



**Oral
Language
Activities**

Puppets and Drama:

- Have children retell books using puppets.
- Have a puppet/drama literacy work station.
- Let students make puppets and create a story to go with them.
- Let students create puppets to go with a story they have told.

Dress-Up Center:

Students can dress up and pretend to be different people or animals. Include different dress up clothes and props for children to use when role playing.

Mystery Bag:

Students bring in a show and tell item that fits inside a reusable lunch bag (teacher provided). A clue sheet was sent with the student to write 3 clues so the other students could guess what the mystery bag item was. Mystery Bag student reads the clues one at a time and class guesses what they think the item is. Students can also ask questions.

Star of the Week:

One student each week brings pictures to display on a bulletin board. The student writes about the pictures on sentence strips. Student orally shares what the pictures were about.

Buzz Groups:

Students get in groups of 4-5. Each student takes a turn talking about whatever the topic is (the weekend, something they did with their family/friends, share an object they have brought, etc.). After everyone has had a turn the group decides which member will share their story with the entire class. After all buzz groups have shared with the entire group, one story may be picked to record.

Mile a Minute: (Based on the concept of the game Password)

Gather a variety of pictures on a certain topic (ie. content vocabulary, content pictures, famous people, storybook characters). Have students pair up. One partner is A and one partner is B. Partner A faces the screen and partner B faces away from the screen. Display 4-6 pictures so that Partner A (facing the screen) can see the pictures. Partner A describes each picture with clues until Partner B identifies the picture. As soon as Partner B has identified all the pictures, the team raises their hands. Students switch positions and new pictures are displayed and the task is repeated. As an extension activity, students can write a description of one of the pictures.

Think-Pair-Share:

Think – The “think” part of Think-Pair-Share is designated as a time either after a question, prompt, or reading for students to independently think about the topic. Student may want to write down notes or ideas as the brainstorm about the topic at hand. Students may want to rehearse what they want to share or say. The time allotted for thinking should be considerate of the amount of reading, if any, that is required.

Pair— After independent thinking time is over students should “pair” up with classmate. Teachers may want to pick partners for each student, randomly assign partners, or have students choose their own partners. The goal of pairing students is to allow students the opportunity to discuss ideas and thoughts and to provide opportunity for them also to listen and gain insights from each other. It is during this time that students will want to decide what they wish to share as a team about the topic.

Share—During the “sharing” step of the strategy students will reveal their ideas on the topic or question to the entire class. The team can decide what to share, or if there are disagreements, they can each give their own thoughts and reasoning.

<http://forpd.ucf.edu/strategies/think-pair-share-strategy-May09.html>

Book Talks/Discussions:

Students (whole group, small groups, or pairs) discuss books that they have read, that have been read to them or that they have listened to. The teacher may or may not be involved.

Picture Walk:

Teachers and students interact with the pictures of a book. Picture walks focus on objects, scenes, and happenings. Talk about: What do you see?, What do you think?, What do you wonder?.

http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Regional_Handouts_New_Orleans/Picture_Walking_A_New_Way_Building_Book_Awareness_Vocabulary_and_Comprehension_with_At_Risk_Families.sflb.ashx

Picture Talk:

- Have students bring in photo from home and share with the class. Students can tell the story behind the picture.
- Have photos or pictures of everyday, ordinary scenes available. Individual students or entire class can discuss the pictures or make up stories about the pictures.

Interview a Character:

One (or more) students pretend to be character(s) from a story. Another student interviews them. Interviewer can ask questions such as: Why did they _____?, How did they feel when _____?, When did they realize _____?, What do they plan on doing now that the story has ended?, Where did they _____?, Why did _____ happen?, etc. Students can brainstorm questions as a whole class for a particular story and then “characters” can prepare answers.

Interview a Friend: (Adapted from a lesson by Cagina Noird)

For this activity, pair each student up with a partner (if numbers are uneven, teacher can work with a student) or allow students to choose a partner. Explain to students that they will interview each other. As a class, brainstorm some possible questions that would be appropriate and encourage students to be creative and come up with some original questions as well (i.e. What is your favorite sport? What do you like to do on the weekend? What is your favorite book?, etc.) . Give students an appropriate amount of time to ask and answer all questions (number of questions depends on grade level). Students can interview each other in front of class just as a newscaster would. This can be done over several days/weeks until everyone has had a chance to interview someone and present. Using a microphone (play or real) makes it more realistic.

Retelling

Have individual students retell a story. Other students can ask questions to help clarify. Students can retell using puppets, felt boards, finger puppets, etc.

