



Oklahoma Arts Council
Performing Arts Corps- Storytelling
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“Storytelling dates back to the beginning of time. It is ancient. Long before written communication man relied on the storyteller to keep the history and culture of a people alive. Many of us know our ancestors only because we were told about them.

The story can be used as a valuable tool to impart knowledge, values, love and culture to listeners. As a “teller” you keep the story alive. Speak up and let the “story” be told.”

~DWe Williams

“At its core, storytelling is the art of using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal the elements and images of a story to a specific, live audience. A central, unique aspect of storytelling is its reliance on the audience to develop specific visual imagery and detail to complete and co-create the story.”

~ National Storytelling Association



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Storytelling Introduction

- The PAC Storytelling program will involve the exercise and development of listening and comprehension skills, oral and non-verbal expression, problem solving, critical thinking, and creative thinking skills and research and observational skills. Students will also find themselves learning about culture, history, language, as well as other subjects, while learning about how to be effective “Tellers”. **This curriculum can be used to support in the fulfillment of the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s PASS requirements for a variety of content areas.**
- **Storytelling History-** The earliest documented uses of Storytelling are directly related to the maintenance of culture and history. Example: African culture- The Griot is highly respected because of their ability to maintain history, culture, record of births and deaths, oracles, laws etc. the survival of the culture and people depended on the Griot. Even the knowledge of common tasks such as health remedies, recipes, or instructions on the construction of structures, etc could be passed down through the telling of stories. This same kind of concept exists for numerous other cultures around the world. Until the advent of written language the storyteller was essential to the survival of the history culture, skills, and values of a people.
- **Uses and value of Storytelling-** The passing of genealogy, history, values, and religion, skills, general and specific knowledge were all important functions of Storytelling. The social value of Storytelling could be seen as a means of socializing people and groups, bringing them together under a common experience. In education Storytelling encourages listening skills, and learning through problem solving and critical thinking. In addition, Storytelling facilitates the ability of individuals to connect with a subject so that their learning is increased. The TELLING of stories can provide contextual cues or other ideas that are often hidden in the written word. Storytelling activates the multiple intelligences through language, sounds and music, body language and movement, seeing and visual cues, logic, abstraction, emotion and memorization.
- **Hidden meaning in Storytelling-** Students can often learn from stories told in a language that they do not fully understand because of the universal messages conveyed in the dynamics of story telling. Things such as gestures and body language, facial expression, voice inflection and volume, tone use of props, and similarities in language can often result in clarity of understanding. The mastery of storytelling skills helps the storyteller to convey messages that would require more vocabulary than under normal circumstances.



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Dynamics of Storytelling

▪ **Story Selection**

Choosing the right story is the first step to a successful storytelling.

- Select a story that you like
- Select simple story you may already know
- Select a short story if you are a beginner
- Telling for Education- besides what you like, what elements are there that can help maximize your ability to convey the message
- Consider who your audience is- this may change the story or change the way you tell it. It may change how the audience is involved- standing, moving, verbal, seated, non-verbal, spontaneous, content, etc. Look for the willing participants.

▪ **Preparation**

Thorough preparation and research are necessary for an insightful well prepared storytelling. The storyteller may consider all of the following as he/she explores the telling of the story; provides cues to the audience; and/or decides how the audience or if the audience should participate.

- Listen to, and observe other storytellers
- Research the time or historical period, culture, rhythm and language of the story
- Determine the best style of telling for the story
 - ☞ **Storyteller-** Third person, from the point of view of a witness or someone who heard.
 - ☞ **Storyteller In Character-** Point of View- first person, second person, third person
 - ☞ **Storyteller In and Out of Character-** The storyteller moves from into and out of multiple characters. Allows him/her to move from storyteller to character and vice versa
- Explore- As you “tell” consider exploring the following areas:
 - ☞ **Person-** First person, third person, etc.
 - ☞ **Point of view-** From which point of view will you tell the story
 - ☞ **Style-** Participatory style- using the audience to help create the scene or tell the story; Oration- not dependent on anything from the audience, but playing to the audience; Theatrical- 4th wall, functioning as though the audience is not there
 - ☞ **Voice-** Selecting character voice- character voices should be very distinct or simply leave them out. It should be very easy to determine which character is speaking at any given time.
 - ☞ **Character-** The various individuals or personalities in the story
 - ☞ **Dialogue-** The words the characters speak and the ways in which they say them. Managing the various voices, and placement of them in the story.
 - ☞ **Gesture-** Use of body language. Also as a device to signal participation.



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- **Rehearsal**

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse and rehearse again. Rehearse until you are at total ease with your story. Rehearse until you can be creative in the delivery of your story and make it your own.

- Warm up

- Vocal

- ☞ Deep breathing- relaxing your body, warm up with deep breaths. Practice abdominal breathing. Inhale from nose exhale from mouth. This helps the performer to manage anxiety.

