"Beyond Words: Storytelling in the Elementary Classroom"

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I dedicate my work to Daisy, my very much-loved Jack Russell Terrier (2000 – 2014).

Abstract

Storytelling transcends time, age, and culture with powers to help people develop socially, emotionally, culturally, and cognitively. Focusing on culturally responsive teaching practices and oral language development, Chapter 1 presents the significance of storytelling and offers curriculum connections as well as an overview of the resource created for elementary teachers. The content presented in Chapter 2 establishes that storytelling is grounded in Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and James Paul Gee's notion of Primary Discourse. In addition, the chapter includes a discussion of Geneva Gay's model of culturally responsive teaching and related supportive research, as well as a review of oral language development and relevant research. Chapter 3 connects the resource to the literature findings in Chapter 2, suggests areas for further research, and includes personal reflections. The teacher resource presents research, outlines pedagogical and pragmatic considerations, and suggests activities, resources, and assessments related to the act of storytelling.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

When deciding on a topic for my Master's of Education project, I reflected on my personal, educational, and professional background. Before long, it became evident that my personal experiences, learning, and teaching philosophy could be integrated into the powerful method of storytelling.

I share Vygotsky's (1978) passion for embracing differences while reducing feelings of inadequacy in children. I support social constructivist views of working to build an inclusive classroom environment founded on respect and empathy. Echoing Vygotsky's idea that thinking is social in origin, I believe we can learn from each other, with each other, and about each other. I value that cognition and culture are interwoven, and recognize that there are variations within and among cultures.

Storytelling is many things; an ancient art, a natural way of communicating, and it is through interactions with others that storytelling potential becomes apparent (Bishop & Kimbell, 2006). Storytelling also demonstrates how people as storytellers and listeners work together to make meaning. The nature of storytelling enables the storyteller to adapt to the needs of the audience, and affords opportunities for the audience to respond to the needs of the storyteller. These needs can be addressed through tone, volume, pause, intonations, timing, eye-contact, and gestures. Furthermore, it is difficult to separate storytelling from culturally responsive teaching, a pedagogy which I strongly endorse. Culture is embedded within storytelling; in fact, storytelling is a commonality amongst all cultures (Bishop & Kimball, 2006; Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003; Lewis, 2011; Lockett & Jones, 2009; McCabe, 1997; McKeough, Bird, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottmann, & Jeary, 2008). Cultures use storytelling to teach lessons and pass on information. In schools, storytelling

can be used to promote the cultivation of inclusive classrooms by including participant voice, validating prior knowledge, and offering opportunities to learn and reflect on various cultural and individual practices. Culture can be embedded in the execution of storytelling units, invitations to community storytellers, sensitivity to protocol, and the use of audio-storytelling materials. Storytelling can also act as a window into history and enables us to learn about themselves, culture, community, and world. It is a socially engaging, enjoyable experience, and fundamental to the development of language skills (Heath, 2013).

In his explanation of primary Discourse, Gee (1989) proposes that how we act, talk, and write develops through people's earliest social interactions in the home, and that individual Discourses should be respected and appreciated. Similarly, I would suggest that cultural and personal experiences of every individual have value. Irrespective of a student's starting point, the gradual release of responsibility and zone of proximal development can be utilized by teachers to assist students in achieving academic outcomes. Teachers should work to scaffold students' learning through modeling and practice. Furthermore, I recognize that prior knowledge acts as a platform for narratives to link home and school while positively positioning students and fostering a community of learners.

Overall, the more I came to understand my learning, teaching philosophy and life experiences, it became obvious that storytelling could be one of the most powerful educational strategies to employ with today's youth. Yet, I was aware that throughout my 16 years of teaching experience, I had observed very few of my colleagues employ storytelling units, activities, and strategies in their classrooms. This awareness prompted me to want to research the benefits of storytelling in greater detail. After some initial research, it became clear that my objective would be to create a resource to inform and excite elementary teachers of the social, emotional, and academic benefits of

storytelling, as well as to share the various means through which storytelling can be implemented into current teaching practices to meet the prescribed learning outcomes.

Significance of Storytelling

"Storytelling provides us with the essential context and other important environmental or sociological conditions at the time, which are often lost in the stark and emotionless world of the written word" (Marsh, 2012, p. 57).

Storytelling underpins the relationship of humanity across time, continents, race, and ethnicity (Carter-Black, 2013). It has been described as being "central to human understanding" (Lewis, 2011, p. 505) and as a "universal meaning-making tool" (McKeough, Bird, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottmann, & Jeary, 2008, p. 148). Humans are classified biologically as Homo Sapiens and sociologically as Homo Narans, storytelling people (Marsh, 2012). Associated with oral tradition, storytelling dates back to the age of the "hunter-gatherer" (Benjamin, 2006, p. 159), and "for centuries storytelling has been used as a powerful communication vehicle" (Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003, p. 217). In the past there was an enormous reliance on the ability to share stories as an individual or as a group participant for "communication, recreation, entertainment, education, and to pass on cultural identity" (Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003, p. 217). According to Barger (2001) language skills were developed through listening to storytellers, and those cultures whose storytellers had advanced speech patterns could influence a generation of imitators (p. 159).

Many cultures, including indigenous populations around the globe, realize their history through oral tradition. Information was, and continues to be, passed from one generation to the next through stories. "People preserve what is most important to them – language, traditions, culture, and identity" (McKeough, et al., 2008, p. 150). Undeniably, with the invention and spread of the written word, oral storytelling has evolved to meet the changing needs in society. Today,

community Elders continue to reinforce cultural values by "reflecting the collective realities, experiences, and reactions" by using stories set in the past to transmit the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of their culture (Carter-Black, 2013, p. 48). Their purpose is to make the insight of the past accessible and to ensure that it is shared with future generations.

Storytelling is a "vital and unique ingredient of the human experience" (Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003, p. 217). Whether a legend, myth, folktale, fable, tall tale, or pourquoi story, narratives appeal to the emotional, developmental, and cultural aspects of learners. In fact, storytelling has been described as "a longstanding strategy for socializing the young ones in various societies" (Carter-Black, 2013, p. 42). Its purpose, regardless of the context, is the transmission of sociocultural values and norms. As is discussed in Chapter 2, the theoretical foundations of storytelling are rooted in Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, a theory that recognizes the significant influence of society and cultural beliefs on individual learning.

Gee's (1989) concept of primary Discourse and the structure of meaning making connect to the practice of storytelling. Baskerville (2011) cites research by Collins (1999) who found that "adults and children frequently use storytelling to make sense of their world" (p. 113). Narrative being is human and human being is stories; so pervasive and powerful is this relationship that if we change our story, we may change our lives because we come to know ourselves through the world and its stories, and we come to know the world through our experiences and our stories (Lewis, 2011, p. 506).

Polletta, Chen, Gardner, and Motes (2011) describe narratives as "forms of discourse, vehicles of ideology, and elements of collective action frames" (p. 112). Such thoughts echo ideas expressed by Hymes (as cited in McCabe, 1997) that "narrative is the primary means by which children make sense of their experience," and that they "comprehend and remember stories that conform to the

structure of the kinds of stories they have heard at home" (p. 463). Michaels (1991) states that "stories are an early genre of discourse that children learn to speak publicly" (cited in McCabe, 1997, p. 454).

Storytelling is a means to embody Gay's (2002) view of culturally responsive teaching. According to culturally responsive teaching, "when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of references of students, they are more personally meaningful, have a higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay, 2002, cited in Brown, 2007, p. 60). Baskerville (2011) believes that storytelling "offers sensitivity to students' backgrounds, experiences and differences, privileges students' voice, and affirms respect for the individual lived experiences" (p. 114). Davidhizar and Lonser (2003) add that, "by validating background knowledge and culture, storytelling can enhance self-esteem and teach cultural sensitivity" (p. 217). Indeed, storytelling provides "collective heritages a tangible form" (Benjamin, 2006, p. 161). According to Carter-Black (2013), storytelling offers an avenue to stimulate interest in unfamiliar cultures, increase the awareness and tolerance of others, and foster pride in one's own (p. 47). Benjamin (2006) believes "storytelling today, as in the past, can be useful as a tool for defining, securing, and shaping people's existence in relation to both their culture and universe" (p. 159).

Moreover, storytelling can offer numerous opportunities for cognitive growth (Lockett & Jones, 2009) and provide experiences that motivate and drive academic achievement (Gay, 2010). Fettes (2012) observed that through storytelling opportunities, students "develop greater oral fluency and sense of agency as learners" (p. 32). Research findings have also revealed how storytelling can increase retelling comprehension (Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004). According to Isbell et al. (2004), storytelling can provide a conceptual framework for language, increase attention span,

enhance vocabulary, nurture visualization and imagination, heighten writing skills, and raise interest in reading. Davidhizar and Lonser (2003) believe storytelling can be used to develop critical thinking, and model positive behaviours and communication skills (p. 217). Storytelling can also provide authentic opportunities to identify and practice expressive features such as pause, repetition, volume, timing, gestures, and body language (Eder, 2007).

Most importantly storytelling can make listening and speaking enjoyable (Bishop & Kimball, 2006). Davidhizar and Lonser (2003) state that storytelling "offers a humane approach that responds to the emotional needs" (p. 217) of the participants. It can captivate and engage, and connect home, school, and community (Hare, 2012; Reese, 2012). Storytelling can also assist in the development of social etiquette skills (Lockett & Jones, 2009). Uniquely, the storyteller and the listener have a reciprocal relationship created through gestures, eye-contact, and vocal participation. Unlike a story reader, the storyteller is engaged in the moment, considering and adapting to the context of the situation.

Like Marsh (2012), I believe "there is a lot to be learnt from this tried and trusted form of passing on one's cultural heritage to the next generation" (p. 57), and I am pleased to learn that others recognize that storytelling is a valuable strategy. As "one of the oldest methods of making sense out of experiences, of preserving the past, and constructing a future" (Peratta, 2010, p. 30), it is undeniably important. Through my research and personal experience, I recognize that the magical powers of storytelling cannot be undervalued, but rather should be embraced whole-heartily to act as a building block for students. Nkanishi and Rittner (1992) stated, "as a universal mode for the expression and transmission of culture, the inclusion of storytelling presents a unique perspective from which to begin the process of developing cultural awareness, sensitivity, knowledge, and, ultimately, a viable set of cross-cultural practice skills" (cited in Carter-Black,

2013, p. 47) indicating the relevance of implementing storytelling activities in literacy programs. In essence, I propose the use of storytelling as a practical strategy for increasing the effectiveness of oral language development, cultural awareness, and sense of belonging.

Curriculum Connections

"The resilience of storytelling over the course of history suggests that it is a powerful teaching/learning strategy and therefore should be a common commodity in the K-12 classroom, particularly with regard to language arts" (Roney, 2009, p. 45).

Meeting the demands of the British Columbia Ministry's English Language Arts (2006) (hereafter referred to as ELA) curriculum may be challenging for some educators. However, the act of storytelling can provide a means to meet the needs of all learners, promote inclusion and diversity, address requirements communicated by the local and Aboriginal communities, while sharing the responsibility of language learning with the student's home environment, all of which are components of the British Columbia's Kindergarten to Grade 7 ELA curriculum document (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006). The content of the document explicates the connections between reading, writing, and oral language and communicates how academic and social competences are reliant on spoken language competence. Sections in the document convey information about the importance of the gradual release of responsibility model, and about students beginning school with differing exposure to literacy and vocabulary knowledge. Storytelling activities also envelop the principles of child development and learning that inform developmentally appropriate practice developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYA) (1996, p. 30). The principles cited in the ELA document that connect to storytelling include the following:

- Development and learning occur and are influenced by multiple social and cultural

contexts....

- Children are active learners, drawing on direct physical and social experiences as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their own understandings of the world around them. . . .
- Children develop and learn best in the context of a community where they are safe and valued, their physical needs are met, and they feel psychologically secure.

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 30)

Another aspect in the ELA Kindergarten to Grade 7 curriculum document that connects to storytelling activities is the opportunity for choice in the exploration of topics to meet certain learning outcomes (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 11). Such choice can be incorporated into storytelling activities as they provide a powerful avenue to address needs that are relevant, local in context, and of particular interest to students. Additionally, content in the Ministry of Education elementary ELA curriculum document stresses the importance of the entire school community working towards oral language learning by making connections between what is learned in and out of school. Storytelling tasks complement the notion that language development, through narratives, begins in the home and can be broadened at the school level by offering storytelling experiences (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 14).

Another key component of the Kindergarten to Grade 7 ELA curriculum document is the stated goal of "ensuring that the cultures and contributions of Aboriginal peoples in BC are reflected in all provincial curricula" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 13). Content in the ELA document communicates the importance of partnerships between school, community, and local Aboriginal groups, stresses that cultures and contributions should be addressed in ways that reflect Aboriginal concepts of teaching and learning accurately and respectfully, and overall conveys the

expectation that educators engage in culturally responsive pedagogy (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 13). Considering that oral language, by means of storytelling, is a traditional and contemporary Aboriginal teaching method, it can be an excellent way to facilitate connections with the Aboriginal community. As stated in the ELA document, teachers are encouraged to work with local Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal education coordinators to locate local storytellers to bring into schools.

Outlined within the elementary ELA document (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006) are qualities that ensure academic and social competence in students. Such qualities are reflected in teachers who employed storytelling practices. The shared qualities include:

- build a personal relationship with each child
- create a safe climate of respectful listening
- provide frequent, sustained opportunities for language development, including structured partner talk and small-group interaction
- interact regularly on a one-to-one basis with each student
- challenge students to talk, think, and explore their knowledge of the world
- ask open-ended questions to help students make meaning
- support students as they develop language and learning strategies necessary to articulate and extending their interactions with the world (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 20)

The foundational nature of oral language is explicitly recognized in the Ministry of Education's (2006) ELA curriculum document. The prescribed oral language outcomes provide educators many opportunities to implement storytelling practices throughout the grades. Booth (1994) states that, "oral language is the foundation of literacy learning and talk is the bridge that helps students make

connections between what they know and what they are coming to know" (as cited in British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 4). Many key concepts of oral language resonate with storytelling throughout Kindergarten to Grade 7, which include but are not limited to the following:

- speaking and listening to express and inquire in (Kindergarten)
- speaking and listening to recall and retell, and acquiring and expressing ideas and information (Grade 1)
- staying on topic and sustaining concentration (Grade 2)
- recalling and summarizing in logical sequence (Grade 3)
- expressing ideas clearly and fluently (Grade 4)
- considering audience when presenting (Grade 5)
- organizing information and practicing delivery (Grade 6)
- using techniques and aids to facilitate audience understanding (Grade 7)

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, pp. 6-7).