Share Wear (From Junior Class Learning)

Turn to your neighbor and share a story about something you are wearing today. Take turns so each person gets to speak.

When both partners have had a chance to speak, the teacher then calls on several participants to share their story. If the students don't give vivid details the teacher asks questions to draw information out. Yes/no answers are not allowed.

Students then draw a picture about what they are wearing. As the students are drawing their picture, the teacher briefly jots on the back of the picture what the students recites to them about what they are wearing. The teacher uses this for publishing later.

Just in Case

Put a variety of objects (10 or so) in a small case/box (lunch box size). Allow a child to choose an object that reminds them of something. Have the child share with the group what the object reminds them of, who was there, what happened, where was it, when was it.... Students can also write after this activity.

I Spy

One student secretly chooses an object in the room that is visible to everyone. Then the student says, "I spy something that begins with ____." Students guess what it is. The student that correctly guesses the object gets to pick the next object.

Listening Walk

Take the children on a walk around the school or sit in the classroom and listen to the sounds around you. After five minutes children describe what sounds they have heard. (MLPP Oral Language Activities)

Brainstorming:

Have children brainstorm all the uses of an object, ways to solve a problem, everything they know about something, etc. Record on chart paper if desired.

Criss Cross Candy Floss (From Junior Class Learning)

Explain to the children that Candy Floss is what children in New Zealand call cotton candy.

Teach the rhyme and clapping pattern.

Criss	cross	candy	floss
(lap)	(clap)	(lap, lap)	(clap)

Then say: **"My name is _____.**

My favorite color is _____

Because _____."

Move from child to child to let everyone share. Repeat the rhyme and clapping between students.

Children can write their rhymes and illustrate them.

Headbands:

Students are given a "headband" to wear. This headband goes across their forehead and has a piece of Velcro in the middle of it. A picture card is placed on the Velcro. Student wearing the headband asks the group questions to try and figure out what is on their card. The questions can only be yes or no questions. Possible categories for pictures are: Animals, Foods, Famous People, Sports, Household Items, Famous Places, etc.)

Just A Minute: (Junior Class Learning) (See resource to send home at end of packet)

Students talk about something they know about for one minute. Child can bring the object from home or the teacher can hand the student an object, show students a picture of something, etc.

Weather Reporter:

Have students pretend they are the weather reporter and report the weather to the class. You can send a note home the night before so parents can help students know what the weather for the next day is supposed to be and so students can practice.

If you have an old television set, take the “guts” out and students can sit behind the television with their face showing through the screen. This makes it more real.

Daily News/News Reporter: (See resource to send home at end of packet)

Have students practice a current event story at home to present to the class.

If you have an old television set, take the “guts” out and students can sit behind the television with their face showing through the screen. This makes it more real.

Phone Station/Center:

Have old phones/cell phones for students to pretend talk on. Children can record messages on “message” pads.

House/Restaurant/Grocery Store Center, etc:

Children can role play. Have dress up clothes and props (dishes, menus, food box and cans, etc.) available.

Morning Meeting

Students can greet each other, share news, stories, etc during this time.

Sing Songs and Chants

Play songs and chants and have students sing along. Motions and movement can be added.

Readers Theater:

Students perform a text, such as a story, a chapter, or a scene orally. They reread the text with the goal of using their voices to interpret the meaning of the text. Reader's theater does not require props, costumes, or memorization. The text is read, not memorized. (Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency, Fountas and Pinnell)

Resources for Reader Theater Scripts

<http://www.teachingheart.net/readers-theater.htm>

<http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html>

<http://www.richmond.k12.va.us/readamillion/readers-theater.htm>

http://www.readinglady.com/index.php?module=documents&JAS_DocumentManager_op=viewDocument&JAS_Document_id=9&MMN_position=34:34

Circle Time

Circle Time should be used to encourage students to talk and play with language. It is a good time for finger plays and oral recitation. Circle Time is an optimum time for conversations. Personal narratives may be shared during Circle Time.

Read Aloud and Shared Reading

Reading and rereading books help children to develop their oral language. The more they hear the language, the more they will start using the language in their own talking and writing.

Storytelling

Have students story tell in pairs and to the whole class. (See attached Storytelling Unit. This says it is for second language students, but can be used for all students.)

Guess What I Have?

One child explains what they have without saying the word and the other child has to guess or ask questions about it. This also helps promote the ability to ask questions using wh-questions (what do you do with it, where can you find it, who uses it, when would you see it, etc.)

