

PRACTICE

Story Telling

Story telling is an important tradition shared in many cultures. It is used for many purposes, such as sharing experiences, teaching knowledge and connecting one generation to another.

Story telling is an art form that uses a person's voice, movement and expressions as well as media such as puppets, pictures, sounds and music to enhance the content of the story being told.

Story telling is a great educator's tool to encourage a feeling of belonging, using language and the arts to communicate and engage children in dialogue that promotes the expression of feelings and ideas.

To start a series of stories that will engage the children choose a subject that is familiar and relevant to them. Why not start with your story and share it with the children?

Things to think about:

- What do you consider to be your cultural heritage?
- Tell us a traditional story or legend from your family that is exciting and teaches something.
- Tell us something that is modern and symbolic of your heritage today, - for example, music groups, dances, food, parties, gatherings
- What do you do today to celebrate your heritage? Any holidays? What do you do on these holidays or at family gatherings?

Some examples:

MIKE: I have met many people with the same last name as I have, only they have different spellings. Later I discovered that my ancestors in Ireland could not read or write (having seen documents signed with an "X"). In fact, they could not spell their own last names, hence the many different spellings.

GEORGE: When it is Christmas my family in Singapore all visit each other to eat together and exchange gifts – first the younger generation visits the older family members and then it is the other way round. Like this – depending on how big your family is – Christmas and its celebrations can last for weeks!

GRETA: My family lives in a village in Germany and on the first of May all the children in the village collect materials and items such as doormats, watering cans and loose fenceposts that they find around the village and bring them to the central meeting place. Everybody goes there after they come from church to find what is theirs.

Before you 'tell' the story:

- Select one of your stories that you feel is of interest and appropriate to your audience.
- Find supporting activities such as music, a video, photos, an arts activity etc that will enhance your story.
- Decide on the 'how' of telling your story and prepare the 'scene'.

Once you have started the 'yarning' with the children you can extend it and explore its different components. Take the lead from the children, some may want to re-tell the same story in lots of different ways, others may want to explore the theme of the story further (e.g. how different families and cultures celebrate birthdays). The opportunities are endless.

Making stories relevant and educational in the context of diversity:

- Connect the content of the story with yours and/or the children's experiences
- Provide opportunities for the children to get involved in the story by:
 - Adding in to its content.
 - Re-experiencing it through related activities.
 - Contributing to the props for the story telling.
 - Partaking in the story presentation.
- Encourage the exploration of 'different' and 'same' by:
 - Sharing the content in different ways.
 - Using the same props for different stories.
 - Investigate the impact on the same story if it was based in a different place/culture/climate/time...
 - Have different people tell the story their own way.

Stories are infinite by nature and can be re-told at a later stage and added to at any time. Creating a scrap book, display, piece of music or by leaving your props in the room (e.g. finger puppets can be left in a basket on a shelf) encourages children to 'pick' up the story again and re-live and extend it allowing it to become a part of the children's development.