I believe the aforementioned components of ELA elementary curriculum position storytelling as an excellent means for teachers to accomplish standard learning outcomes as well as assist the realization of the cultural, social, and emotional needs of today's students.

Overview of Resource

In the resource, ": Storytelling in the Elementary Classroom," I review the research related to storytelling, and outline pedagogical and pragmatic considerations for classroom use. To ensure that elementary teachers are cognizant of the relevance of implementing storytelling activities into their literacy programs, a number of connections to British Columbia's Ministry of Education English Language Arts Curriculum (2006) are presented. With classroom teachers in mind, content in the resource is presented in a user-friendly manner consisting mainly of bulleted phrases. The

resource includes 21 engaging activities, some supplemental materials, and sample assessment rubrics for listening, speaking, retelling, and representing. Most of the teaching materials can be readily accessed online and can be adapted to meet the particular needs of a student group. Classroom teachers will also find a list of storytelling resources comprised of professional texts, informative websites, local storytellers, and storybooks for sharing and retelling, as well as storytelling conferences and festivals being held in 2014. In addition, the resource includes a glossary of the terminology presented within the document. Overall, the objectives of the resource are to inform and excite elementary teachers of the numerous benefits of storytelling, and to guide teachers in the inclusion of storytelling activities into today's classrooms.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 began with a presentation of the significance of storytelling. The Chapter also identified numerous curriculum connections and provided an overview of the resource. In Chapter 2, literature on the theoretical and conceptual findings of Lev Vygotsky, James Paul Gee, and Geneva Gay in regards to sociocultural theory, Primary Discourse, and culturally responsive teaching is reviewed. An overview of oral language development is also presented.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In this chapter, I examine the theoretical and conceptual foundations relevant to the resource that I created for elementary teachers: "Beyond Words: Storytelling in the Elementary Classroom." Following an introduction to Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Gee's concept of Discourse, and Gay's model of Culturally Responsive Teaching, I consider the literature on oral language development. Discussion of the research endorsing the practice of storytelling is also included.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

Lev Vygotsky: Sociocultural theory.

Russian born theorist and seminal developmental and child psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, has greatly influenced educators around the world. Born in 1896 and taken with tuberculosis only 37 years later, remarkably Vygotsky published 180 works and produced another 300 unpublished manuscripts on the many facets of child learning within sociocultural settings (Johnson & Keier, 2010).

Although his work is highly regarded today, this respectful admiration has not always existed. In fact, Stalin banned reading and distributing Vygotsky's work, and it was not until after Stalin's death in 1953 that Vygotsky's theories were circulated. Even then, his theories took time to become popular because they "rejected the then dominant descriptive-analytic orientation to psychology at the time" (Cross, 2010, p. 438). Vygotsky challenged Piaget's "belief that a child's learning was limited by certain stages in development" (Johnson & Keier, 2010, p. 40). Indeed, Vygotsky believed Piaget "failed to address the sociocultural aspect of learning, largely seeing learning as a direct interaction between the child and the environment with little role for human mediators" (Kozulin, 2000, p. 595). Vygotsky believed an individual's development of higher order functions

resulted from interactions with parents, caregivers, peers, and culture (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 198). He suggested that the child unable "to do a task alone, could possibly learn to do it independently if he learned from, and was supported by, an experienced other" (Johnson & Keier, 2010, p. 40). This idea was the premise of Vygotsky's renowned concept, the Zone of Proximal Development.

Today Vygotsky's pivotal theories of the ways in which children learn are the focus of many university education programs. His philosophy resonates in classrooms where teachers work to differentiate instruction to suit students' zones of proximal development, use language as a central tool to build cognitive development, and create social environments that foster talk, interaction, and cooperative tasks (Johnson & Keirer, 2010).

Vygotsky's formative ideas informed sociocultural theory, a theory that recognizes the significant influence that society and cultural beliefs and attitudes have on individual learning. Vygotsky's words, "all higher mental functions are internalized social relationships" emphasize how learning results from social interactions with people around us (Cross, 2010, p. 438). He expressed the importance of validating an individual's experience knowing that vocabulary and ways of thinking are established through personal experience. Vygotsky also promoted the use of personal examples to help construct and enrich understanding (Smagorinsky, 2013). By doing so, he believed academic content to be more relevant, interesting, and accessible. Stimulated by Vygotsky's concepts, Smagorinsky (2013) suggests creating hybrid classroom spaces that offer an integration of home and school culture in school activities to encourage a sense of belonging for all students.

Vygotsky and other sociocultural theorists believe the relationship between thinking and emotion to be symbiotic, never occurring in isolation. In support of this belief, Vygotsky pointed to the profound emotional effects that all forms of art imbue on readers, listeners, and viewers

(Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 195). Along with the inseparable connection between emotion and cognition, Vygotsky claimed that metacognition and/or meta-experience effects individual development. The concept of meta-experience describes "the manner in which people experience their experience" (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 195). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory also advocates for a "feel good curriculum" (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 195) where feelings of inferiority are eliminated by means of inclusion and celebration of diversity. He believed that language could be used as a tool for developing empathy in classrooms, and that empathy contributed to the awareness of and appreciation for varying beliefs, attitudes, and cultures while also validating the prior knowledge and background of each individual (Smagorinsky, 2013).

The many potentials of storytelling are in accordance with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. First, the art of storytelling has the ability to bond emotion and cognition. In fact, storytelling has been documented to evoke considerations and sensations while enabling listeners to empathize with familiar and unfamiliar people, places, and situations (Stoyle, 2003, p. 1). Vygotsky's claim about the effects of metacognition on individual development connect to storytelling as well. For example, if a student associates sharing either personal or cultural stories in class with powerful feelings of pride, respect, and inclusion, in all probability he/she will actively contribute in future discussions, and maintain positive attitudes towards school and schoolwork enhancing his/her development potential and sense of belonging. The contrary could result if, when speaking and sharing either cultural or personal stories negative experiences ensued (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 195). Thus, it is essential for students to have positive experiences when contributing both personal and cultural stories.

Storytelling offers powerful opportunities to cultivate a "feel good curriculum," another characteristic of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Storytelling has been shown to create an

inclusive environment, regardless if the participant is a listener, viewer, or storyteller, because storytelling can reflect, honor, and present the various ways of knowing and learning represented in the class composition. Additionally, the practice of storytelling aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural belief that learning results from social interactions. By interacting with others through storytelling, learning can develop intellectually (Lewis, 2011), socially (Honig, 2007), emotionally, and spiritually. Everyone benefits when individual and cultural beliefs and attitudes are validated (Stadler & Ward, 2005). Such validation can help bridge home and school experiences in meaningful and relevant ways (Wright, Bacigalupa, Black, & Burton, 2007). Students learn from themselves and others as they voice their own tales, and listen to those from peers, community members, as well as similar and different cultures. Further echoing Vygotsky's beliefs, storytelling can help develop self-esteem, empathy, and understanding while helping to foster a caring class community and more tolerant members of society (Honig, 2007, Locket & Jones, 2009; Nelson, McClintock, Perez-Ferguson, Shawver & Thompson, 2008). Furthermore, there is evidence that narratives are related to a "child's development of concepts which presents us with a connection between language and cognition reminiscent of Vygotsky (1978)" (Stadler & Ward, 2005, p. 73).

James Paul Gee: Discourse.

Consistent with sociocultural theory, Gee's theory of Discourse attempts to explain how culture, society, and personal history influence meaning-making. Gee (1989) describes Discourse as "an identity kit which comes with instructions on how to act, talk, and often write" (p. 7) which develops in people's earliest social interactions in the home. These 'intimate' interactions are the basis of one's identity or Primary Discourse and lead into secondary Discourses that are attained through non-home based institutions.

Gee is recognized for his research on primary Discourse. His idea that secondary Discourse acquisition is difficult without complete immersion and impossible if it differs from one's primary Discourse is controversial. In fact, his deficit-based idea that a student with non-traditional academic speaking and listening practices will be unable to build upon his/her oral discourse at school is often disputed. Compounding this notion, Gee suggests that if attempts are made to build upon oral discourse at school, conflict will occur as one's primary Discourse is denied. Gee's highly problematic tenets have been criticized by scholars such as Delpit (2001) and others. They oppose these ideas for numerous reasons, stating how deficit thinking excuses educators from teaching academic oracy to non-traditional students. Delpit (2001) believes such deficit thinking devalues, disenchants, and frustrates students. In essence, Gee and his adherents place teachers in roles of power and cast students who are not meeting traditional academic benchmarks as remedial, dividing relationships between home and school. This point of view is in contrast to those who view teachers as facilitators working to bridge home and school relationships.

Gee's theory of secondary Discourse is opposed by other academics such as Rex, Bunn, Davila, Dickinson, Carpenter, Gerben, Orzulak, Thomson, Maybin, and Carter (2010) who connect discourse and culture. They present a strength-based learning perspective where an individual's oral discourse is respected and valued and used as a springboard for learning. Dudley-Marling and Lucas (2009) stated that, "differences can be recruited, in school, as strengths" (p. 368), where students are positioned as capable and teachers are positioned as vital in the development and practice of oral language. Essentially, the philosophy proposes that all students can succeed in mainstream classrooms by building on primary Discourse. Rex et al. (2010) further suggest that validating home oracy practices is paramount for upholding and developing self-esteem.

Delpit's (2001) and Rex et al.'s (2010) views on discourse/Discourse support Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (as cited in Smagorinsky, 2013). Rivalland (2004) is in agreement that "differences in oral language structures and uses impact on how and in what ways children are likely to take up school literacies" (156). These scholars, like Vygotsky, emphasize the vital need for teachers to understand home literacies, to know how to identify strengths, and to be aware of ways to implement appropriate scaffolding techniques to best support learning endeavors. In addition, their opinions are consistent with Vygotsky's theory of metaknowledge as they support creating relationships between what is known and what is being learned to improve comprehension; learning begets learning. Storytelling embraces sociocultural theory and the conceptual foundation of Discourse. It provides a means for teachers to "build upon and transform the language these children bring from their homes and communities so that they can develop a language repertoire that will enable them to fully engage with school and subject specific discourses" (Rivalland, 2004, p. 157).

Research on Discourse and storytelling.

Storytelling practices are situated in Gee's concept of Discourse (1989) and are supported by many researchers including Heath (1982), McCabe (1997), Delpit (2001), Rivalland (2004), Stadler and Ward (2005), McKeough et al. (2008), and Curenton, Craig and Flanigan (2008). In fact, Stadler and Ward (2005) ascertain that discourse assists in story creation, and offers other benefits such as framing language structures, learning and using new words, engaging in fantasy play, remembering specific happenings, and forming object categorization," all of which are components of storytelling (p. 76). Polletta, Chen, Gardner and Motes (2011) propose that "narratives are forms of discourse" (p. 112).

Research has revealed that storytelling can be a means by which educators can embrace and enhance students' primary Discourse. According to McCabe (1997) "stories are an early genre of discourse that children learn to speak publically" (p. 454) and are the primary means by which they make sense of their experience. Children construct narratives of family members and culturally significant others of who they are in relationship (Honig, 2007, p. 602).

Research has also shown that children come to school with different ranges of language use and repertoires and indeed this primary Discourse impacts how they take up school literacies (Rivalland, 2004, p. 156). McKeough et al. (2008) promote the use of storytelling because discourse patterns that correspond to the children's experience contribute to the breakdown of discontinuities between community and classroom literacy practices (p. 150). Similarly, Honig (2007) acknowledges that teachers who elicit children's stories provide a powerful message that stories from every household and cultural group are welcomed (p. 602). Aldridge (2012) also writes about how teachers can facilitate language development opportunities by acknowledging and elaborating on children's expressions and stories. These behaviours can promote those important feelings of value and respect.

A study by Curenton et al. (2008) explored the discourses in child-mother dyads. The purpose of the study "was to examine how young children learn to use a sophisticated form of oral language called decontextualized discourse" from their mothers (Curenton et al., 2008, p. 162). Language can be viewed as spanning a continuum that ranges from contextualized to decontextualized discourse (Curenton et al., 2008; McKeough et al., 2008). Curenton et al. (2008) described contextualized discourse to be used to "talk about situations and objects that are part of the immediate context" (p. 162). Decontextualized discourse was explained by McKeough et al. (2008) as "the ability to speak about events in the past and involves a refinement of simply recounting

simple personal narratives by including explicit vocabulary, clarity in pronoun usage, and precision in the use of temporal connectives such as 'then' and 'so'"(p. 151). Although both are part of the continuum of oral language, "it is only decontextualized discourse that sets the foundation for school achievement and literacy because it promotes higher order thinking, such as reminiscing and planning and requires children to use their imagination and memory to think about abstract ideas that are outside the immediate environment" (Curenton et al., 2008, p. 162).

The study investigated the oral language skills of 33 preschoolers and mother dyads comprised mainly of African American families from varying socioeconomic backgrounds in Virginia and Florida. Decontextualized language use was examined across three interactions: emergent reading, shared reading, and oral narrative. The three interactions were consecutively labelled story-creating, story reading, and storytelling. The child led the emergent reading interaction whereas in the other two interactions, the mother led by reading a book and telling a personal narrative. The procedure involved a researcher engaging in a one-hour visit with each of the dyads. The visit included individual reading assessments followed by the story-creating, story-reading, and storytelling interactions which were videotaped for future examination. All of the interactions were transcribed into the Child Language Analysis program (MacWhinney, 1994) and then checked for accuracy and later segmented into communication units. Subsequently, the communication units were coded for parts of speech including conjunctions, verbs, adverbs, and expanded noun phrases.