Use Wordless Picture Books:

Teachers must remember the value of wordless picture books in stimulating oral language development. For instance, we recently saw a teacher institute a 'story-tell' around Chris Van Allsburg's book. *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*. The students sat in a circle and the teacher encouraged them to look hard at the picture and notice as many details as possible. The teacher began the story and each child was encouraged to add to it, one after another around the circle. Only the person holding the "talking stick" could speak. The rest of the students listened carefully so that when their turns came, they would know what had happened so far in the story and were able to add a piece that made sense.

From: Developing Oral Language in Primary Classrooms

Lynn D. Kirkland¹ and Janice Patterson¹ *Early Childhood Education Journal*, Vol. 32. No. 6, June 2005 (© 2005)

Barrier Games:

Barrier games require students to interact and use language to complete a task by giving and receiving instructions. Barrier Games promote listening and speaking, and help to strengthen your students' *semantic*, *syntactic*, and *pragmatic* language skills.

• **Possible Barriers:**

- Large hardback book
- 2 single fold files, stapled together to make a Π shape
- Ring binder (empty)
- Seat children back-to-back (only really suitable for paired work)

- **Dressing game:** Print out 2 people and 2 identical sets of clothes and hair from www.makingfriends.com. Cut the clothes out and laminate them (for durability). Give each child a set. One child dresses their person and describes what they are doing, the other tries to make theirs the same.

- Step up – lots of clothes, very similar clothes (e.g. blue shirt and blue t-shirt)
- Step down – only 2 choices for each item. Eliminate socks (too fiddly). Help children sort clothes by type before they start (e.g. all hats together, all trousers together etc.)

- **Bead threading:** Use a set of beads and commercially produced cards (or make your own set, using drawings or photos of the beads available to you), showing strings of beads. One child describes the string to the other child who makes them.
 - Step up – use beads that are similar (e.g. small round red, large round red, small round blue etc.)
 - Step down – use very different beads
 - Variation – give each child an identical set of beads and ask them both to make a string.

- **Guess Who?:** Play commercially available ‘Guess Who?’ game. You do not need a physical barrier for this game.
 - Step down – use one board only and have one person doing the guessing, the other answering questions or giving clues about who they have chosen.

- **Make your own ‘Guess Who?’:** (especially suitable for group work). Take photos of everyone in the group. Optional – each person to add a paragraph about themselves giving information such as name, age, class/teacher’s name, favorite color/food etc. Spread the pictures out in front of the group. One person chooses one of the pictures, without saying which it is. The rest of the group ask questions to work out who has been chosen.
 - If the child choosing the picture keeps changing their mind about which card they have chosen, give them a small, flat token (such as a small scrap of paper) to hide under their chosen picture while everyone else turns their back.
 - Step down – turn the pictures over when a the person is eliminated (e.g. if you find out it’s a boy, turn all the girl’s pictures over); use fewer pictures
 - Step up – use lots of pictures, use pictures of people not present.

- **Funny Faces:** Provide each child with a sheet of paper with ovals on it. One child makes a face and describes what they are doing. The other tries to make the same face.
 - Variation – make cards showing different faces in advance, and have one child describe them for another to recreate.

- **Drawing Activity:** Provide each child with some paper and an identical pack of pens or colored pencils. Have one child draw a picture and describe it. The other person has to try to make an identical picture.

- **Coloring Activity:** Give each child an identical picture to color (coloring pictures can be downloaded from a number of websites, alternatively, draw you own), and an identical set of pens/pencils. One child colors their picture and describes it for the others to make theirs the same.
 - Step down – provide the child with an already colored in picture; Give very simple pictures.
 - Step up – give ‘composite pictures’ (ie., pictures of a scene); remind the child doing the describing to use unusual/unpredictable colors (e.g. “there is a green rabbit with purple spots. It is eating a blue carrot” etc.)

<http://www.commtap.org/generalresources/englishlev1/AR%20E%20ideas%20for%20barrier%20games.doc>

Class Cookbook:

Make a class cookbook containing children's favorite recipes. Give each student an opportunity to tell about his or her favorite dish. Record the name of the recipe and then ask the child what ingredients the cook uses in the recipe. Make a list of the ingredients and then ask what the cook does first, next, and so on to make the dish. Record the child's responses, then read the recipe together.

When every child has dictated his or her recipe, type and copy the recipes and ask children to illustrate them. Collate and staple the pages together to make recipe books. Don't expect the recipes to be perfect. Instead, expect them to be interesting. One child's recipe for biscuits said "She puts them in the oven. She takes them out when she smells them burning."

