

Statesman Journal Article

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Storytelling

"Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever."

- Indian Proverb

Storytelling, once viewed by many educators as being a pleasant way to spend time at best, and a complete waste of time at worst, is now being recognized as a powerful tool that can help build literacy and critical thinking skills. It allows different learning styles to be used: auditory, visual & kinesthetic.

Jump into the world of storytelling with your children! Documented time and time again, it has been found to be crucial to child development, and helps to strengthen neural pathways that make learning of all kinds possible.

Many storytellers, educators and researchers advocate that storytelling can contribute significantly to early literacy development. They also claim that regular storytelling experience increases young children's vocabulary, as they encounter a broad range of new words through story, thereby supporting the development of their written vocabulary.

Hearing stories helps build comprehension by being able to mentally map the story's main events. It exposes us to unfamiliar literature and traditional tales and increases understanding of our world's diverse cultures. Storytelling develops mental imaging skills. It encourages problem-solving behavior and offers solutions to moral dilemmas. Hearing stories instills love of language in listeners and stimulates them to read. Hearing stories also encourages creative writing and public speaking skills.

You don't need to be an expert when it comes to telling and sharing stories with your children, family, friends or students. The priceless rewards will be well worth any initial nervousness or self-consciousness you might feel. The story can be of a real event or it can be made up.

Perhaps the biggest question that faces would-be story-tellers is: "Where do I begin?" Two practical answers are: your library and the internet. At most libraries, there are sections to turn to for collections of folktales, fairytales, legends and myths from all over the world. So go ahead and explore these books to find those stories that speak to you and your children.

Many storytelling experiences incorporate word play, such as rhymes and tongue twisters, and a good children's storyteller will invite children to actively participate in these repeatedly throughout a story, until the children are playing with these words for the rest of the day and perhaps for many days or weeks after. Try these simple techniques to kick start your family's storytelling and have fun!

1. "Read" a picture book to your child with their eyes closed. Without showing them the pictures, talk about the pictures they saw in their heads. Compare and talk about the illustrator's vision of the story.
2. Tell a story and have the kids act it out.
3. Add simple props.
4. Add sound effects- easiest to add: Wind blowing, crying, stomping your feet, animal noises, snoring, cheering, booing.
5. You tell a story and have your child re-tell it to you.

Take a moment to try something that has moved people since the dawn of time - tell some stories. *"To be a person is to have a story to tell."* -Isak Dinesen