the techniques of eye contact, dramatic placement of a character within a scene, use of character voices, and more. If students spend time rehearsing a story, they become comfortable using a variety of techniques. However, it is important to remember that storytelling is communication, from the teller to the audience, not just acting or performing.

Storytellers can draft a story the same way writers draft. Audiotape or videotape recordings can offer the storyteller a chance to be reflective about the process of telling. Listeners can give feedback about where the telling engaged them most. Learning logs kept throughout a storytelling unit allow both teacher and students to write about the thinking that goes into choosing a story, mapping its scenes, coming to know its characters, deciding on detail to include or exclude.

Like writers, student storytellers learn from models. Teachers who tell personal stories or go through the process of learning to tell folk or literary tales make the most credible models. Visiting storytellers or professional tellers on audiotapes or videotapes offer students a variety of styles. Often a community historian or folklorist has a repertoire of local tales. Older students both learn and teach when they take their tales to younger audiences or community agencies. Once you get storytelling going, there is no telling where it will take you.

Oral storytelling is regaining its position of respect in communities where hundreds of people of every age gather together for festivals in celebration of its power. Schools and preservice college courses are gradually giving it curriculum space as well. It is unsurpassed as a tool for learning about ourselves, about the ever-increasing information available to us, and about the thoughts and feelings of others.

The simpleminded youngest brother in olden tales, while disregarded for a while, won the treasure in the end every time. The NCTE Committee on Storytelling invites you to reach for a treasure—the riches of storytelling.

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## Introduction

When you consider bringing a storyteller into your school to work with one or several of your teachers to support and enhance the standard curriculum, there are many questions that will come to mind. Has something like this been done before? Are there quantitative studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of storytelling as a classroom technique to help teach the curriculum? What kind of innovative programs have shown positive results? How may teachers be trained to incorporate storytelling in their classrooms? For further information, how can you contact some of the administrators, scholars and storytellers who have been involved in and analyzed these educational programs?

This booklet addresses those questions. It features a wide variety of storytelling programs in schools across the country (and a few abroad) that have been designed to assist teachers in traditional classrooms with the standard curriculum. Some are supported by quantitative measurements; others are more anecdotal in nature. All are considered successful.

The appendix contains position statements from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and The Youth, Educators and Storytellers Alliance (YES!) reviewing much of the history and background of the use of storytellers and storytelling techniques in classrooms. They answer such questions as: What is storytelling? Why include storytelling in school? How do you include storytelling in school? What are the benefits that come from the use of storytelling in the classroom?

In this first edition of the booklet, the curriculum applications are art and music, cultural awareness and understanding, environmental education, history, language arts, mathematics, physics and science; oral interpretation and presentation; drama; classroom behavior/behavioral problems; student/teacher relationships, and teacher education in the classroom. Programs sponsored by libraries and museums outside of the classroom are also included. These outside programs address curricular needs as well as community outreach.

In this booklet, you will find both Quantitative Studies and Innovative Projects.

**Quantitative Studies** contain research papers that investigate the effects of storytelling on children's learning. Most of these projects:

- have been documented in master's theses, journal articles or books
- cover a range of subjects including art, character building, history, language arts, mathematics, music and science
- are applicable from PreK through college
- deal with oral storytelling  
(digital storytelling is not included in this edition of the booklet)

## Storytelling in Schools

For example, some research papers show quantitatively that storytelling improves students' attitudes toward science and history more than story reading. Others measure the benefits of using storytelling techniques in mathematics, language arts and social studies classes.

**Innovative Projects** are anecdotal descriptions of programs that may serve as models for other schools and communities.

For instance, a number of projects show in detail how it is possible for teachers and storytellers to make the learning of history enjoyable and memorable at all grade levels. Other projects demonstrate how effective storytelling is when used to stimulate reading, writing and oral interpretation activities.

Whenever possible, we included full text descriptions of projects. When that was not possible, we posted as much information as was available and then included instructions on the web site for obtaining follow-up information from journals, articles and books.