Read more at Suite101: [Developing Oral Language in Primary Classrooms: Children's Dictation Activities | Suite101.com](http://primary-school-curriculum.suite101.com/article.cfm/developing_oral_language_in_primary_classrooms#ixzz0ZJF1e8yi) http://primary-school-curriculum.suite101.com/article.cfm/developing_oral_language_in_primary_classrooms#ixzz0ZJF1e8yi

Reading Books

When reading books to children or after reading:

- Discuss the book's pictures and have students paraphrase the story;
- Let students make up his or her own version of what will happen next in a story;
- If a story is familiar, allowing students to finish telling key events or giving the succeeding rhyme;
- Acting out the story or creating a puppet show

http://www.idonline.org/article/Nurturing_Oral_Language_Skills/6314

Language Experience Approach Charts (LEA)

Excerpted Ready Set Read! by Jean Feldman, Ph.D.,

Directions: Use language experience approach charts to record children's speech, then read back over what they have dictated. The following are possible LEA chart topics.

Field Trips

Class Parties

Super Star: Choose one child each week to be the "super star." Write his or her name at the top of the chart, then ask each classmate to dictate what they like best about that person.

K-W-L: When starting a new unit or topic of study, ask children what they **K**now about the topic and what they **W**ant to learn about the topic. As they **L**earn new information, add it to the chart.

Story Recall

Daily News

Complete the Sentence: Write part of a sentence at the top of the chart, then write children's names and how they would complete the sentence. For example:

"I am special because _____."

"When I grow up I want to be a/an _____."

"I like to read _____."

"My favorite center at school is _____."

"Mystery Person" by Dr. Jean Feldman

This activity (excerpt) is taken from: Transition Time: Let's Do Something Different!

- When the children are sitting down, take the marker and write, "Mystery Person" at the top of the chart.
- Write and draw clues about a special person in the class.
- The children have to play detective to discover who the Mystery Person is.
- Ask the children to look at you.
- Write the following clue: *My eyes are (color).*
- Use pictures and the appropriate color markers to illustrate the clues. For example, use blue to draw blue eyes, brown to draw brown hair, etc.
- Ask the children to "read" the clue.
- Point to each word.
- Next, write the second clue. *My hair is (color).*
- Again, read the clue together.
- Continue writing and reading clues about the Mystery Person's favorite food, songs, stories, games, pets, family, etc.
- Tell the children when they think they know who it is to smile.
- At the bottom of the chart write, "Who am I?"
- Read over the entire chart, asking the Mystery Person to stand up at the end. (Make the clues fairly obvious and look directly at that person.)
- The Mystery Person can draw her picture at the bottom of the page and take it home.

<http://www.literacyconnections.com/DrJeanMysteryPerson.php>

How Do You Use It?

Robert Rockwell, Debra Reichert Hoge, and Bill Searcy

Linking Language: Simple Language and Literacy Activities Throughout the Curriculum

What you will need:

- Photographs or objects to show the children

Words you can use:

- ride, car, bus, wear, hat, gloves, sit, chair, bench, eat, with, fork, knife, sleep, bed, cot, wash, dishes, clothes, clean, dish, house

What to do:

- Tell the children that you are going to show them some things that we use both at home and here at school. Use photographs or real items if possible.
- Show the children an item. Let the children take turns answering, "How do we use this?"
- Start with items that are available in the center such as a table, chair, rug, block, paintbrush, or paper.
- Now try items of clothing such as shoes, socks, pants, dress, boots, raincoat, or ribbon.
- Now try items that are found in homes such as a bed, sofa, chair, knife, spoon, telephone, or television.

<http://www.literacyconnections.com/LAHowDoYouUseIt.php>

Stuffed Animal Mystery

Robert Rockwell, Debra Reichert Hoge, and Bill Searcy

Linking Language: Simple Language and Literacy Activities Throughout the Curriculum

What you will need:

- Stuffed animals (children could bring from home)
- Pillowcase
- Box (large enough to cover mystery items)

Words you can use:

- | | | |
|-----------|----------|---------|
| • mystery | • think | • small |
| • sack | • soft | • large |
| • guess | • big | |
| • clue | • little | |

What to do:

- - One child fills a pillowcase with familiar stuffed animals.
- - She tells the other children to close their eyes or to face in the opposite direction.
- - She takes an animal from the pillowcase and hides it from view under a box.
- - She tells the other children to open their eyes or to turn around.
- - She uses words to describe the mystery animal without naming it.
- - The other children listen and as descriptions are given, they ask questions that will help them identify the stuffed animal.
- - After the stuffed animal is identified, another child takes a turn selecting an animal and describing it to the other children.