According to Curenton et al.'s (2008) results, the children used more decontextualized (grammatically complex talk) language during the emergent reading (story-creating) interaction whereas the mothers used more decontextualized language throughout the shared reading (story reading) and oral narrative (storytelling) interaction. The results illustrated that children tended to talk more and use more complex language when creating a story compared to when they

participated in listening to stories told by their mothers. The latter demonstrates the importance of encouraging children to create stories. The results also showed that the greatest opportunity for mothers to present their discourse skills was through storytelling. Therefore, it is essential that parents share oral stories with their children, as ideally this activity will expose children to more sophisticated talk. Lastly, Curenton et al. (2008) recommended that literacy intervention for parent-child literacy should not only promote story interactions, but also include questioning and comment techniques for scaffolding children's use of decontextualized language.

As important as it is to encourage students to create stories, McCabe (1997) determined that it is equally important for educators to be aware that "not all children from any one background bring the same kind of oral narrative structure to school with them" (p. 462). In fact, story form differs from culture to culture, and no one culture is homogenous. Through her intense review of qualitative and quantitative research on storytelling, she identified that "current formal definitions of what makes a good story are based on the European storytelling tradition" (McCabe, 1997, p. 453). Such a definition can prove to be a disservice for students whose style of oral discourse differs from the Eurocentric form. By broadening the definition to include other cultural narrative forms, the transition between home and school language would be smoother for those who are linguistically dissimilar.

McCabe (1997) claimed that narratives should reflect the oral storytelling discourses of the population within the classroom, and cautioned educators to be wary of dismissing stories from different cultures as ones that do not make sense. She identified plot structure, story length, theme, repetition, brevity, verbosity, pronunciation, vocabulary, and accent as characteristics that can vary in narratives among cultures. In addition, she identified that stories are easier to retell if they culturally fit the story framework one understands yet, she cautioned that even though books may

show ethnic diversity in pictures, they may not in story form or culture (McCabe, 1997, p. 463). McCabe proposed that teachers increase their knowledge of the various forms of narratives and recommended that explicit instruction on story structure instruction take place in the classroom.

Heath's (1982) extensive ethnographic work revealed the importance of educators taking the time to understand the background knowledge and socialization of each child in order to strengthen their language skills as well as balance the inequity of power in the classroom. Heath's seminal findings resulted from a long-term comparative study during non-school hours of three diverse communities in the Carolinas: Trackton, Roadville, and Maintown. Trackton was an African American working-class community which consisted of recent farmers and mill workers. Childrearing fit into the daily on goings of the small community, children were not provided educational stimuli nor did adults simplify language, focus on children's utterances, or offer specific reinforcement. Instead, children were left to their own devices to sort through the rules of language structure. In Trackton, stories had "no point, no beginning or ending; they would go on as long as the audience enjoyed and tolerated the storyteller's entertainment" (Heath, 1982, p. 68). Telling stories was competitive so children had to be aggressive to be heard.

Roadville's white working-class population was mainly employed at the local mill, and although children were taught to work hard, attend church, and respect teachers, academic expectations were minimal and little educational support outside of learning lower order thinking skills was provided at home. In Roadville, a story was defined as an "account from a book, or a factual account of a real event in which some type of marked behavior occurred and there was a lesson to be learned" (Heath, 1982, p. 63). Fictional stories were rejected, and storytellers were considered to be comprised of a select few in the community.

Maintown was a suburban, middle-class education oriented community. Local teachers resided in Maintown, and parents were actively engaged in their child's education with specific developmental targets. Maintown's African American and Caucasian children had similar cultures and socialization patterns to that of the teachers. Indeed, a good story was considered to "follow formulaic openings, a particular prosody, or the borrowings of episodes in story books" (Heath, 1982, p. 53). Narratives could be factual and fictional.

The Trackton and Roadville students' socialization and discourse patterns differed from Maintown as well as from each other. Due to the vast difference between their primary Discourse and school expectations, most Trackton students were unsuccessful. Unfamiliar types of questions, an inability to conform to classroom expectations, and inexperience with print in isolation as well as stylized 2-dimensional pictures all contributed to low language arts scores and student disengagement. Sadly, their "creative, highly analogical styles of telling stories and giving explanations" were not capitalized on early enough to make a positive impact on their education (Heath, 1982, p. 73). Roadville children also experienced difficulties with school because they had learned to take on a passive role in their education and they required retraining in order to question, make connections to self, text, and world, as well as become active information seekers and contributors. Heath's research demonstrated how different language socialization patterns affect school success and revealed how typical school based literacy expectations and programs are more compatible with specific language socialization patterns than others.

Geneva Gay: Culturally responsive teaching.

Gay's culturally responsive teaching (2010) method is consistent with the tenets of sociocultural theory and the conceptual foundation of Discourse. Gay (2010) describes the method as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically

diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). It is founded on a strength-based philosophy, which embraces racial and cultural diversity in learning. By utilizing various ethnic and cultural groups' ways of knowing and understanding, culturally responsive teaching can effectively increase academic achievement and social consciousness in academic subjects, processes, and skills. In Nieto's opinion (as cited in Brown, 2007), because culturally responsive teaching "necessitates inclusion and authenticity" it allows for meaningful connections to be made with the subject matter (p. 60). It can also affirm individuality, and promote self-dignity and sense of belonging while cultivating cooperation and collaboration, as well as mutual respect. In 1995, Ladson-Billings wrote that culturally responsive teaching is a commitment to individual and collective empowerment, and a means to pedagogical excellence (p. 160).

Educators who implement culturally responsive teaching realize that it goes beyond "just good teaching" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159). It has been described as a powerful method that "teaches to and through" (Gay, 2010, p. 26) even the most marginalized students. It requires a shift in traditional western pedagogical thinking towards a more holistic one, where culture and socialization patterns are reflected and respected in school. Many educators and researchers argue that an educational overhaul is necessary in order to ensure such a shift in practice (Baskerville, 2011; Brown, 2007; Eder, 2007; Hare, 2012; Kanu, 2007; McKeough et al., 2012). They believe change would positively revolutionize the education system to be one where cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and frame of reference would be welcomed and valued. All of which would increase students' sense of belonging while confirming their place in the school, community, and world.

Cultural knowledge.

One of the most important characteristics of culturally responsive teaching is its inclusive nature that recognizes cultural knowledge as a significant component of an individual's authentic self. Fostering an inclusive environment is increasingly important as classrooms are comprised of a broad range of learners. The diverse ethnic backgrounds, social class, religious affiliation, intellectual strengths, and ability levels in class compositions present both opportunities and challenges for educators. According to Carter-Black (2013), it is evident that if educators intend to develop and maintain high teaching standards, they must become familiar with the knowledge characteristics of their students. Research has indicated that one of the most effective ways teachers can reach the range of their student population is by embracing the cultural richness of each child (Brown, 2007; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Benefits of cultural embracement include learning about other cultures, behavior, and beliefs while fostering tolerance and acceptance in the classroom, school, and greater community. Explicit acceptance and teaching of cultural knowledge promotes inclusion by affirming that the individual is a valued and an accepted member of the class community. In addition to the listed benefits, Gay (2010) states that by including cultural knowledge, culturally responsive teaching cultivates interest in learning and enhances academic achievement (p. 27). Furthermore, Gay (2010) and Hare (2012) recognize that embracing cultural knowledge is a means to lessening educational inequality.

Prior knowledge and frames of reference are two additional components of Gay's (2010) culturally responsive model. Prior knowledge can be described as a blend of the learner's established attitudes, experiences, and knowledge. Attitude includes awareness of one's distinct interests and strengths, beliefs about oneself as a learner, and one's drive to learn. Experience is based on one's history with family and community, daily events that relate to learning, as well as

any events in one's life that offers understanding. Knowledge includes processes, content, concepts, topics, structure, and strategies. Frame of reference, synonymous with point of view, is interconnected to prior knowledge and experience. It is the "structure of concepts, values, customs, and views by means of which an individual or group perceives or evaluates information, data, communicates ideas, and regulates behavior" (Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, © 2010, February 3, 2014). Culturally responsive teachers work from a strength-based philosophy accepting and valuing students' prior knowledge and frames of reference. By employing such an approach, one consistent with Vygotskian, teachers place students on a continuum of learning and view them as unique individuals with differing learning strengths rather than as achievers and under-achievers. Such teachers promote curriculum "grounded in positive beliefs about the cultural heritages and academic potentialities" and implement Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development to assure student success (Gay, 2010, p. 23).

Knowing that a person's frame of reference determines how thoughts and information are processed, it is important to recognize that perspectives and thoughts can evolve or change over time as a result of new experiences, reflection, and feedback (Delpit, 2001). This knowledge highlights the importance of implementing appropriate cultural teachings to better inform all students' frames of reference to avoid directly or indirectly promoting an ignorant learning environment where perceptions of "people different from us breeds negative attitudes, anxiety, fears, and the seductive temptation to turn them into images of ourselves" (Gay, 2010, p. 24). In addition, culturally responsive teachers work to differentiate instruction to individual performance. Practices such as Differentiated Instruction, Universal Design for Learning, and Response to Intervention have become commonplace in today's educational system.

Culturally responsive teachers recognize that student learning is a high-risk venture. They understand that in order for all students to become competent they need to have some degree of academic mastery, as well as self-reliance and bravery. Such teachers respond to these needs by employing scaffolding techniques and the Gradual Release of Responsibility (Johnson & Keier, 2010). Gay (2010), similar to other strength-based professionals, states that "learning derives from a basis of strength and capability, not weakness and failure" (p. 26).

Although recognition of the need for cultural knowledge to be reflected in classroom learning is not a new concept, current statistics confirm that more attention to this topic is needed because many students are not reaching their highest potential. According to Hare (2012) and Ladson-Billings (1995), educators need to examine their teaching philosophy and practices as many minority students are not achieving to their highest potential. Such scholars and researchers argue that student potential is compromised due to the lack of culturally responsive methodology and teaching practices in the traditional education system (Baskerville, 2011; Brown, 2007; Eder, 2007; Hare, 2012; Kanu, 2007; McKeough et al., 2012). In 1995, Ladson-Billings reasoned the disparity between traditional and non-traditional students to be that educators "attempted to insert culture into the education, instead of inserting education into the culture" (p. 159).

Such opinions evoke questions of how best to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. With limited supports by means of professional development, culturally appropriate materials, and people power, teachers wonder how more can be added to a curriculum which is at present challenging to complete within a school year. This dilemma may explain why Kanu (2007) advocates for an educational overhaul, stating that "equality of opportunity is the fundamental promise of a liberal democratic society such as Canada" (p. 38). Kanu (2007), Eder (2007), Reese (2012), and others share a common pursuit. They believe that without a more systematic, holistic,

and comprehensive philosophical change to Canadian education, the current practice of inserting cultural tidbits into curriculum will continue to be received as forced and unauthentic, which in turn may further compromise student success.

Hare (2012) insists that culture should not be seen as "anthropological curiosity or entertainment" but rather as a place where learning should come from (p. 408). With her experience and data, and citing Baskerville (2010), Brown (2007), Reese (2012), Kanu (2007), and Eder's (2007) research in support of culturally responsive teaching practices, she calls for educators worldwide; "to listen closely to the literacy learning goals and educational aspirations that families and communities articulate for their children" (Hare, 2012, p. 392).

Sense of belonging.

Another distinguishing feature of culturally responsive teaching is its promotion of sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is an emotion of connectedness and acceptance within a family, classroom, school, and community. Research has revealed how sense of belonging is an important aspect of human development and that we benefit from feelings of inclusion. Research findings indicate that the level in which humans feel connected to each other affects health, self-worth, and academic potential.

In most school districts today, people are cognizant of the importance of fostering a sense of belonging within their students, staff, parents, and community members. Many staffs have successfully developed such a climate within their buildings by encouraging involvement by all stakeholders. Schools which promote a sense of belonging attribute it to acknowledging, respecting and caring for the strengths, prior knowledge, and culture of each individual (Baskerville, 1995; Hare, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nelson et al., 2008). Many teachers play a key role in nurturing a sense of belonging within their classrooms and greater school community. Various instructional

practices can cultivate a sense of belonging. Each instructional practice focuses on learning, academic progress, and building a compassionate relational climate in and out of the school. Within classrooms, many teachers employ a high level of cooperative student participation as well as provide opportunities for student choice and decision-making. In addition, scaffolding is used so assist students as they strive to reach high expectations (Higgins, 2008). Culturally responsive teachers promote an inclusive environment by concentrating their efforts on the understanding and mastery of concepts while modeling inclusion, warmth, respect, and strong communication skills (Brown, 2007). They also look for leadership from the community, value traditional and current knowledge, develop outreach efforts, and include cultural enrichment programs (Hare, 2012). They promote a sense of belonging by implementing a more holistic, social, and experiential learning process.

Using storytelling in education is a means to culturally responsive teaching. It can enable teachers, students, and community members to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for students. Storytelling can enhance a sense of belonging and understanding in the classroom as it values and builds upon students' diverse cultural knowledge and prior experience as well as frames of reference and performance styles.

Research on culturally responsive teaching and storytelling.

Notably, Gay (2010) has declared "personal narratives and cultural stories as vital to teaching content and methodology" (p. 22) because they help "develop a closer fit between students' home cultures and the culture of the school" (Brown, 2007, p. 57). Many researchers including Baskerville (2011), Higgins (2008), Hare (2012), Eder (2007), Kanu (2007), and McKeough et al. (2008) have documented findings in support of Gay's (2010) statement.

Baskerville (2011) found storytelling to be an effective means for creating culturally responsive environments. Her study included a purposeful sampling of 24 13- and 14-year-old multi-ethnic students from a low socio-economic school in New Zealand's lower North Island. They participated in four 50-minute storytelling workshops that were held over two consecutive weeks. Students sat on chairs in a storytelling circle. With warmth, understanding, and clear expectations Baskerville provided her students with the opportunity to listen to her voice tell her own stories and to let them voice their lived experiences. Attentive listening protocols were established in the first workshop, while modeling and practice attributed to students' increased levels of skill and confidence. During subsequent workshops, students listened to others' stories, told personal stories, and reflected upon the experiences in journal writing. The theme, 'human failings' allowed students to share and learn about each other's lived experiences. Baskerville's (2011) storytelling unit fostered both "inclusion and authenticity" and provided the "personally meaningful" frames of reference that Brown (2007) specifies as essential in developing a culturally responsive environment (p. 60).