- ☞ Vocalization- tune, or warm up your voice before you begin- recite phrases that you can repeat at different levels, tones, etc. practice projecting and speaking at different levels of volume.

- Body- move and stretch all body parts to relieve anxiety and be prepared for your performance. You may need to move and be animated in your performance so being warm may keep you from problems.

- ☞ Hands- Flex and clench, shake, clap, stretch

- ☞ Eyes- Open wide, close roll, shift. Make sure your eyeglasses or contacts are clean and comfortable.

- ☞ Face- Stretch your facial muscles, smile big frown, open and close the mouth wide and tight.

- ☞ Full body stretches- stretch arms legs back, shoulders, etc.

- **Stand the Story Up-** preparing to a degree that the teller is beyond the need for script, outline, cues, etc.

- Walk around telling the story with other distractions- TV on, other people talking music playing etc.

- Rehearse alone, in a quiet place or in your head

- Deliver the story in front of mirror

- Record your story on tape recorder

- Record your story on video

- Tell the story to a friend or share the video with a friend

- Resist writing the story out completely- the oral aspect of your story is important. Keeping it oral keeps it alive and organic.

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▪ Audience

The audience and the story are equally important to the storytelling experience. They may be experienced in listening to stories or they may have no idea of what they are in for or what is expected of them. The storyteller must take the audience by the ear and invite them into the experience. Consider the following:

- Age and Mixture- Consider the ages and the combinations of ages of the audience. 10 children with 2 teachers, 25 children and their parents, a small group of 4-5 children, etc.
- Exposure- What is the experience level of the listeners. What does the audience know?
- Group Size- How large is the group?
- Audience Preparation- You may need to prep the audience about what to expect or do during the telling.
- Audience Participation- The ways the audience participates. Allows them to play a roll in the telling.
 - Mass- The audience or large groups of the audience responding in unison
 - Volunteers
 - ☞ Selected in advance
 - ☞ Selected on the spot
 - ☞ Volunteer as character
 - ☞ Self

▪ Performance

Any time that you present your story it is a “performance”. Many factors may affect the presentation, but even 1 person can make an audience; and that makes a “performance”.

- Eye Contact- Make eye contact with the entire audience. Don’t just focus on one or two individuals.
- Use the Space- Be aware of your performance space.
 - Audience access- The ability of participatory members to reach the performance area. Can they reach the performance area with ease if you should call on them to participate up front?
 - Seated teller- How will taking a seated position effect your performance?
 - Standing teller- How and where should you stand? How long?
 - Sight lines- Can you see them? Can they see you?
 - ☞ Audience- What can the audience see?
 - ☞ Storyteller- What can you see?
- Projection- The use of your voice. If they can’t hear you it’s not worth saying.
 - Use of Microphone- practice and be familiar with your equipment
 - ☞ Cordless
 - ☞ Hand held with cord
 - ☞ Mike on stand
 - ☞ Head Set
 - ☞ None- Loud and clear projection with your voice alone



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Outcomes

Through guided creative storytelling activities, students will learn a variety of storytelling fundamentals and learn tools for increased listening skills, verbal/oral expression and critical thinking skills.

- ✓ Students will increase awareness of the craft of storytelling.
- ✓ Students will increase knowledge of types of microphones and their use.
- ✓ Students will be able to apply and define specific storytelling techniques.
- ✓ Students will be able to present a brief story to classmates.
- ✓ Select students will present story before audience.

With thoughtful integration students may also demonstrate the following outcomes:

- ✓ Students will increase range of vocabulary and uses of words.
- ✓ Students will demonstrate an increase in reading proficiency.
- ✓ Students will demonstrate and increase in written and oral expression.
- ✓ Students will demonstrate increased creative and critical thinking skills.

Performance

- The elements covered in the content area of this syllabus will be applied in the storytelling performance. Content elements will be identified before the story and reviewed at the completion of the story; with a question and answer session immediately following the performance.

Teaching Materials

- Sample storytelling activities (Appendix A)
- Example Lesson Plan “Mike, Speak up!” (Appendix B)
- Storytelling Tips (Appendix C)
- Suggested Reading Book List (Appendix D)



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Appendix A

Storytelling Activities

- **Preparation, Performance- Projection**
Use of a Microphone- Improper use of a microphone can destroy a performance.
 - Set up several different kinds of microphones and allow students to try them out to determine which works best for their style and story.
 - Cordless
 - Lapel
 - Hand held with cord
 - Hand held without cord
 - Head set
 - Mike on stand
 - None

- **Story Selection & Preparation- Explore**
 - Select a nursery rhyme. Divide students into groups of 5 members. Each student must use the Explore keys to develop a different presentation of the rhyme.
 - Allow over night for development

- **Rehearsal & Performance**
 - Vocal and body warm-up- Lead class in practice of Warm Up keys