More:

- Describe vegetables that will be eaten at snack.
- Describe dolls, toys, objects, or equipment in the classroom.

Whisper Down the Line (Telephone):

Telephone, Broken Telephone, Whisper Down the Line, Gossip: the first player whispers a phrase or sentence to the next player. Each player successively whispers what that player believes he or she heard to the next. The last player announces the statement to the entire group. Errors typically accumulate in the retellings, so the statement announced by the last player differs significantly, and often amusingly, from the one uttered by the first.

How to play:

As many players as possible line up such that they can whisper to their immediate neighbors but not hear any players farther away. The player at the beginning of the line thinks of a phrase, and whispers it as quietly as possible to his neighbor. The neighbor then passes on the message to the next player to the best of his ability. The passing continues in this fashion until it reaches the player at the end of the line, who calls out the message he or she received.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_whispers

Talk Time!

The Home:

- Design the ideal home. Tell your classmates about it.
- Describe your bedroom. Your classmates should be able to produce a detailed plan of the place, according to your description.
- You have won 25,000 dollars in the lottery. Tell how you would spend it.
- In groups, design the house of the future. Show the results on a poster. Orally share with the class.
- Draw a plan of your neighborhood, show where your house is and explain how you go to the following places: a) the baker's, b) the supermarket and c) your favorite disco or pub.
- Would you rather rent a house or buy one? Discuss.

School Life

- In pairs, list the qualities of the perfect teacher.
- Say what your favorite school subjects are. Give reasons.
- Homework is necessary. Discuss.
- Tell your classmates a funny story/situation that has taken place in your school.
- In groups discuss school situations that you think need to change. Be prepared to defend your group.

Jobs

- Tell your classmates about one job you would NOT like to do. Explain your choice.
- Would you like to be a (policeman/policewoman)? Why? Why not?
- Think of one job. Let your classmates ask you questions about it (i.e. "Do you work indoors?", "Is your job interesting?" etc.) You may only answer "Yes" or "No". Can they guess the job you are thinking about?

Spare Time

- How many different jobs can you name in 1 minute?
- Summarize the plot of a book you have enjoyed. Can your classmates guess its title?
- Tell the class about the worst/best TV program you have ever seen.
- Are you sports-mad? Briefly describe the rules of your favorite sport.
- If you could travel round the world, what countries would you visit? Why?
- Tell your classmates about the (computer/video) game you like best.

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/LAOTalkTime-GetTalking-Good1stDayIdea35.htm>

Oral Language Strategies

Story aprons to let children come to love stories and practice retellings

Story props (like Clifford, Arthur, Franklin, Chicka Chicka Tree) for children

Finger puppets for retellings, creating stories

Computer software for stimulating language development

Games and materials that encourage capital and lower case letter learning

Add new verses to existing poems

Discussions that focus on a variety of topics, including problem solving

Activities that help children understand the world, in and out of the classroom

Songs, chants, and poems that are fun to sing and say

Concept development and vocabulary-building lessons

Games and other activities that involve talking, listening, and following directions

Activities that help children to understand that print represents spoken language

Activities that highlight the meanings, uses, and production of print found in classroom signs, label, notes, posters, calendars, and directions.

Activities in which children practice with predictable and patterned language stories.

Practice activities that involve blending together the components of sounded-out words.

"Word play" activities in which children change beginning, middle, or ending letters of related words, thus changing the words they decode and spell.

Language games that teach children to identify rhyming words and to create rhymes on their own.

Activities that help children understand that spoken sentences are made up of groups of separate words, that words are made up of syllables, and that words can be broken down into separate sounds.

Alphabetic awareness activities in which children learn that printed words are made up of patterns of letters.

Lessons in sound-letter relationships that are organized systematically and that provide as much practice and review as is needed.

As children exhibit behaviors indicative of emergent literacy, parents and teachers can seize the teachable moments, and provide developmentally appropriate materials and interactions to further literacy development.

Alphabetic knowledge activities in which children learn the names of letters and learn to identify them rapidly and accurately.

Activities that are related to the words that children are reading and writing.

<http://www.earlyliterature.ecsd.net/oral.htm>

Practices Promoting Language Development:

- The classroom has a variety of learning centers (blocks, books, housekeeping).
- Ample time is provided to children to play in the centers.
- Children are provided ample materials for dramatic play (dress-up clothes, props).
- Speech is encouraged through use of puppets and stuffed animals that can speak for children.
- Children are encouraged to discuss the pictures and action in books that are read aloud.
- Children are encouraged to retell books that have been read aloud.
- Adults model use of new words related to children's play.
- Adults sing with children, often using children's names in familiar songs.
- New objects are added often to the Science/Discovery Center to encourage children's talk.
- Non-English speaking children are provided with language experiences in their own native language.
- Children are encouraged to work together and talk about what they are doing at the computer.
- Adults serve as good language models by expanding children's language.