Baskerville (2011) gained an understanding of students' thoughts and feelings through an extensive collection of data that included interviews, observations, student comments, field notes, as well as student journal entries. Data were sorted manually, and a content analysis approach was implemented to code and identify themes. In the end, Baskerville (2011) applied grounded theory to conclude that storytelling can be an effective means of creating connections and feelings of empathy among students. "Acknowledging participant voice" and providing opportunities for students to "investigate what they learned about themselves, others, and cultural perspectives as they told and listened to one another's personal stories" proved powerful (Baskerville, 2011, p. 108).

In an earlier study, Higgins (2008) also explored culturally responsive teaching practices. The intent of Higgins's qualitative study was to build students' oral confidence, extend their oral fluency, develop their awareness of the characteristics of the folktale genre, and teach story mapping while increasing student familiarity of traditional African American stories and sense of belonging. Higgins included 50 Grade 3 students with a range of abilities, and who attended a K-8 school in a low socio-economic area in Philadelphia. Inspired by a Storytelling Festival, Higgins (2008) proposed a Storytelling unit. Her relentless enthusiasm and confidence in her students helped her overcome her colleagues' skepticism. Higgins, a library media specialist, and two peers carefully planned and implemented an eight-week unit. Each of the eight 45-minute carefully scaffolded sessions built upon previously learned skills. The lessons included: 1) captivate student interest, 2) expose students to various stories, 3) create a class story, 4) tell a story, 5) select a story, 6) memorize, 7) practice, 8) fine tune, and 9) present for an audience. The unit culminated in a Storytelling Celebration that included parents, a professional storyteller, decorations, music, and food.

Her data collection process included observations, memos, discussions with colleagues and students, pre- and post-assessment of rubrics, self-reflection, and a storytelling survey where students assessed themselves and the instructional practices of teachers. The data analysis revealed that through explicit teaching, storytelling increased fluency, engagement, confidence, and understanding of the characteristics of the folktale genre and of story elements. In addition, it was a means to develop cultural awareness by providing children with "opportunities to experience narratives and cultures familiar and unfamiliar to them" (Lockett, 2009, p. 179). As well, home and school literacy was bridged as the storytelling celebration provided opportunities to connect and build relationships between students, parents, teachers, and the professional storyteller. The

research by Higgins promotes the use of storytelling to cultivate interest and motivation in learners, connect home and school through celebration of student accomplishments, as well as demonstrates the importance of positively positioning students, scaffolding instruction, and displaying authentic teacher enthusiasm.

Ethnographic research by Hare (2012) further exemplified how cultural knowledge, such as the inclusion of traditional Aboriginal storytelling, can help bridge the gap between home, community, and school while fostering trust and sense of belonging. The overarching goal of Hare's research was to "examine the contributions of Indigenous knowledge to young Indigenous children's learning" (Hare, 2012 p. 389). Hare (2012) studied five western Canadian First Nations reserve communities. While in the field, she collected multiple forms of data including observations, field notes, interviews, and focus group sessions with parents and extended family, elders, caregivers, staff, and community stakeholders (Creswell, 2013). She used two-leveled analysis and validity checks throughout her multifaceted technical study. She analyzed and coded transcripts to discretely categorize and identify themes of "cultural practices, values and learning processes" (Hare, 2012, p. 398). She determined that school personnel can empower Indigenous students by valuing traditional knowledge, dialoguing with families and communities, participating in outreach efforts, developing cultural enrichment programs, attending community events, and engaging in ongoing professional development of Indigenous knowledge and history as drumming, singing, dancing, making medicine, gather and preparing food are rich in story (Hare, 2012, p. 408). Similarly elders' visits to schools and daily walk on the land can inspire dialogue. Her research exemplifies a passion for Indigenous populations worldwide, and in her words, she declares it "complements sociocultural theories of literacy" (Hare, 2012, p. 393).

Eder (2007) also completed an ethnographic study that based its philosophical assumptions within an Indigenous framework. The overall purpose of her research was to examine Navajo storytelling practices as one example of a non-Western method of instruction while also investigating the importance of 'context' in storytelling practices among Navajo storytellers. The study's philosophical assumptions were embedded within an Indigenous framework, reflecting the Navajo Nation in America which includes New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. The data collection and analysis included interviews with eight Navajo storytellers about the past, present and future of storytelling, as well as interviews with individuals within all levels of the Navajo Nation school system. The research was conducted over three years. Eder collaborated extensively with a Navajo colleague who acted as a mentor and gatekeeper into the Navajo Nation. She followed protocols to ensure to the best of her ability that she analyzed the data from the perspective of the people she was studying.

Eder's (2007) research was thorough with active listening and purposeful questioning. With permission, she recorded stories which enabled her to revisit them. Repetitive listening and coding allowed her to identify the significance of pause, repetition, phrasing, volume, and timing in storytelling. In addition, an Indigenous frame of reference emerged probably due to her impressive approach to ensuring cultural sensitivity. Indeed, Eder's research process unveiled her western assumptions regarding the purpose of storytelling. Eder offered an honest portrayal of her initial assumptions and recorded the evolution of her changing perspectives, both of which enhanced and gave credibility to her research. She also became aware of how integral context is in Navajo storytelling practice. Context encompasses "the importance of setting, time, and timing in the telling" (Eder, 2007, p. 282). By uncovering the central role 'context' plays in cultural storytelling, she suggested that an authentic educational framework should reflect community cultural practices

and protocols. In this case, the community places great value on storytelling and uses it to teach important principles to live well, construct meaning, pass knowledge, and formulate ideas based on personal experiences and perspectives. As for protocol, it was determined that stories should be told orally and preferable by elders or people with wisdom. Bilingual storytellers were also recommended.

The Navajo Nation's successful implementation of an Indigenous framework that emphasizes oral language was effective because it validated students. Teachers' attitudes reflected "an appreciation of their cultural, linguistic, and social characteristics" (Brown, 2007, p. 58) and this validation was the catalyst to engagement, meaningful learning, and positive community and school relationships. Based on these findings, Eder emphasized the need for researchers and educators to revolutionize Western education philosophy.

With mirrored conviction, the research by Hare (2012) and Eder (2007) demonstrates the need for researchers and educators to revolutionize western education practice and philosophy to reflect the cultural practices and beliefs found in one's classroom. Hare and Eder found that linking "specific cultural practices, learning processes, and values with school-based literacy" (Hare, 2011, p. 393) improved self-efficacy in students. With cultural validation through the inclusion of storytelling, students took risks and participated in the learning process because it was meaningful to them.

Oral language development.

The significance of oral language cannot be overvalued. Oral language connects societies of the world (Honig, 2007) due to the fact that each relies on some form of oral communication, yet not all have written systems of communication. Oral language development is fascinating topic and one that has been debated by scholars and researchers alike. Some believe that oral language structures

are innate in humans (Chomsky, 1965) whereas others embrace Vygotskian (1978) thinking and believe that such structures develop through socialization (Heath, 1982; Honig, 2007; Isbell et al., 2004; McKeough et al., 2008; Reese, 2012; Stadler & Ward, 2005).

Noam Chomsky (1965), an American linguist introduced the notion that "language is hard-wired in the brain" (Honig, 2007, p. 581). His research and findings were based on the fact that children quickly learn to speak without prescribed instruction. This pivotal observation informed his concept of Universal Grammar which suggests that humans, regardless of culture, are equipped with a language system at birth. Although popular, his view of oral language development is refuted by researchers who determine that oracy is cultivated through social exchanges (e.g., Heath, 1982; Honig; 2007; Isbell et al., 2004; McKeough et al., 2008; Reese, 2012; Stadler & Ward, 2005). As is described below, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory is the foundation of such research.

Stadler and Ward (2005) believe the earliest origins of language development begin at birth, as babies share interactions with more skilled language users. Similarly, Honig (2007) states that the "communicative social interactions and games that caring adults play with babies who cannot yet 'talk'" (p. 582) are fundamental in oral language development. In fact, she says that children learn oral language intricacies without even realizing it.

Heath (1982), an American linguistic anthropologist, proposed that three stages of early oral language development demonstrate the incredible influence socialization has on individual learning. During the first stage, repetition, children "imitate the intonation contours and general shaping of the utterances they repeat" (Heath, 1982, p. 65). Within stage two, repetition with variation, pieces of conversation are absorbed and manipulated, and children integrate chunks of language from others into their own conversation. Through modeling, children begin to internalize the productive rules of language as they insert new nouns and verbs into the chunked arrangement. During stage

two children also explore rhyming patterns and varying intonation contours (Heath, 1982). The participation stage is the final stage of oral language development. It is during this stage that children start to participate in discussions pertaining to themselves. They initiate conversations "by attracting the adult's attention with a tug on the arm or pant leg, and they help make themselves understood by providing nonverbal reinforcements to help recreate a scene" (Heath, 1982, p. 66).

The social nature of oracy was described by Vygotsky's (1978) beliefs that "social interaction is foundational to language development" (Kirkland & Patterson, 2005, p. 392). Aldridge (2005) asserts that early verbal interactions teach meaning, language structure, and conversational format and goes as far to say that, "the variety of language used at home" (p. 179) is "crucial" in the progression of "listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills" (p. 177). Honig (2007) agrees, and describes how "subtle social skills in oral language are confirmed very early in children's lives" through exchanges (p. 582). Indeed, like many researchers and theorists, Aldridge (2005) and Honig (2007) recognize how culture significantly influences oral language development (Heath, 1982; McKeough et al., 2008; Stadler & Ward, 2005).

It is difficult to comprehend that language development would occur in isolation, void of cultural influence. To most, it is commonsensical that culture plays a dominant role in a child's language development. Heath (1982) explained how "the culture children learn as they grow up is in fact, 'ways of taking' meaning from the environment around them" (p. 49). Stadler and Ward (2005) have described "narrative content and structure to be greatly influenced by culture" (p. 73). McKeough et al. (2008) further expressed that language "allows the parent to introduce the child to culture," thus it is the power of language that provides opportunities for generations to be connected by "behavioral scripts, values, beliefs, rules, goals, expectations, symbolisms, and social institutions" (p. 151).

Moreover, the development of beginning personal narratives has been attributed to "conversations that help to interpret, reminisce, and recount experiences" (McKeough et al., 2008, p. 151), all of which occur simultaneously within a cultural context. Honig (2007) writes that "children construct stories with whom they are in relationship with family members and culturally significant others" (p. 602). According to McKeough et al. (2008), whose research is discussed below, through the creation of personal narratives "memories, language, and culture come together" (p. 151).

Recently there has been a focus on the importance of oral language development and its effects on school preparedness. In fact, "oral narrative competence is a major predictor of literacy acquisition later in the school years" (McKeough et al., 2008, p. 151). Constructing oral narratives has been shown to facilitate oral language skills because stories demand more complex language than needed for daily discussions (Stadler & Ward, 2005). Explicit vocabulary and a command of pronouns and connectives are required to describe an experience to a listener who is unaware of the experience. Thus, storytelling can provide opportunities to cultivate a higher level of language before reading or writing. Indeed, anyone who has witnessed young children recounting personal experiences recognizes these descriptions as first stories. Researchers such as Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer and Lowrance (2004), Stadler and Ward (2005), McKeough et al. (2008), Reese (2012), and Fettes (2013) strongly promote storytelling practices to support reading, writing, listening, and oral language development skills in children.

Research on oral language development and storytelling.

A multitude of studies have documented the benefits of storytelling practices on oral language development. Studies by Isbell et al. (2004), Stadler and Ward (2005), McKeough et al. (2008), and Reese (2012) are discussed below.

A quantitative multiphase study by Isbell et al. (2004) demonstrated how storytelling and story reading influences the language development and story comprehension of 3-5 year-old children. The 12-week study was conducted at Tennessee State University. It included 38, 3- and 4-year-old children who were randomly placed into two groups. Group A had stories told to them, whereas Group B had stories read to them. Each group was exposed to 24 carefully selected stories shared by two presenters, a graduate student and an early childhood educator. The lessons were consistent with pre- and post-reading activities, and a retelling of a wordless picture book. Complex and descriptive data included interviews, transcripts, and audiotaped pre- and post-samples of oral language samples. Data were analyzed for language complexity including fluency, diversity in vocabulary, and formal story conventions using Gavin and Giles (1996) language sample measures and the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcript (SALT) computer software program which formulated visual charts.

The language development benefits of story reading and storytelling were compared and contrasted. The research findings supported the use of both storytelling and story reading to benefit language development. In particular, storytelling was attributed to increases in retelling, story element identification, and comprehension, whereas story reading was connected to improved language complexity. Other notable benefits of storytelling included improved visual imagination, enhanced listening skills, and increased engagement, interactions, and enjoyment. Better fluency, vocabulary, and oral and written skills were also revealed through storytelling. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of storytelling was noted to provide support in shaping and understanding experiences while also providing a model to imitate.

Research by Stadler and Ward (2005) also confirmed the significance of storytelling for language development. Based on the belief that children initiate learning to tell stories in five levels

by recounting personal experiences, telling stories in play, retelling, and lastly creating fictional stories, Stadler and Ward employed a pilot study to collect and explore an assortment of narratives from 14 preschoolers ranging between the ages of 41 and 68 months. Three of the 14 children had speech or language impairments whereas the other 11 children were developing as usual.

During the study each child had to tell an original story and retell a familiar folktale to a small group of peers. Later the children told and retold their stories to the researchers. The original story was prompted by a single picture and the retelling was prompted by familiar folktale. Both oral narratives were videotaped for future examination. During the transcription, the stories were classified into one of five narrative levels which were guided by Applebee's (1978) and Stein and Glenn's (1979) levels (cited in Stadler & Ward, 2005), but adapted and renamed by Stadler and Ward to better suit each of the level's descriptors. The five narrative levels advanced from labeling to listing to connecting to sequencing to narrating. When transcribing the stories Stadler and Ward (2005) were aware of the continuum of narrative development, so they used the overall perception of the child's story level for this study rather than how consistently the child maintained the story at the level (p. 75).

Analysis of the data revealed that children's storytelling skills were connected to communication, literacy, and cognition. In addition, Stadler and Ward (2005) concluded that teachers can best support developing oral narrative skills by identifying developmental necessities and meeting those needs through a collection of strategies including "questioning, dialog and discussion, stimulating language use through activities, reading aloud, guiding symbolic play and encouraging personal narrative construction to an audience" (p. 79). The researchers also stated that those teachers who have an awareness of students' level of narratives can better support their

students' oral narrative development skills and that narratives are underused for facilitating language development.

