

## **Developing Language through Storytelling**

### **WHAT is a narrative?**

A narrative, in the simplest sense, is the telling of the story. A simple narrative structure begins with a setting and character development. The story rises to a conflict and falls to a conclusion. Storytelling has existed for thousands of years, long before writing and books. Telling a story is different from reading a book; it is a creative, interactive event that makes connections between people of all ages. It is a wonderful way to teach life lessons and to learn about each other.

### **WHY tell narratives/stories?**

Storytelling helps children develop a number of communication skills:

- Listening and understanding
- Imagining events when hearing about them
- Building vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation
- Putting thoughts into words
- Putting events in order
- Reasoning and problem-solving with language
- Imagining and creating
- Understanding and talking about feelings



### **HOW to tell stories?**

Tell stories about your day. Talk about what happened today, and what may happen later. This will help children learn to talk about the past and the future using correct grammar and sentence structure.

Make up pretend stories together. Take turns adding to the story. Use your imagination! Record your stories with a tape recorder so you can listen again and again. You can never tell the same story too many times!

Incorporate books. Tell a story first without the book, and then read the book. This helps to link stories with print. You can also re-tell or act out a story from a familiar book. Use toys, old clothes, puppets, or anything you can think of to help act out the story.

### **WHEN to tell stories?**

- Make sure that both the storyteller and the listener are actively involved.
- A simple narrative structure consists of a beginning, middle and end. When telling stories use words like 'first', 'next', and 'finally'.
- The story grammar is a more complex structure for story development. Answering the questions below form the components of a good narrative/story:
  - Who was in the story?
  - Where did it happen?
  - When did it happen?
  - What was the problem?
  - What was the plan?
  - What happened?
  - How did the people feel?

- How did it end?
- Encourage children to help tell the story – especially the repetitive or very familiar parts.
- Connect things that happen in the story with the children’s life experiences.
- **For older students:**
  - Act out the story with peers
  - Create a story circle where each subsequent person adds a thread to the story line until the story comes to a resolution
  - Share folktales with a younger audience
  - Perform an old time radio show in the classroom or over the PA system
  - Explore cultural narratives from around the world
  - Poetry – the poem does not need to rhyme but needs a vivid image within it and a sense of closure
  - Autobiography of anything – describe the life experiences of everyday items (rubber band, piece of paper, shoe, etc.)