Just a Minute

I am a reporter for "Just a Minute" on _____. I need to talk about something I know a lot about for one minute. I can bring props to show as I report to the class.



News Reporter

It is my turn to be a "News Reporter" on _____. Can you please help me find an article, picture or advertisement in the newspaper that I could report on to my group?

Thank you!



Storytelling as a Strategy to Increase Oral Language Proficiency of Second Language Learners

By Katherine Massa

Preface

I am writing this unit because of the desperate need for more oral language instruction. Today more than ever students are coming into school with insufficient language knowledge. Our students' oral language skills are not developed enough to support the curriculum and objectives we teachers are pushing so hard. They require formal language instruction before they can be expected to become fluent readers, writers, and thinkers.

This unit is a focused, intensive unit on storytelling. Storytelling is the strategy I use to help obtain oral language proficiency among second language learners and students with deficient language skills. Storytelling gives the students the daily practice they need in order to advance their language skills. This unit will help the students understand how telling stories and story structure enable them to express themselves more clearly. The students will also learn through storytelling that their ability to listen to others will increase, expanding both their vocabulary, knowledge base and sentence structure.

Background

I teach second grade at a dual language school focusing on international communication. Demographically, the majority of my students are of Hispanic and Black descent. Many of the students at John C. Daniels speak Spanish as their dominant language. It is through our dual language program that students learn English or Spanish as a second language. As a result, in the early grades, many students' oral language skills in their second language, more so than in their primary language, are far below grade level. When I formally tested my student's oral language level based on the MONDO oral language assessment, I found that some of my students scored at a Kindergarten level. Students at this level have difficulty following simple instructions and understanding texts read to them. The majority of my students scored at a beginning First Grade level, meaning they have difficulty comprehending texts above a DRA level of 6 read in class. Only a few of my students scored on a second grade level, in part because many of my students learned to read in Spanish. I found these results alarming.

How can I, as the teacher, force a curriculum onto these students who have not yet acquired the necessary fundamental skills to understand and tackle it successfully? My answer to this question is that I can't and we as teachers need to make an adjustment in our teaching to account for this. Much of the curriculum we are expected to follow is intended for students who are on grade level. Based on the assessment data I have for my classroom- which is that the majority of students fall below grade level in oral language, leading also to their deficiencies in both reading and writing- the second grade curriculum proves to be too advanced. Many of the books have vocabulary and structure that are too complex for their academic level. I see this a lot in my classroom where my students are able to read at a higher level than they can speak and function. One example of this is a student in my class who is able to read at a DRA level

12, yet his oral language level is so low that he can't structurally put a sentence together well enough to ask me if he can use the bathroom. Another example I see in students who have low language skills is that they "look" like fluent readers when you listen to them read, but when it comes down to comprehension questions and being able to retell what they have just read, they can not do it. They do not have the language skills or background to support a clear understanding of the story. Much of this discrepancy can be addressed if we as teachers take the time to focus on formal language instruction. We need to remember that you need to be able to speak and listen in order to read, write, and think.

Storytelling is perfect strategy to use with the students at my school because it also fits in with our international communication magnet theme and will honor the students' cultural roots and individuality. The students at my school have rich heritages and it is through this unit that they will be able to express themselves and learn about the diverse backgrounds of their fellow classmates. Because this unit is focused on second language learners, my partner teacher who teaches the Spanish component will be working with the students who are learning Spanish as their second language, while I am working with the students who are learning English as their second language.

Oral Language

Oral Language is what gives children the foundation for literacy development. English language learners (ELL's) need and require daily language practice. It is through listening to other people that they gain much of their vocabulary and sentence structure. By listening to other people they also learn the context in which words are used. These children require not only listening to others but also a safe and comfortable environment in which they can practice the skills that they have learned. Children must learn to speak and carry on conversations before they can become active readers.

Formal language instruction is needed to assist our students to achieve the proficiency necessary to become successful learners in the classroom. In order to do this we need to bridge the gap between the informal language spoken at home and the formal instructional language they hear at school. To do this, students need language instruction so they can learn to speak appropriately and to listen. Oral language instruction will help students to be fluent and understand structured academic language.