Given the established connection between oral narratives and literacy development McKeough et al. (2008) proposed that oral storytelling should be included in education (p. 151) for both Aboriginal and mainstream cultures. Their proposal was based on the fact that not only are oral narratives a precursor to reading and writing across cultures, they are a traditional Aboriginal teaching tool which fit with the Aboriginal epistemology (McKeough et al., 2008).

With the support of a First Nations advisory group, McKeough et al. (2008) identified content themes and created appropriate instructional material to complement the oral storytelling instruction program, Story Thinking. Through consultation with First Nations and school district representatives adaptations were made to better suit the 4 to 8 year-olds in Nakota/Stoney First Nation group. The adaptations resulted from discussions pertaining to the literacy learning needs of the children, thematic content, and appropriateness of instructional materials. Through the conversations, it was apparent that those involved believed it critical to use legends and stories of contemporary Aboriginal life written and illustrated by First Nations people. The books and collections included David Bouchard and Allan Sapps' (2002) *The Song Within My Heart*, Waboose's (2000) *Skysisters,* as well as Cree stories of Wesakejak and Ojibwe stories of Nanabosho. The supplemental materials that were created continue to be property of the First Nations band.

McKeough et al.'s (2008) article was written near the completion of the instructional work with the students. Even though the program was incomplete, it was apparent through micro genetic analysis and preliminary results from end-of-unit assessments that considerable growth in oral storytelling had occurred. It was decided that upon completion of the program, McKeough et al.

would use standardized assessment measures to review how the progress correlated to developing language skills. Afterwards the findings would be used to inform educational practices and policy of effective, culturally relevant classroom literacy strategies such as oral storytelling activities which support Aboriginal children's literacy acquisition. They positioned this study as a catalyst to providing a sustainable model for culturally relevant instruction, support, and resources. At the time this literature review was written, no follow up research to this study could be located.

Culturally relevant instruction, support, and resources were also a focus of Reese's (2012) case study that concentrated on the traditional practice of storytelling as well as the impact of storytelling on language development. The study was part of a larger mixed-method longitudinal study of Mexican language and literacy development. It involved 30 randomly chosen Grade1-3 immigrant American students and their families from one of four participating schools in Guadalajara. Data were collected over two years by a binational team from the U.S. and Mexico. Students were assessed using the Woodcock and Munoz-Scandoval assessment tool in the fall and spring of each school year by trained researchers most of whom resided in Guadalajara. Surveys about family demographics and literacy practices were completed by parents with research assistants. During the first year, the focus was on parents' home literacy experiences, whereas during the second year the focus was on current literacy practices including the target children. Three particular families participated in four home visits throughout the study. Ethnographic field notes taken during the visits provided additional insight into urban Mexican family life beyond the student and parent interviews. Data analysis consisted of transcribing, reviewing, and coding interview and field notes using a model from socio-historic and activity theory. Data matrices were used to summarize and identify patterns.

Reese (2012) reported that current home storybook reading in urban Mexican family homes is more prevalent today than home storytelling. These results were contrary to that of the parents' youth experiences. However, the researcher cautioned that storybook reading has not replaced storytelling activities. In addition, the assessment results indicated that certain components of oral-language proficiency improved with greater storytelling exposure. Reese (2008) concluded that Aboriginal early literacy programs should contain oral storytelling for it is a traditional teaching tool as well as an antecedent to reading and writing across cultures.

Conclusions

Overall, the theoretical and conceptual foundations and research reviewed in Chapter 2 convey how storytelling is a powerful and natural means to educating our youth. As is evident by the review of the literature, storytelling activities can validate personal experience, connect thinking and emotion, as well as foster self-esteem, empathy, and understanding.

As described above, storytelling activities fit within the parameters of sociocultural theory because they are founded on socializing and are influenced by societal and cultural beliefs and attitudes. Storytelling also aligns with Gee's theory of primary Discourse. Research on storytelling has revealed how teachers can support students' vocabulary, memory, language frames, and word usage skills to help them meet the expected curriculum outcomes in ways that build upon students' knowledge and experiences in a respectful fashion.

In Chapter 2, I also discussed how storytelling activities support Gay's culturally responsive teaching method, which embraces cultural knowledge and promotes sense of belonging in students as well. Storytelling research brings to the forefront the importance of appropriate context, as well as the need to make learning encounters relevant and effective for all students by linking home, culture, language, and community members to school.

Finally, I explained how the benefits of storytelling activities are closely linked to oral language development. Personal narratives connect language, culture, and memory as well as act as a precursor to later literacy development. Indeed, decontextualized language has been recognized as an underpinning for school preparedness which endorses storytelling practices as research has revealed how children use more decontextualized language in creating stories than in other literacy related activities (Curenton et al., 2008). Findings from the research reviewed in Chapter 2 also revealed how implementing storytelling activities can increase retelling proficiency, improve story element identification, comprehension, and visual imagination, enhance listening skills, and increase engagement, enjoyment, fluency, and vocabulary, as well as other oral and written skills.

In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of how the resource, "Beyond Words: Storytelling in the Elementary Classroom" reflects the theoretical and conceptual foundations and research reviewed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3

Connecting the Handbook to the Literature

I have developed the resource in careful consideration of the literature introduced in Chapter 2. The resource is intended to heighten teachers' awareness of the academic, cultural, and emotional benefits of storytelling while demonstrating how storytelling activities fulfill multiple of the British Columbia ELA Prescribed Learning Outcomes (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006). Presented through a sociocultural lens, I believe the practicalities of the resource will appeal to teachers. I am also confident that the power of storytelling will resonate with them as they come to understand the historical and contemporary relevance of including storytelling activities in their literacy programs. In fact, through reading and implementing components of the resource, some educators may come to learn how the benefits of storytelling are indeed "beyond words."

Introduction, Objectives, and Format

I believe that an Introduction, Objectives, and format are integral components of any resource, but especially so in this case as storytelling is often overlooked by practicing teachers. The Introduction section includes Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the conceptual idea of Gee's Discourse, as well as the cultural responsive teaching method. I also sought to support my own personal philosophy and teaching experiences and explain why storytelling should indeed be a common literacy practice. In the Objectives section, an 'at a glance' format is offered with the intent that teachers will be able to peruse, review, and revisit. In regards to the overall framework of the resource, I wanted it to be accessible to teachers so they could easily read, understand, and implement the teaching of storytelling hence the use of bullet form. It was a conscious decision to offer online websites throughout the document as I believe that teachers are more likely to have access to the internet than the printed versions or commercial resources. In addition, I believe that

teaching practices evolve as do considerations for implementation, scaffolds, activities, assessment rubrics, resources, and curricular outcomes and therefore I needed the resource to be a working document which could be supplemented or adapted. Lastly, I wanted to showcase an alternative to the typical literacy programs that, in my experience, tend to place a greater emphasis on reading and writing than oral language instruction and activities.

Benefits of Storytelling and Curriculum Connections

When considering sections to create for the resource, I believed it imperative to share not only the many benefits of storytelling, but also to pinpoint how storytelling can be used to meet curriculum objectives. Recognizing that storytelling practices are not a familiar component of most teachers' literacy programs, I wanted to demonstrate several cultural, emotional, and cognitive benefits that can arise from implementing storytelling activities in the classroom. Specifically, I chose to focus on cultural responsive and oral language benefits; however, I included others with the intent of showcasing storytelling as a valuable means to making learning enjoyable, building class culture, as well as strengthening awareness and understanding of others. Similarly, in the Connections to Curriculum section, I attempted to identify ways by which storytelling activities can provide an effective means to meet specific components and numerous prescribed learning outcomes of British Columbia Ministry's (2006) English Language Arts curriculum. The pedagogical implications can be found within the resource.

Pedagogical and Pragmatic Considerations

Fourteen pedagogical and pragmatic considerations for storytelling implementation are described for teachers within the resource. The rationales for including the considerations in the resource are as follows:

<u>Consideration #1</u> – know the cultural composition of your classroom

With an awareness of their classroom's cultural composition teachers should understand that cultural beliefs and attitudes have a significant influence on individual learning (Carter-Black, 2013; Heath, 1982; McCabe, 1997).

Consideration #2 – review the historical and contemporary importance of storytelling with students

By reviewing the historical and contemporary importance of storytelling teachers should come to further realize that social environments that foster talk, interaction, and cooperative tasks can develop students' cognitive abilities (Fettes, 2013; Heath, 1982; Honig, 2007; Isbel et al., 2004; Kirkland & Patterson, 2005; McKeough, Bird, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottmann, & Jeary, 2008; Reese, 2012; Stadler & Ward, 2005).

Consideration #3 – provide models to offer opportunities to experience storytelling

By providing models students will see, hear, and feel firsthand the magic of storytelling and notice that although storytelling is an ancient art, it can be an everyday occurrence. Hopefully through such experiences students will be inspired to emulate the positive attributes recognized in the storyteller's performance.

Considerations #4 to #8 – include all students and position them as capable storytellers; establish what good listening looks and feels like; establish what good speaking sounds and feels like; establish what good storytellers do; review what makes a good story

By positioning all students as capable storytellers, teachers should embrace Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, working from what students can do independently to what they can do with assistance. Teachers should also appreciate the relevance for reviewing what makes a 'good' listener, speaker, story, and storyteller in a typical school setting. They should understand that ways of thinking vary among individuals because it is an individual's experience that

establishes thinking patterns (Baskerville, 2011; Gay, 2012; Higgins, 2008; Honig, 2007; McCabe, 1997; McKeough et al., 2008; Rivalland, 2011).

Considerations #9 to #13 – offer Story and Retelling Maps as frameworks for planning/listening, practicing, and presenting as well as to support memory and prosody; provide Coaching Cards as prompts to assist students with listening, retelling, practicing, and presenting; provide short and frequent opportunities for students to practice listening to and telling/retelling stories to improve automaticity, fluency, and confidence; assess - provide opportunities for students to give and receive feedback; provide students with time for self-reflection and goal setting to celebrate successes and acknowledge areas of need.

These five considerations offer strategies for teachers to employ when using the gradual release of responsibility model and provide opportunities for student self-reflection and informal and formal feedback. The scaffolding techniques such as the story and retelling maps and the coaching cards, should enable teachers to support students' learning from guided practice to independence (Baskerville, 2011; Gay, 2010; Higgins, 2008; McCabe, 1997).

Consideration #14 – Celebrate! Connect home, school, and community

The final consideration encourages teachers to integrate home and school culture through celebration. Emotion and cognition are culminated while validating the prior knowledge and background of each student (Brown, 2007; Gay, 2010; Higgins, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lockett, 2009).

Storytelling Activities

In addition to pedagogical and pragmatic considerations, the resource is comprised of 21 suggested activities. Throughout my research I came to realize that there are numerous storytelling activities for teachers to implement in their classroom. When carefully selecting activities to

include in the resource, I was careful to ensure that each one mirrors sociocultural theory, supports oral language development, and reflects culturally responsive teaching practices.

With awareness that a variety of social interactions are fundamental to one's communicative competence, each activity is inclusive, and offers a high degree of socialization and choice. In addition, activities provide opportunities for students to make authentic meaningful connections that affirm individuality and self-dignity. Such attributes are reflected in several of the activities including the Personal and Family History, ABC's of My Life, Powerful Memory, as well as Personal Artifact and Photograph activities.

Representation and sharing of cultural knowledge is a natural fit for storytelling activities and paramount in culturally responsive teaching practices. Therefore, several activities are included in the resource that provides opportunities for students to learn about various cultures, behaviours, and beliefs that can help foster acceptance and tolerance (Brown, 2007; Gay, 2010). The activities most suited to learning about cultures include Tell and Retell, Story Element Box, Another Perspective, Listening Center, and Storytelling Festival activities.

Another distinguishing feature of culturally responsive teaching taken into consideration when developing the resource was the promotion of a sense of belonging, connection, and acceptance within the family, classroom, school, and community. Research has indicated that such an atmosphere can be cultivated through the use of cooperative student participation and engaging collaborative learning opportunities (Baskerville, 1995; Gay, 2010; Hare, 2012; Higgins, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Acknowledging the importance of cooperation and collaboration, I included the activities of Magic Story Bag, Spinning Yarns, Roll-a-Story, Rory's Story Cubes, Fib or Not, Picture Says a 1000 Words, Fluency Work Station Voice Jar, and Autobiography of Anything.

Storytelling Resources

The resource section includes a list of professional resources with simple tales to tell and activities to try, picture books for telling and retelling, wordless books for story creating, as well as websites for audio versions to listen to and local storytellers to invite into schools. Many of the suggested resources are comprised of tales from various cultures. Some of the titles are personal favorites which include many of the Aboriginal titles, others were recommended by librarians for example *Camel in the Sun* (Ondaatje, 2013) and *There was a Tree* (Isadora, 2012) and others like *Something from Nothing* (Gilman, 1993) and *The Lion and the Mouse* (Pinkney, 2009) were found by searching titles at local bookstores and online, as well as in my school libraries and district resource center. The storytellers include those I have had the honour of listening to, with the exception of Richard VanCamp, who was recommended to me by the district principal of Aboriginal Education in School District #62 (Sooke).

Suggestions for Further Research

My review of the research revealed how storytelling is universal and how it has many social, emotional, and cognitive benefits (Bishop & Kimball, 2006; Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003; Lewis, 2011; Lockett & Jones, 2009; McCabe, 1997; McKeough, et al., 2008). Yet, with the many benefits, it was noted that storytelling activities are not a regular component in today's classrooms and that they have received little research attention (Isbell et al., 2004).