A web site accompanies this booklet. It contains much more detailed information than was possible here. As you read about the programs and want to learn more about any of them, go to the Storytelling in Schools web site and use the keywords to find that particular project and backup information online:

**[www.storytellingschools.org](http://www.storytellingschools.org)**

This is just the start of an ongoing project. Both the booklet and the web site will be updated on a regular basis so that you may stay current with the exciting new storytelling programs in schools worldwide. As more information about the use of storytelling programs in schools is collected and entered into the booklet and web site, the curriculum applications will expand and broaden. Please let us know your areas of special interest.

We hope you will become part of our network of contributors and advise us of any programs you know about that do not appear in this booklet. We will continue our independent research, but we also hope to receive new information as individuals learn about innovative new endeavors. If you do bring storytellers into your school because of this booklet and web site, please let us know the results.

If you have any questions or would like to contribute information about projects that demonstrate the value of storytelling in schools, please feel free to contact either of us. Any comments and suggestions are welcomed. It will be a pleasure to hear from you.

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# **Storytelling in Education? YES!**

**The Youth, Educators, and Storytellers Alliance (YES!)  
A Special Interest Group of the National Storytelling Network  
A Statement Concerning the Importance of Storytelling in Education  
August 1, 2006**

Since the human race began, people have told stories to each other, to pass on family lore, values and beliefs, common history and heritage, to teach factual and conceptual information, to entertain, and to form bonds of friendship. Amidst the bustle of our visually-oriented, technologically-enhanced, multitasking, competitive world where we share information through text messaging, sound bytes, cell phones, and disks that we burn, we need to be reminded of our humanity. We pride ourselves as a nation of doers, but more and more we find ourselves in the position of observers as we watch others perform in movies, in rock concerts, or on television.

Storytelling helps students be active not only in presenting but also in focused listening and reacting, enhancing the vital skills of communication. Storytelling is an ancient art that strengthens and enhances skills that children need to acquire to function in today's world. As adults, we work in groups, sharing ideas and building upon them. Students practice the same skills, often working collaboratively in cooperative groups.

In all academic areas, storytelling enlivens the delivery of curriculum, accelerates and enhances curriculum learning, and engages learners. It encourages students to think about issues, and it can also deliver emotional and factual content beyond a child's vocabulary or reading ability. Storytelling helps students stretch and expand their thinking. Each state has learning standards that are supported by storytelling and storylistening. We know that storytelling produces enthusiastic and engaged learners; furthermore, qualitative and quantitative research studies show that storytelling can improve academic performance. Through storytelling:

- Connections and understandings are formed about and between the past, present, and future.
- Horizons are broadened.
- Understanding of and empathy towards other races and cultures is increased.
- Auditory processing skills and listening skills are supported and practiced.
- Visualization skills are expanded as children form pictures in their minds.
- Sensory imaging is heightened as all senses are elicited: tasting, touching, smelling, hearing, and feeling.
- Order is brought to students' worlds through use of thinking skills.
- Decision-making skills are discerned.

- Memory is enhanced and attention spans are stretched.
- Fear of public speaking is reduced.
- Writing skills are strengthened as students examine the structure of a story.
- Characters, events, and settings are brought to life.
- New vocabulary emerges.
- Cultural literacy is conveyed.
- Difficult scientific or mathematical concepts are introduced, explained and explored.
- Students learn core academic skills including math and science as well as language arts skills.
- Factual and conceptual curriculum material is effectively and efficiently taught.

Storytelling is an art, a tool, a device, a gateway to the past and a portal to the future that supports the present. Our true voices come alive when we share stories. Members of the YES! Alliance, along with other members of our parent organization, the National Storytelling Network, will continue to bring love of story, the excitement of storytelling and the practicalities of using storytelling in education, in classrooms and in community work, to our fellow educators.

*This statement was prepared by the Youth, Educators and Storytellers Alliance of the National Storytelling Network. To learn more about the activities and resources of the YES! Alliance, please visit our website at [www.yesalliance.com](http://www.yesalliance.com).*

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