Storytelling is a perfect avenue to explore when looking for ways to develop the oral language skills of second language learners in a classroom. This unit will encompass many of the techniques and strategies used to increase language skills as stated by Crevola and Vineis (MONDO 2005). For example this unit will:

- Develop personal relationships among all the children.
- Provide daily opportunities for language development.
- Create opportunities to interact regularly on a one to one basis.
- Challenge students to talk, think, and explore their knowledge of the world.

- Support students as they develop the language and learning strategies necessary to articulate and extend their interactions with the world.

Storytelling

Storytelling has long held an important role in history. People have passed down stories from generation to generation. It has served as a way to explain and understand the world. There are many different types of stories, which are told for many different purposes. Stories help explain different phenomena, cultural beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and much more. In this unit we will be focusing on folktales and traditional stories arising from the students' heritages.

Storytelling has many key values for both the individual telling the story and the people listening to the story being told. Among the values that storytelling instills in its participants as stated by Margaret Read Macdonald, in *The Storytellers Start-Up Book*, is that it "hones our literary and imaginative skills. We improve our ability to listen, speak, imagine, compose phrases and create stories" (Pg. 101). Macdonald continues on in her book to say that storytelling broadens our awareness of our own as well as other cultures, allows us to understand ourselves better, gives us a sense of belonging to a group and increases our vocabularies. Jack McGuire lists the benefits in his book, *Creative Storytelling*, by stating, "The specific educational and social benefits to storytelling from a child's point of view are numerous and well documented" (Pgs. 13-14). Some of the values McGuire touches upon are helping a child recognize patterns in language, stimulating a child's powers of creativity, providing a child with problem solving and decision making activities, strengthening a child's capacity to form objective, rational and practical applications, assisting a child to develop skills in dialogue and cooperative interpersonal behavior. It also familiarizes and introduces a child to symbols, and traditions of different cultural heritages shared among the people around them. There are tremendous gains to be made through storytelling as a strategy to increase the oral language of second language learners in particular.

Goals and Objectives

During this unit students will be given the opportunity to have daily language practice in the safe and relaxed environment of their classroom. This daily language practice will allow the students to interact on a personal level with both the teacher and fellow classmates. The students are able to gain language knowledge from their participation both as speakers and listeners. These personal interactions are meaningful because the students are able to interact with one another, carry on conversations, and hear significant rules being modeled involving sentence structure. Each lesson within the unit will focus on a particular aspect or skill set of storytelling, each week building upon the last in complexity. The skills learned in this unit will help to develop the students' oral language, which is necessary to become successful academic learners in the classroom. This will further prepare the students to effectively take on the second grade curriculum.

In this unit students will meet the following objectives:

- Students will develop vocabulary through listening, speaking, reading and writing.

- Students will listen to and respect the opinions of others about written, oral and visual texts.
- Students will listen to, read and respond to texts about and from many cultures and times.
- Students will recognize values and beliefs included in a text.
- Students will determine purpose, point of view and audience, and choose an appropriate written, oral or visual format.
- Students will use oral language with clarity and voice to communicate a message.
- Students will use strategies to generate and develop ideas for speaking, writing and visual activities.
- Students will read, listen to and tell stories from a variety of cultures, and identify the similarities and differences in the way language is used.

Strategies

Week 1, Day 1

This unit on storytelling begins with the teacher. In order to become successful teaching a unit on storytelling I had to be comfortable telling stories and had to become a storyteller myself. After all you wouldn't become a football coach if you didn't know how to play football. There is no need to be nervous about this; there are many resources (as listed under my teacher references) available to help you become an effective storyteller.

To introduce the unit on storytelling I begin by becoming a storyteller myself and I tell the students an intriguing, exciting story. I make sure to model all the important components of a great storyteller that I expect to see from the students during this unit. To do this, first I choose a folktale that I love. The story I tell my students is *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. I choose this folktale because it is one that I remember hearing and loving myself as a child. It has strong characters and a clear storyline that is easy to follow. Before I tell the story I make sure that I practice it a few times. This story is fun to tell because you can change your voice to fit and portray each character. Then, I give it my best effort and tell the story to my students as if I were a professional storyteller. It is exciting watching the students listen to my story and seeing their ears and eyes perk up with excitement as they listen.