- **Performance- Eye Contact, Use of Space, Projection**
 - “Walk” The Stage- Have students walk around on the stage (performance area) inspecting the floor surface, testing projection, sight lines, gestures and sound quality.
 - Create “performance obstacles” for the students to analyze, evaluate and problems solve
 - You can evaluate and coach your student’s critical thinking by creating a rubric to score their performance
 - Have the class discuss the effectiveness of each students work

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Appendix A

- **Performance & Preparation- Improvisation, Style, Listen & Observe- Understanding story structure-** It is important for the teller to understand how to put the parts of the story together.
 - Create a circle story by placing students in a circle allowing each student to contribute to the story
 - Instructor may walk around the outside of circle tapping student on shoulder to signaling the beginning and ending of speaking time
 - Stop the story after one round. Have students mark the beginning, middle and end of the story

- **Preparation- Listen & Observe, Research**
 - Read a story to group. Allow students to collectively retell the story.
 - Allow each student no more than 30 seconds to speak before the next student takes over
 - After reading the story a second time have students repeat the process
 - Now divide students into groups of 4 or 5 students. Each time reducing the size of the group until student can tell the story alone

- **Rehearsal- Body, Stand the Story Up**
 - Have students practice telling their stories using only gestures and eyes
 - Have students “mouth” (without speaking) the story during this process to help them obtain a feel for the length of their story

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Appendix B

“Mike”, Speak Up!

Grade: K-Adult

Length of Lesson: 50 Minutes

Author: DWe Williams

Theme: Students will explore the importance of projection and the proper use and selection of microphones when available and appropriate.

Major Arts Concept(s):

Performance/Projection- Speaking with clarity and proper volume control

Multiple Intelligences:

Bodily-Kinesthetic, Spatial,
Linguistic, Intrapersonal,
Interpersonal

Lesson Objective(s):

- To familiarize students with the use of different types of microphones.
- To allow students to speak to a group using a microphone.
- To acquire proper microphone use and handling skills
- To promote discussion of appropriate microphone selection.

Supplies -

- Basic sound system with any variety of microphones
- One “mock” microphone for students to practice with first

Details of Instructional Activity:

Knowing how to use a microphone in storytelling is very important. The audience must hear you if they are to fully experience the story. Tripping over cords will get their attention, but you might get hurt in the process. “Did you hear what I said?”

Warming up:

1. Select Nursery Rhyme- review the story with the class so that all are familiar with how it goes.

Exploring the Concept:

1. Introduce one type of microphone to students at a time.
2. Each student presents their rhyme or poem using the microphone.
3. After every 4 or 5 student present their poems lead the class in a discussion about the correct and incorrect use of the microphone that they observed.
4. Discuss the pros and cons of each microphone

Developing Skills:

1. *Speak into the microphone; do not blow.
2. Do not touch the microphone with your mouth.

Modifications:

1. Place microphone within reach of student. If student has limited use and control of hands a lapel or headset might work best.

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Appendix C

Storytelling Tips

Know the story; do not memorize it. If you write your “storytelling” you “freeze” the storytelling experience. Keep the story alive!

- Follow bullet points (map the story)
- Share your excitement for the story
- Keep your audience close
- Listen to and interact with your audience
- Make sure that you can be seen and heard
- Always warm up
- Tell the story to the entire audience
- Use your body and voice as one tool
- Remember the trio; storyteller, story and audience

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Appendix D

Suggested Reading Book List

Aardema, Vera. Misoso. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1994

Axtell, David. We're Going On A Lion Hunt. New York, New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited. 1999.

Collins, Stanley. Ananse the Spider: Why Spiders Stay on the Ceiling. Eugene, OR: Garlic Press. 1997

DeSpain, Pleasant. Thirty-Three Multicultural Tales To Tell. Little Rock, Arkansas: August House. 1993.

Flodin, Mickey. Signing Illustrated. New York: New York: Penguin Group Inc. 1994.

Hamilton, Martha and Mitch Weiss. Noodlehead Stories. Little Rock, Arkansas: August House. 2000.

Hayes, Joe. Here Comes The Storyteller. El Paso, Texas: Cinco Puntos Press. 1996.

Lane, Elizabeth. Anansi and the Seven Yam Hills Sandy: Utah: Waterford Institute, Inc.

Norfolk, Sherry, Jane Stenson and Diane Williams. The Storytelling Classroom. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited. 2006

Reed, Margaret Read. Shake It Up Tales. Little Rock, Arkansas: August House. 2000.

Torrence, Jackie. Jackie Tales. New York, New York: Avon Books, Inc. 1998.

Williams, DWe and Loretta Ford. Bridget "Biddy" Mason. DWeLo Enterprises. 1996.

Tingle, Tim. Crossing Bok Chitto. El Paso, Texas: Cinco Puntos Press. 2006