Although there is a global sampling of storytelling research, more research is needed in and around the world as well as in Canada with particular attention to Aboriginal, immigrant, and refugee populations. Building upon this situation, Hare (2011) addresses her concern about the limited body of research pertaining to practices and programs that contribute to Indigenous children's language development. McKeough et al. (2008) highlights that more research should be

conducted in regards to how Aboriginal community members can become involved in education by serving as storytellers, and to explore the direct effects their involvement would have on students' oral literacy levels. I believe positive results of such research could act as a catalyst to bridge local nations and schools. A concern that arose of out my research is that much of the American research examining relationships between language and literacy has been carried out by monolingual English speakers. As stated by Reese (2012) more multi-ethnic gatekeepers need to become involved in the process of initiating, executing, and reviewing research. Along the same lines, McCabe (1997) believes that in order for cultural resources to be culturally authentic, they should be written by culturally-like people. Furthermore, McCabe (1997) suggests that researchers should work to develop narrative frameworks for various cultures and assessments to measure student comprehension of such non-European narrative frameworks. I believe such frameworks and assessment tools would increase specific instruction practices on distinctive story structures in the classroom.

There is limited research on the influence of storytelling on language development of children. Curenton et al. (2008) notes that more systematic research studies of mother-child interactions across different story contexts should be performed. I believe that such additional research would inform best practices by suggesting that a range of practices do indeed support language development and in turn, storytelling would become more prevalent in today's homes and schools.

Another area of research that deserves further scrutiny is a comparison between storytelling and storybook read alouds on student attention levels (Isbell et al., 2004). I believe this focus would be beneficial as student engagement is a fundamental element in learning. In addition, I hypothesize the results on student engagement may lead to a growth in storytelling practices in the classroom.

Lastly, like Eder (2007), I believe more attention in research should be given to how storytelling practices embrace the much needed shift in educational epistemologies. The concept of a shift from the common Eurocentric model to a more holistic one is important for many reasons, but most importantly that various student populations within our schools are not reflected in the common Eurocentric model.

Personal Reflection

From the outset of my research, I believed storytelling to be a powerful means of teaching. Yet, as I researched I was amazed at the number of ways the act of storytelling can benefit learners and enrich teaching practices. I was surprised to discover how many contemporary professional books pertaining to storytelling and storytelling activities. Interestingly, in my experience such titles have not come up in conversations with other teachers, or at regional or local professional development sessions outside of the annual First Nations Education Steering Committee Conference which has hosted storytelling sessions in the past. Most recently, Colleen Devlin, Gail Martindale, and Lynn Swift presented at this conference and three of my suggested activities Powerful Memory, Personal Artifact, and Personal Photograph Story are a result of their presentation. As I researched activities, I encountered many which made narrowing the selection process enjoyable but challenging.

When reflecting upon my topic, I believe it is very timely. In the fall of 2013, I was pleased to learn that all of BC's Ministry of Education curriculum drafts include First Peoples Principles of Learning. This inclusion is significant for the implementation of storytelling practices for three reasons. Firstly, the principles are authentic as they were established by the First Nations Education Steering Committee. Secondly, one of the principles specifically states that learning is embedded in memory, history, and story. Finally, with the growing understanding of the possibilities of oral narratives, I trust there will be an increase in the number of storytelling activities in the classroom

and school community. The increase in storytelling practices should in turn increase awareness of storytelling in regards to culturally responsive teaching and oral language development for all students. In response to these three reasons, my future hopes for teaching education programs resonate with McCabe (1997) and Stadler and Ward (2005). I believe storytelling has a place in university course design similarly reading and writing. Such coursework could be founded upon sociocultural theory, embrace culturally responsive teaching methods, and review the theory of Discourse. In addition, the course work could emphasize the significance of narratives, present knowledge of the stages of narrative development, address the various forms of narratives, and share strategies and resources that would nourish such development. I hypothesize such education would have the potential to transform future literacy teaching practices while empowering and engaging our youth.

I believe my learnings have already impacted my teaching practice. Subsequently, reading aloud to students, I am more attentive as I listen to how students retell stories. As well, I actively seek out picture books with tales from other lands and research professional resources and regional workshops online, and I advocate for local storytellers to be invited into classrooms. When I am in the company of a storyteller, I notice that I have greater immersion in the process as I listen, watch, think, and participate in the storytelling act. However, the greatest impact of my research is that it provided me with the information, confidence, and motivation to propose and develop a new program in my school district with assistance from a future advisory group. The proposed program is founded upon sociocultural theory, culturally responsive teaching practices, and oral language development and is rooted in the First Peoples Principles of Learning. Although, my efforts are currently at a preliminary stage, the feedback I have received from executive administration, local community members, partner groups, and local nations has been very encouraging. I look forward

to learning my initiative will be approved in the coming weeks. Regardless, I will continue to implement my learning into my own practice as the days move forward.

In closing, I have sought to incorporate the tenets of sociocultural theory, the conceptual idea of Gee's Discourse, and the research on cultural responsive teaching and oral language development into the resource, "Beyond Words: Storytelling in the Elementary Classroom" in the hope that this document will empower and inspire teachers with knowledge, activities, and resources to launch the next story in their classrooms.

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Chapter 4

"Beyond Words: Storytelling in the Elementary Classroom"

Beyond Words

STORYTELLING

in the

Elementary Classroom

Marlys Denny

Table of Contents

Introduction

"Through personal narratives, memories, language, and culture come together" (McKeough, Bird, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottmann, & Jeary, 2008, p. 151).

Storytelling is one of the most powerful methods teachers can use to stimulate students' social, emotional, and cognitive development. This resource is intended to inform teachers of the power of storytelling while providing theoretical reasoning, curriculum connections, considerations for implementation, scaffolds to support students, teaching activities, and teacher and student resources for successful application.

I promote the use of storytelling in elementary classrooms for multiple reasons. First, I share Lev Vygotsky's (1978) passion for embracing differences while reducing feelings of inadequacy in children. Echoing Vygotsky's idea that thinking is social in origin, I also believe we can learn from each other, with each other, and about each other. I value the idea that cognition and culture are interwoven, and recognize that there are variations within and among cultural groups. Indeed, I support social constructivist views of working to build an inclusive classroom environment founded on respect and empathy. My approach to storytelling is based upon sociocultural theory.

Storytelling is many things; an ancient art, a natural way of communicating, and it is through interactions with others that storytelling potential becomes apparent (Bishop & Kimbell, 2006). Storytelling also demonstrates how people as storytellers and listeners work together to make meaning. The nature of storytelling enables the storyteller to adapt to the needs of the audience, and affords opportunities for the audience to respond to the needs of the storyteller. These needs can be addressed through tone, volume, pause, intonations, timing, eye-contact, and gestures. Furthermore, it is difficult to separate storytelling from culturally responsive teaching, a pedagogy which I strongly endorse. Culture is embedded within storytelling; in fact storytelling is a commonality amongst all cultures (Bishop & Kimball, 2006; Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003; Lewis, 2011; Lockett & Jones, 2009; McCabe, 1997; McKeough, Bird, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottmann, & Jeary, 2008). Cultures use storytelling to teach lessons and pass on information. In schools, storytelling can be used to promote the cultivation of inclusive classrooms by including participant voice, validating prior knowledge, and offering opportunities to learn and reflect on various cultural and individual practices. Culture can be embedded in the execution of storytelling units, invitations to community storytellers, sensitivity to protocol, and the use of audio-storytelling materials.

Storytelling can also act as a window into history and enable one to learn about themselves, culture, community, and world. It is a socially engaging, enjoyable experience, and fundamental to the development of language skills (Heath, 2013).

In his explanation of primary Discourse, Gee (1989) proposes that how we act, talk, and write develops through people's earliest social interactions in the home, and that individual Discourses should be respected and appreciated. Similarly, I would suggest that cultural and personal experiences of every individual have value. Irrespective of a student's starting point, the gradual release of responsibility and zone of proximal development can be utilized by teachers to assist students in achieving academic outcomes. Teachers should work to scaffold students' learning through modeling and practice. Furthermore, I recognize that prior knowledge acts as a platform for narratives to link home and school while positively positioning students and fostering a community of learners

My intention is that this resource will expand readers' concepts of what storytelling is and how it can be used to engage students and increase the social, emotional, cultural, and academic competence. In this way, I hope to foster students' sense of belonging, and their understanding and appreciation of other individuals.

Objectives

1. to explain the significance of storytelling
2. to convey a theoretical basis underlying the use of storytelling
3. to link storytelling activities to BC Ministry of Education ELA Curriculum (2006)
4. to educate and inform teachers of the benefits of storytelling
5. to suggest pedagogical and pragmatic considerations before implementing storytelling activities
6. to propose scaffolds to assist storytelling practices
7. to excite educators of the many possibilities of storytelling
8. to present enjoyable and engaging storytelling activities
9. to offer sample assessment rubrics
10. to recommend storytelling resources (books, storytellers, websites, and conferences)

Connections to Curriculum

"The resilience of storytelling over the course of history suggests that it is a powerful teaching/learning strategy and therefore should be a common commodity in the K-12 classroom, particularly with regard to language arts" (Roney, 2009, p. 45).

The requirements of the British Columbia Ministry's English Language Arts (2006) (hereafter referred to as ELA) curriculum may seem challenging for some educators. However, the act of storytelling can provide a means to meet six essential components of the Kindergarten to Grade 7 ELA document. Storytelling activities are effective in meeting prescribed learning outcomes, supporting academic and social competence, sharing the responsibility of language learning with the home environment, promoting inclusion and diversity, while addressing local and Aboriginal communities' requests.

1. Content in the ELA document expresses that programs should meet the needs of all students including those with varied backgrounds, interests, abilities, and needs. Undeniably storytelling units are enriched by the involvement of "diverse groups of students" (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 25) and also support inclusive environments of equity and accessibility for learners. Storytelling undertakings also provide a means for teachers to meet the Ministry of Education's (2006) mandate of "ensuring that classroom instruction, assessment, and resources reflect sensitivity to diversity and incorporate positive role portrayals, relevant issues, and themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance" (p. 12).

2. The foundational nature of oral language is explicitly recognized in the Ministry of Education's ELA curriculum document (2006). The prescribed oral language outcomes provide educators with many opportunities to implement storytelling practices throughout the grade levels. Booth (1994) states that, "oral language is the foundation of literacy learning and talk is the bridge that helps students make connections between what they know and what they are coming to know" (as cited in British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 4). Many key concepts of oral language resonate with storytelling throughout the Kindergarten to Grade 7 curriculum. A sample of such concepts follows:

- speaking and listening to express and inquire (Kindergarten)

- speaking and listening to recall and retell (Grade 1)
- staying on topic and sustaining concentration (Grade 2)
- recalling and summarizing in logical sequence (Grade 3)
- expressing ideas clearly and fluently (Grade 4)
- considering audience when presenting (Grade 5)
- organizing information and practicing delivery (Grade 6)
- using techniques and aids to facilitate audience understanding (Grade 7)

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, pp. 6-7).

3. Content in the elementary ELA document describes qualities of teachers that benefit academic and social competence in students. Such qualities are reflected in teachers who successfully employ storytelling practices. The shared qualities include the following:

- build a personal relationship with each child
- create a safe climate of respectful listening
- provide frequent, sustained opportunities for language development, including structured partner talk and small-group interaction
- interact regularly on a one-to-one basis with each student
- challenge students to talk, think, and explore their knowledge of the world
- ask open-ended questions to help students make meaning and
- support students as they develop language and learning strategies necessary to articulate and extending their interactions with the world (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 20).

4. Content in the ELA curriculum supports the practice of storytelling through an emphasis on making connections between what is learned in and out of school. Content in the document recommends that the entire school community be actively engaged in working towards a child's oral language learning. Language development, through narratives, begins in the home and can be broadened at school. This concept supports the use of storytelling practices in the classroom (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 14).

5. The importance of culturally appropriate practices in regards to child development and learning is reflected in content in the ELA curriculum. The principles of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYA) (1996, p. 30) are used as a guide to inform best practice. The following excerpts from the NAEYA's list of principles resonate with storytelling practices:

- Development and learning occur, and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts …
- Children are active learners, drawing on direct physical and social experiences as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their own understandings of the world around them. . . .
- Children develop and learn best in the context of a community where they are safe and valued, their physical needs are met, and they feel psychologically secure. (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 30)

6. Storytelling activities can "ensure that the cultures and contributions of Aboriginal peoples in BC are reflected in all provincial curricula" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 13). Content in the document communicates the importance of partnerships between school, community, and local Aboriginal groups. Cultures and contributions of Aboriginal peoples of BC should be addressed in ways that reflect Aboriginal concepts of teaching and learning accurately and respectfully, and overall the content conveys the expectation that educators engage in culturally responsive pedagogy (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 13). Storytelling is both a traditional and contemporary Aboriginal teaching method. It is an excellent way to facilitate connections with the Aboriginal community. As recommended in the ELA document, teachers can work with local Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal Education Coordinators to invite local storytellers into schools.

In summary, storytelling is an adaptable means to meet many components of the ELA document. Storytelling is consistent with the theoretical foundations of the curriculum that identify the interconnectedness of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing as well as how academic and social competences are reliant on oral language proficiency. Reflecting content in the document, storytelling tasks recognize that students begin school with differing exposure to literacy and vocabulary knowledge, and that the gradual release of responsibility model, a

framework of instruction that progresses from teaching to modeling to coaching to student independence, can be used to scaffold children's learning. The content in the document also offers some choice in meeting learning outcomes. Topics can be selected which are of particular interest to students and are an avenue to address relevant and local needs (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 11), all of which support the implementation of storytelling in the classroom.

