

Dear Families,

There are some little things that can carry big impacts, or as the saying goes, “big doors swing on small hinges”. That is to say there are a few practices we can build into our child’s day that carry impacts that are larger than the time we spend doing them. One is storytelling. Storytelling has three big benefits for our young (and old) children:

1. Storytelling helps build oral language, and strong oral language helps your child become a strong reader and writer
2. Storytelling helps build identity. The stories we tell ourselves become how we think of ourselves (for good and for not-so-good)
3. Storytelling helps your child feel powerful and have agency.

All practices have intended and unintended effects. When your child tells stories they are building a writer’s way of thinking. In time your child will gain more fluency with a pen or pencil, and all the practice they have had with TELLING stories will appear in the stories they now write. The unintended benefit of all this storytelling, is that your child will also have a rich reserve of stories that help them understand who they are in the world. Most of the storytelling prompts in this packet aim to have children tell stories where they are people who can make change, be resilient, and leave the world a better place.

Imaginary stories are good to tell too! As Kurt Vonnegut says, “Be careful who you pretend to be, for that is who you are.” When your child pretends to conquer great challenges in stories and in play they are becoming the type of people who will do so.

Guidelines for storytelling:

- Your child can tell stories in many ways. They can tell them: orally, by drawing pictures, or by playing (with legos, blocks, paper dolls, figures)
- You do not have to be there to listen to your child’s story, just set the scene for them to “play stories”
- If your child naturally engages in story play, you can sit back and say “great, this carries tons of academic and emotional benefits and I will not interrupt this to make them do something else. In fact, I will ignore them and read this regency romance novel in the name of self care.” If your child DOES NOT, it could be that some props and prompts are in order (See below)
- Props for storytelling: lego people, clothespins (the ones that look like people- your child can decorate them), sticks, dolls, corks, loose parts. TIP: you can print out pictures of your family or people important to your child, cut them out together, and glue them on to toilet paper rolls to make “paper dolls” that stand on their own.
- DO NOT STRESS OUT if violence shows up in your child’s storytelling. It is not a predictor of future violence. Lawrence Cohen, the author of *The Opposite of Worry*, says that children are more inclined to play in these powerful ways when they feel powerless. My child is scared of Bowser in Super Mario so he is *more often* to play with Bowser and defeat him or make him a “good guy” in his imaginary play.

Maybe take some time to tell some stories yourself, it helps us all in these times.

Warmly,

Kristi

Storytelling Prompts

Use these if you or your child is at a loss for what stories they could tell or retell. These are a starting point, so if the story takes a new turn, great.

Tell a story
about being
brave



Tell a story
about trying
again



Tell a story
about your
favorite place



Tell a story
about your
favorite person



Tell a story
about your
favorite thing



Tell the story of
your favorite
movie or book



Tell a story
about solving a
mystery



Tell a story
about going on
an adventure



Tell a story
about friends