Benefits of Storytelling

Culturally Responsive Teaching Benefits

Culturally Responsive Teaching is a teaching pedagogy that is inclusive in nature and recognizes cultural knowledge as a significant component of an individual's authentic self. Storytelling supports inclusion, cultural awareness, and individuality proving to be a culturally responsive means of teaching. Storytelling is a culturally responsive teaching practice as it:

- links cultures – just as music, dance, food, and celebrations (Bishop & Kimbell, 2006)
- connects societies of the world as each relies on some form of oral communication, yet not all have written systems (Honig, 2007)
- makes meaning – it is a universal educational tool to teach lessons/values, and pass along information (McKeough et al., 2008)
- allows generations to be connected by "behavioral script, values, beliefs, rules, goals, expectations, symbolism, and social institutions" (McKeough et al., 2008, p. 151)
- embraces learners from diverse ethnic backgrounds, social class, religious affiliation, intellectual strengths and ability levels; respects heritage (Eder, 2007)
- appeals to the emotional, developmental, and cultural aspects of learners (Carter-Black, 2013)
- fits with Aboriginal epistemology as storytelling was and continues to be a means of sharing information (Carter-Black, 2013)
- allows for differentiated instruction supports a caring environment as it facilitates awareness of, appreciation for, and connection to other cultures – fosters empathy, tolerance, and acceptance of others (Carter-Black, 2013)
- provides opportunities to understand various societal values

- affirms individuality and enhances sense of belonging within the class, school, and community
- provides opportunities to bridge the gap between home, community, and school by inviting parents, care-givers, and community members into the school (Hare, 2012; Reese, 2012)
- promotes self-dignity (Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003)
- cultivates cooperation, collaboration, and mutual respect
- values individual's prior knowledge and frame of reference (Baskerville, 2011)
- allows for meaningful connections to be made with content

Oral Language Development Benefits

Oral language development involves learning the complexities of speaking, listening, and understanding through social interaction. Storytelling supports oral language development as it:

- capitalizes on the natural ability of children to display proficiency to narrate personal experience to others (Locket & Jones, 2009)
- provides children with opportunities to develop both formal and informal public speaking skills (McCabe, 1997)
- cultivates verbal interactions which teach meaning, language structure, and conversational format
- increases oral fluency (Fettes, 2012)
- provides a conceptual language framework for students to imitate (Isbell et al., 2004)
- teaches, reinforces, and improves oral skills including expressive features including pause, phrasing, volume, timing, repetition, and sound devices (Eder, 2007)
- helps increase attention span (Isbell et al., 2004)
- benefits vocabulary and word usage skills (Locket & Jones, 2009)
- supports the development of attentive listening skills; both active and quiet (Locket & Jones, 2009)
- confirms subtle social skills (Locket & Jones, 2009)

- develops confidence in voicing personal thoughts and emotions early in life (Locket & Jones, 2009)

Additional Benefits

Engaging in storytelling activities can:

- improve cognitive abilities (Locket & Jones, 2009)
- nurture imagination, visualization, and creativity (Isbell et al., 2004)
- heighten writing and reading skills (Isbell et al., 2004)
- increase student engagement and enjoyment (Bishop, 2006)
- increase student interactions
- facilitate recall of information and comprehension in retelling – presentation of facts in story form personalizes them facilitating retention (Isbell et al., 2004)
- increase risk-taking
- cultivate interest in learning which then can enhance academic achievement (Gay, 2010)
- increase story element identification (Locket & Jones, 2009)
- help develop critical thinking (Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003)
- model positive behavior and communication skills (Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003)

Pedagogical and Pragmatic Considerations

"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 learning" (Locket & Jones, 2009, p. 178).

1. **Know the cultural composition of your classroom**
    - when choosing appropriate stories, choose cultures represented in your classroom (Lockett & Jones, 2009)
    - be aware and sensitive of cultural diversity within the classroom to promote inclusion and understanding

- take into account the differences and similarities between the narrative of various cultures (Lockett & Jones, 2009)
- learn protocols of local culture storytelling practices; the context of who, what, where, when, why
- participate in professional development regarding cultural diversity and responsiveness

2. **Review the historical and contemporary importance of storytelling with students**
    - attend professional development on storytelling practices
    - read professional resources (see resource section)
    - talk to local Indigenous groups
    - contact your local Storytellers' Guild (see resource section)

3. **Provide models to offer opportunities to experience storytelling**
    - invite storytellers into the classroom
    - seek out public library storytelling programs and local historians
    - listen to a collection of audio formatted stories from various cultures and different genres
    - view storytellers downloaded from the internet or on video
    - view newscasters

4. **Include all students and position them as capable storytellers**

5. **Establish what good "listening" looks and feels like**
    - eyes on speaker
    - lips quiet (unless audience participation is requested)
    - heart caring
    - brain thinking
    - body still (unless audience participation is requested)

6. Establish what good "speaking" sounds and feels like

- clear
- loud
- fluent and natural
- confident

7. Establish what good "storytellers" do

- poise and appearance
- body language – facial expressions and body gestures
- eye contact
- voice and sound effects
- pacing / silence and pause
- audience involvement
- proximity of storyteller to listener
- props

8. Review what makes a 'good story'

*Please note unique story structure exists among cultures. The following is intended as a guide and is not intended to discriminate against non-Eurocentric story structures.

- beginning – middle – end
- setting – plot – climax – ending
- character development
- conflict or problem
- moral, theme, or lesson
- descriptive language to support visualization / mental images including poetic features such as: similes and metaphors, personification, alliteration, onomatopoeias, tone words, sensory words, rhyme, repetition

9. Offer Story and Retelling Maps as frameworks for planning/listening, practicing, and presenting as well as to support memory and prosody (see Appendix A for sample Story Maps)

10. Provide Coaching Cards as prompts to assist students with listening, retelling, practicing, and presenting (see Appendix B for a sample Presentation Coaching Card)

11. Provide short and frequent opportunities for students to practice listening to and telling/retelling stories to improve automaticity, fluency, and confidence

- practice to self – mirror, tape recorder, video
- practice with peer
- practice with small group
- practice with a large group

12. Assessment - provide opportunities for students to give and receive feedback (see Appendix C for samples of Listening and Retelling Rubrics as well as suggested websites for additional samples)

- discuss storytelling assessment rubrics in advance
- create criteria for storytelling rubrics together
- implement listening/speaking/creating/presenting rubrics
- teach TAG (Higgins, 2008), a means for students to respond to each other – **T**ell something you enjoyed, **A**sk a question, **G**ive a suggestion
- include self-assessments

13. Provide students with time for self-reflection and goal setting to celebrate successes and acknowledge areas of need

14. Celebrate! Connect home, school, and community

- go on a field trip to a public library, museum, bookstore, community center
- organize a storytelling celebration at the end of a unit
- share stories with buddy class
- share stories with community (e.g., seniors home, veterans' association, hospital, church)

Storytelling Activities

1. **Personal History Story**

   www.simplekids.net/storytelling/

   Invite students to learn a personal story by talking to their parents or caregivers.

   Examples: The story of the day they were born. How they got their name. How parents felt when they first saw them. Their first birthday or other baby adventures.

   "When I was a little girl, I….."

2. **Family History**

   www.storyarts.org/lessonplans/lessonideas/

   Invite students to collect true tales about the "time when" by interviewing family members. An excellent resource is Donald Davis' *Telling Your Own Stories* which is complete with prompts to help draw out stories of memorable people, places, and happenings. See professional resource section for detailed information.

3. **The ABC's of MY LIFE! Story**

   www.kidactivities.net/category/Literacy-Games-and-Creative-Story-Telling.aspx

   Invite students to create alphabetical autobiographies to share.

   Example: **"A"** is for Alberta; that's where I was born.

   "B" is for bannock; my Kokum's is my favorite.

   "C" is for Cub Scouts; I joined when I was 5.

4. **Powerful Memory Story**

   Adapted from Colleen Devlin, Gail Martindale, and Lynn Swift*'s Storytelling: Helping Students Tell Their Own Stories Based on Oral Tradition* workshop at FNESC on December 13, 2013.

   Use the picture book, *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, by Mem Fox to introduce what a memory is and to classify memories into categories such as scary, funny, happy, and so on. Then have students web their own memories under each generated category. Information can be shared with a partner, small group, or class. Students then draw a picture of a vivid memory

using the *My Powerful Memory* supplemental sheet located in Appendix D. The only criterion for the picture is that it acts as a means to recollect his/her vivid memory. Afterwards, students can share their memory with each other or in small groups.

5. Personal Artifact Story

Adapted from Colleen Devlin, Gail Martindale, and Lynn Swift*'s Storytelling: Helping Students Tell Their Own Stories Based on Oral Tradition* workshop at FNESC on December 13, 2013.

Invite students to bring an artifact that is special to them. Students can use coaching cards and a story map to help share the story of the artifact's significance.

6. Personal Photograph Story

Adapted from Colleen Devlin, Gail Martindale, and Lynn Swift*'s Storytelling: Helping Students Tell Their Own Stories Based on Oral Tradition* workshop at FNESC on December 13, 2013.

Invite students to bring a personal photo that is special to them. Students can use coaching cards and a story map to help share the story of the photo's significance.

7. Tell and Retell

The teacher tells or reads a story (e.g., fable, legend, fairytale, creation story, pourquoi, tall tale) to students. Prior to retelling, students will require instruction about "retelling" – what it is and how to do it. Then, individuals retell the same story in pairs, in small groups, or to the whole class. Retelling maps can be used to support students. See resource section for suggested professional books by Margaret Read MacDonald, Jennifer MacDonald Whitman and Nathaniel Forrest Whitman, Sherry Norfolk, Jane Stenson and Diane Williams, and Anne Pellowski. Also, see resource section for books for sharing and retelling.

8. Draw and Tell Stories

Draw-and-Tell stories are enjoyable to listen to and enjoyable to share. The storyteller draws symbolic pictures to represent story elements throughout the story. By the end, all of the pictures create one picture that is essential to the story. Such stories engage students, enhance

listening skills, and help teach language and story structure. See professional resource section for texts on drawing stories by Barbara Freedman-De Vito and Anne Pellowski.

9. Story Element Boxes

www.inspirationlaboratories.com/50-storytelling-ideas/

Create story element boxes to support the retelling of familiar tales. Include items to represent the setting, characters, and events in the story. See examples on website.

10. Another Perspective Story

Create and tell a familiar tale from a different perspective with the support of coaching cards and story maps.

11. Listening Center

Create a listening center in the classroom complete with headsets. Numerous tales have downloadable audio versions or can be purchased as CD's. See resource list for examples. Students can listen to the tale for enjoyment or for focusing on specific skills. Consider having students use their response journal to illustrate or write about a text to self/text/world connection, an interesting character, the setting, a problem/solution, a main idea, or retell the story in words or pictures.

12. Storytelling Festival

A unit can culminate with a storytelling festival that includes music, food, and a professional storyteller. Invite family and community members to attend. Students can be grouped with an adult to share their tales or, can tell their tale to whole class. See resource list for potential storytellers in the Greater Victoria area.

13. The Magic Story Bag

http://diannedelascasas.com/storytelling-games//

The teacher has an opaque cloth bag with an assortment of objects inside. The objects could include items such as a rock, feather, ribbon, or earring. There should be at least one item per

student. Each student randomly pulls a 'magic' object out of the bag, which then becomes an integral part of the story they create with the support of a story map.

14. **Spinning Yarns**

http://diannedelascasas.com/storytelling-games//

Students are seated closely in a circle. The teacher has a large ball of yarn with knots tied at 1 to 1.5 meter intervals. As the teacher tells the story, she unravels the yarn. Once the knot is reached, the ball of yarn is passed to the next person who continues the story and unraveling of the yarn until a knot is reached. The process continues until the story is completed.

15. **Roll-a-Story**

http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/FREE-Roll-a-Story-Writing-Activity-286634

Students are given a die and a story element sheet. They roll the die to determine the setting, main character, and problem. From there, they generate a tale! See website for Roll-a-Story game board and Appendix A for a modified version of Jordan Reads' story map. This game board can act a model in creating other game boards.

16. **Rory's Story Cubes and other versions of Story Cubes** by Gamewright.

http://www.storycubes.com/products

This creative, non-competitive story generator game can be played with one or more players. The nine cubes with pictures on each side allow for many combinations leading to storytelling enjoyment.

17. **Fib or Not** by Chuckle Game Co.

http://www.gatheraroundgames.com/About.cfm

A game for all ages where players tell stories based on subjects they select. The storyteller can decide to tell the real story or create their own. Players secretly vote on whether they believe the story is a fib or not. The more the storyteller can dupe their opponents, the further they advance on the game board.

18. A Picture Says 1000 Words

Teachers and students can document field trips, class outings, and school events with photographs. Afterwards, photos can be used as prompts to assist students in recalling events in detail. Story retelling maps and coaching cards can be used to support students.

19. Wordless Picture Books

Wordless picture books are an excellent means to support students in narrating a story. Provide students with a wordless picture book, allow them time to go through it, and then let them narrate the story to a partner or small group. See resource list for suggested wordless picture book titles.

20. Fluency Work Station Voice Jar

http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Fluency-Workstation-Voice-Jar-with-18-Emotions-711233

This activity provides students practice speaking with expression and emotion. First students choose a short tale, riddle, or passage to share. Next they draw an emotion card from the voice jar. Then they read the tale using emotion on the selected card. See website for Aimee Van Middlesworth's Fluency Work Station Voice Jar Activity.

21. The Autobiography of Anything Story

www.storyarts.org/lessonplans/lessonideas/

Essentially everything comes from the earth and therefore everything has a story to tell! The teacher supplies a collection of objects such as piece of paper, shoe, rubber band, rock, wool socks, and so on. The task is for students to imagine the life story of each item by personifying the item. They describe its history backwards from its personal use, purchase, manufacture, to original natural resource. This activity can be done in pairs or small groups.

Examples: Tell the tale of a magazine back to the tree in the forest. Tell the tale of the wool sweater back to the sheep in the field. Tell the tale of the piece of Lego from plastic to oil, to prehistoric plants that created oil.

Assessment

Storytelling activities offer opportunities for a variety of assessments including listening, speaking, story generating, performance skills, recall, and participation. Although teachers are encouraged to create assessment rubrics with students, a selection of rubrics are provided in Appendix D of this resource as are a number of links to online samples below.

Listening Rubrics

http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/usestories/listenrubric.html

Speaking Rubrics

http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/usestories/storyrubric.html

Story Retelling Rubrics

http://www.louisianavoices.org/Unit5/edu_unit5w_story_retelling.html

http://sheridanpark.dsbn.org/documents/Retelling-FictionRubric.pdf

http://www.readinga-z.com/assessments/retelling-rubrics/ (requires membership)

Story Creation Rubrics

http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/usestories/storyrubric.html#composition

Self-Assessment Rubric

http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/usestories/selfassesment.html

Storytelling Resources

Professional Books:

Davis, D. (2005). *Telling your own stories.* Atlanta, GA: August House.

Freedman-De Vito, B. (2008). *Draw me a story: a dozen delightful "draw and tell" tales to entertain tiny tots.* San Bernardino, CA: Baby Bird Productions.

Neuburger, E. K. (2012). *Show me a story: 40 craft projects and activities to spark children's storytelling.* North Adams, MA: Story Publishing.

Pellowski, A. (2008). *The storytelling handbook.* New York, NY: Aladdin.

Macdonald-Read, M. (2007). *Five-minute tales: More stories to read and tell when time is short.* Atlanta, GA: August House.

Macdonald-Read M., MacDonald-Whitman, J. & Whitman-Forrest, N. (2013) *Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling.* Atlanta, GA: August House.

Norfolk, S., Stenson, J., & Williams, D. (2006). *The storytelling classroom: Applications across the curriculum.* Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Pellowski, A. (2005). *Drawing stories from around the world and a sampling of European handkerchief stories.* Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Wright, A. (2009). *Resource books for teachers: Storytelling with children.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

*A variety of graphic organizers including story maps, retelling maps, and coaching cards, as well as posters and handouts on word choice can be found at www.teacherspayteachers.com

Picture Books for Sharing and Retelling

Fables, legends, myths, fairytales, tall-tales and creation stories or pourquoi stories provide opportunities to reflect upon the cultural composition of a classroom and broaden student awareness of different populations of the world. Such works can be read or told, and used as models for students to emulate in retelling activities. The following is a selection of books that can be used to supplement a storytelling unit, however many more titles exist. Ask your teacher librarian for suggestions or look for titles that exist in your school library, resource center, or local bookstore.

Aardema, V. (1992). *Why mosquitos buzz in people's ears.* St. Louis, MO: Turtleback.
A jungle disaster results as Mosquito tells a story.

Ahenakey, F. (1996). *How the mouse got brown teeth. United States of America.* New York, NY: Mondo.
A Cree legend tells why mice around the world have brown teeth.

Bruchac, J. (1994). *The great ball game.* New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.
A Native American pourquoi tale explains why birds fly south every winter.

Bruchac, J., Bruchac, J. (2004). *Raccoon's last race.* New York, NY: Dial.
A Native American pourquoi tale explains why raccoons are the way they are today.

Clements, A. (1997). *Big Al.* New York, NY: Athenaeum Books for Young Readers.
The tale of how friendships can come about in the big blue sea.

Dabcovich, L. (1999). *The polar bear son: An Inuit tale.* New York, NY: HMH Books for Young Readers.
The tale of an adopted polar bear that provides for his Inuit mother as he grows up.

Demi. (2007). *The empty pot.* New York, NY: Henry Holt.
The theme of honesty resonates in this tale where an alluring contest is presented by the Emperor.

DePaola, T. (1997). *Strega nona.* New York, NY: Little Simon.
A town is overrun with spaghetti when a magic spell is forgotten.

DePaola, T. (2002). *The legend of the bluebonnet.* London, UK: Puffin.
A Comanche legend of how the bluebonnet flower came to be in Texas thanks to a little girl's sacrifice.

DuVoisin, R. (2000). *Petunia.* New York, NY: Knopf Books for Young Readers.
A mindless goose finds a book and shares misguided advice to her farmyard friends.

Fox, M. (1984). *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge.* San Diego, CA: Kane Miller Book.
Living next to a nursing home, Wilfred seeks out what memory is as one of his special friends begins to loose hers.

Gilman, P. (1993). *Something from nothing.* Markham, ON: Scholastic Press.
A Jewish tale of a talented tailor demonstrates how items can be reused and recycled to ultimately be transformed into something fresh.

Ginsburg, M. (1997). *Mushroom in the rain.* New York, NY: Aladdin.
An ant, butterfly, mouse, sparrow and rabbit somehow all find shelter under a mushroom in the rain.

Hurd, T. (2008). *Mama don't allow.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.
Miles, a saxophone player, uses his swamp band music to escape a crocodile's bite.

Isadora, R. (2012). *There was a tree.* New York, NY: Nancy Paulsen Books.
Set in Africa, this cumulative tale with colorful rebus icons are based on the lyrics "The prettiest tree that you ever did see."

Kaslik, I. (2010). *Tales from the tundra: A collection of Inuit stories.* Iqaluit, NU: Inhabit Media.
Traditional Inuit legends explain reasons why things are as they are.

Ketteman, H. (2000). *Armadillo tattletale.* Markham, ON: Scholastic Press.
A fun pourquoi tale where an armadillo learns the penalties of eavesdropping and blathering.

Kimmel, E. (1994). *Anansi and the talking melon.* New York, NY: Holiday House.
Elephant and others are tricked by clever spider.

Kleven, E. (1998). *The paper princess.* New York, NY: Penguin Group.
A gust of winds takes an unfinished cut-out doll on an adventure as she tries to return to the little girl who made her.

Kusagak, M. (2010). *The littlest sled dog.* Victoria, BC: Orca Book.
The endearing story of a little cairn terrier that goes to live in Rankin Inlet with her master.

Leaf, M. (2011). *The story of Ferdinand.* New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap.
A tale of a peaceful bull that would rather smell flowers than fight a Matador.

Mandela, N. (2002). *Nelson Madela's favorite African folktales.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
A collection of 32 treasured African tales.

Marceau-Chenkie, B. (1999). *Naya – The Inuit Cinderella.* Yellowknife, NWT: Raven Rock.
A beautiful rendition of Cinderella set in the high Canadian Arctic.

Martin, R. (1998). *The rough-face girl.* New York, NY: Puffin.
An unforgettable Algonquin version of Cinderella that is set in the shores of Lake Ontario.

McDermott, G. (2001). *Raven, a trickster tale of the Pacific northwest.* Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
Raven brings light to the world in a mischievous way.

Melmed-Kraus, L. (2004). *The rainbabies.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.
After a magical moon shower a childless couple finds a dozen tiny babies in the meadow.

Ondaatje, G. (2013). *The camel in the sun.* Toronto, ON: Groundwood.
An inspirational retelling of a Muslim hadith story about empathy.

Polacco, P. (2002). *Thunder cake.* London, UK: Puffin.
A girl learns to be brave during a storm thanks to her grandmother.

Rathmann, P. (1993). *Ruby the copycat.* New York, NY: Blue Ribbon Book.
A tale of how imitation helps a child find her individuality.

Ray, J. (1996). *The twelve dancing princesses.* London, UK: Orchard Books.
A dozen princesses dance each night without their father's consent.

Simpson, C. (2010). *The first mosquito.* Vancouver, BC: Heritage House Publishing.
A Pacific Northwest tale that presents traditional mythical creatures and explains how mosquitos came to be.

Sunberg, M. R. (2009). *The legend of the caribou boy.* Penticton, BC: Theytus Books.
A Dene tale that communicates the power of destiny and the relationship of the Dene people with the caribou. Written in dual language with accompanying CD.

Sunberg, M. R. (2008). *The old man with the otter medicine.* Penticton, BC: Theytus Books.
A Dene tale that shares the struggle for survival and the power of the medicine man. Written in dual language with accompanying CD.

Waddell, M. (1996). *Farmer duck.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.
A duck works tirelessly for a lazy farmer until he collapses. His farmyard friends come to his rescue.

Yolen, J. (1998). *The emperor and the kite.* St. Louis, MO: Turtleback Books.
An unassuming daughter rescues her Emperor father from a high tower with the assistance of her kite.

* Strong Nations Publishing has numerous Aboriginal titles to support culturally responsive teaching. View book collection at www.strongnations.com.

* Scholastic Inc. has a collection of 15 popular folk and fairy tales in an easy-reader form entitled Folk and Fairy Tales Easy Readers.

Wordless Picture Books for Creating Stories:

Banyai, I. (1998). *Zoom.* London, UK: Picture Puffin.
An engaging book with pictures cleverly positioned within pictures.

Geisert, A. (2006). *Oops*. Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
A humorous story of a pig family where one incident ripples into another and so on.

Lehman, B. (1997). *Rainstorm*. Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers.
A rainy afternoon becomes interesting as a mysterious key is found in a big house.

Lehman, B. (2004). *Red book.* Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers.
A book about a book where a girl's journey leads her to a friend she has never met.

Lehman, B. (2006). *Museum trip*. Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers; First Edition.
A boy becomes part of a museum exhibit when he strays from his class.

Lehman, B. (2011). *Secret box*. Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers.
A secret box with secret messages leads to secret places.

Lee, S. (2008). *Wave*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.
A little girl spends a day at the beach experiencing nature in a carefree manner.

Pinkney, J. (2009). *Lion and the mouse*. New York, NY: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

A rendition of an Aesop's tale. After saving the lion, a mouse is spared.

Thomson, B. (2010). *Chalk*. Oxford, UK: Two Lions.
One rainy day three children with a bag of chalk begin to draw and their drawings come to life.

Wiesner, D. (1991). *Free fall*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
An adventure begins when a boy falls asleep with a book in his arms.

Wiesner, D. (1991). *Tuesday*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.
An unpredictable Tuesday unfolds when a group of frogs take flight for an evening adventure.

Wiesner, D. (2006). *Flotsam*. New York, NY: Clarion Books; 1st edition.
While beachcombing, a boy discovers an old camera and develops its photos, learning about the mysterious adventures of the camera.

Audio Recording Websites:

Online Audio Stories	www.onlineaudiostories.com
Storynory	www.storynory.com

Professional Organization Websites:

Victoria Storytellers Guild	www.victoriastorytellers.org
Vancouver Storytellers Guild	www.vancouverstorytellers.vcn.bc.ca
Storytellers of Canada	www.storytellers-conteurs.ca/links.html

Local Storytellers' Websites:

Victoria Storytellers Guild	www.victoriastorytellers.org
David Bouchard	www.davidbouchard.com
Monique Gray-Smith	www.littledrum.com
Michael Kusugak	www.michaelkusugak.com
Ed Peekeekoot	www.peekeekoot.ca

Richard VanCamp
www.storiesofthenightsky.ca/vancamp.htm

Storytelling Festivals / Conferences:

Beyond the Border Wales International Storytelling Festival

www.beyondtheborder.com/festival/

Canadian Storytelling Festivals

www.storytellers-conteurs.ca/calendars/festivals.html

First Nations Steering Committee List of Events

www.fnesc.ca/listings

National Storytelling Festival

www.storytellingcenter.net/events/national-storytelling-festival

APPENDIX A – Story Maps

STORY ELEMENT MAPPING

Name: _____

TITLE:

AUTHOR / STORYTELLER:

SETTING

When? Where?

CHARACTERS

Main Character:

Other Characters:

BEGINNING

MIDDLE / PROBLEM

END /PROBLEM SOLVED

Story Title: _____

Name: _____

Character:	Setting:	Problem:

Story Map:

APPENDIX B – Coaching Card

PRESENTATION

Good Presenters consider:

1. Poise & Appearance
- Relax
- Be Confident

2. Body Language
- Move Natural
- Use Gestures
- Show Energy
- Engage Audience

3. Eye Contact
- Look at Everyone

4. Voice
- Speak Loud & Soft
- Use Expression

5. Pacing
- Speak Slow & Quick
- Pause
- Allow Silence

PRESENTATION

Good Presenters consider:

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APPENDIX C – Sample Assessment Rubrics

WHOLE BODY LISTENING RUBRIC Designed for use during Storytelling Activities

WHOLE BODY LISTENING Looks Like:	Emerging with DIRECT support....	Beginning with GUIDED support...	Developing with MINIMAL support...	Applying WITHOUT support...
EYES – look at the person speaking				
EARS – ready to hear				
MOUTH – quiet, hold your thought				
HANDS – still, on your lap				
FEET – quiet				
BODY – facing the speaker				
BRAIN – think about what is being said				
HEART – care about what is being said				
APPROPRIATE RESPONSE to comedy, silence, laughter, body language, chants, etc.				

LISTENING RUBRIC for Kindergarten

Prescribed Learning Outcome:

- use the **strategies** of preparing for listening and focusing on the speaker when listening to make and clarify meaning

Aspect	**Emerging with direct support....**	**Beginning with guided support...**	**Developing with minimal support...**	**Applying without support...**
Prepares for Listening	With direct support may be ready to listen to storyteller. May not attend enough to make meaning.	With guided support prepares to listen to storyteller to make meaning.	With minimal support prepares to listen to storyteller to make meaning.	Without support prepares to listen to storyteller to make meaning.
Attends to Storyteller throughout	With direct support attends to formal storytelling interactions.	With guided support attends to formal storytelling interactions.	With minimal support attends to formal storytelling language interactions.	Without support attends to formal storytelling interactions.
Makes meaning from Storyteller	With direct support listens yet does not yet make meaning of storytelling activities and presentations.	With guided support listens and makes some meaning of storytelling activities during storytelling activities and presentations.	With minimal support listens and makes meaning of storytelling activities during storytelling activities and presentations.	Without support listens and makes meaning of storytelling activities and presentations.

Adapted from page 445 of BC Ministry of Education ELA Curriculum Document (2006).

Grade 1 Rubric for Oral Language

From the BC Ministry of Education ELA Curriculum Document (2006).

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

A2 use **speaking** to explore, express, and present ideas, information, and feelings, by

- generally staying on topic
- using descriptive words about people, places, things, and events
- retelling stories in a logical sequence

Suggested Achievement Indicators

- speaks to entertain, inform, celebrate, and persuade different audiences (e.g., parents, peers, teacher)
- describes objects, events, and feelings
- tells a story in a meaningful sequence from pictures
- supports speaking with gestures and body language

Expectation:	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fully Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Speaks to entertain, inform, celebrate, and persuade different audiences (e.g., parents, peers, teacher)	-stays on topic for a short duration, with teacher support	-generally stays on topic for a short duration	-stays on topic for a short duration	-consistently stays on topic for an extended duration
Describes objects, events, and feelings	-not yet using descriptive words about people, places, things, and events	-beginning to use descriptive words about people, places, things, and events	-uses descriptive words about people, places, things, and events	-consistently uses a variety of descriptive words about people, places, things, and events
Retells stories in a logical sequence	-unable to tell a story in a meaningful sequence from pictures	-beginning to tell a story in a meaningful sequence from pictures	-tells a story in a meaningful sequence from pictures	-tells a story in a meaningful and complex sequence from pictures
Supports speaking with gestures and body language	-does not use gestures or body language to support retelling	-beginning to use gestures and body language to support retelling	-uses gestures and body language to support retelling	-consistently uses gestures and body language to support retelling

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