After telling the students my story I introduce formal storytelling to them. I begin a discussion with the students and ask them a series of questions. I start out by asking them what storytelling is. In my own research I came across Esme Raji Codell's website where she suggests a good way to tell your students about what storytelling is. She says, "I tell them that in Africa, there is a saying: Every man dies two deaths. The first, when his body dies. The second, when the last person remembers him dies. Stories, too, die when the last person who knows the story dies. So the trick is not only to know the story, but to make people remember the story, so it will live on and on." After telling the students this about storytelling we discuss what she means. I also ask the students what makes a good storyteller, how do you become a storyteller (I let them know that some people's job is to be a storyteller), and why stories are important? Once I have spent some time discussing storytelling, I tell the students that we are




beginning a unit on storytelling. I tell my students that by the end of this unit they will all become storytellers.

Week 1, Days 2-4

As the students' first opportunity or trial with storytelling, I partner the students up into pairs. I put one student with high language skills and one student with low language skills together in a group. This allows for the higher skilled student to act as a model for the lower skilled student. This is meaningful for the lower leveled student because they are able to hear correct sentence structure in a safe environment made up of his or her peer. This will allow the student to feel confident in producing and attempting oral language.

I have learned from past experiences that for my students' first time speaking in front of an audience (the class), they always feel more comfortable with a buddy or friend at their side, taking a bit of the attention off themselves. In order to do this I use a series of books by Mary Anne Hoberman entitled *You Read to Me, I'll Read to You*. These books are filled with short stories in dialogue form. One student reads the left side of the page and the other student reads the right side of the page, taking turns. Anything in the middle they read together. Each part is color coded so the student knows what line is his or hers. These stories are great because they are very short, including fairy tales, scary stories, stories from the 21st century and more. They are perfect for the students' first storytelling experience because they are simple, and fun and they can be told with a partner.

After each pair of students chooses the short story they would like to perform out of this series of books, I tell the students the objective of the lesson. In this lesson the students will be focusing on the important mechanics of storytelling. These include speaking in a loud, confident voice that their audience can clearly hear, making eye contact with the audience, speaking fluently, and becoming involved with the story through props, emotions, and actions. At the end of the week, on Friday, each pair of students will have the opportunity to tell their story to the class. Before the pairs begin to practice I hand out a rubric to each group so that they can see how they will be assessed. I score the students by giving either a 0, 1, or 2 for each category. An example of a rubric I use is as follows:

Name: _____ Date: _____ Title of the Skit Performed _____	0 Needs Improvement 	1 Room to Grow 	2 Excellent Work! 
Voice- Did you speak clearly and loudly enough so everyone in the audience could hear you? Did you speak to your audience and NOT into your paper?			
Eye Contact- Did you look at the audience as you were speaking? Could the audience see your eyes?			
Fluency- Did you stumble over a lot of your words? Were you speaking at a good pace- not too slow and not too fast?			
Actions- Did you use expression and get involved with the story? Did you change your voice to fit the character? Did you use any props?			

During the week I allow the students time each day to practice reading the skits together with their partner. I allow enough time for each group to read the skits at least three times through and discuss with one another how they can become great storytellers as they tell the story to the class. The students, as they practice, each have a copy of the rubric in order to focus their attention on the objectives of this lesson. As the students are practicing their stories, I circulate around the room, spending time with each group continually focusing each group on the mechanics of storytelling that we are focusing on this week. I go through each of these mechanics with the pair, checking for understanding and asking the students what they are doing to make sure they are addressing each category. At times I need to model these mechanics and get involved with each pair, to increase the students' understanding.

My students get very excited with their skits and it gives them a sense of ownership over their story if they have a copy of it to take home and practice. I make copies of the skits so that they can take them home and practice them for homework. I tell the students that hopefully by Friday they will not need their paper any more to tell the story. Some of the students are able to perform their skits without the script in their hand.

It is important to allow the students sufficient time each day to work on their stories. This gives the students with low language skills more confidence and the daily practice they need in order to learn to tell the story. This activity is great for increasing oral language because it allows the students to create a personal relationship with a fellow classmate. This gives the students with

low language skills the opportunity to hear correct sentence structure, learn vocabulary, and practice using language in a safe and comfortable environment.

Week 1, Day 5

On Friday, or the last day of the week, it is storytelling day. This is the day the students will finally be able to tell their stories to the class and begin the process of becoming storytellers. Before the students tell their stories I always make sure to go over respectful behavior. I remind the students to be polite, and tell them that there is no talking during storytelling because in storytelling the audience also plays a very important part. The audience has the role of listening and learning. I also remind the students that it is polite to clap at the end of a performance. In addition, before the storytelling begins I go over the rubric one last time to focus the students on the objectives of the lesson. I try not to make it seem like I am grading the students because this is supposed to be fun, not an intimidating activity like a test.

As each pair tells their story I fill out a rubric for each student. This allows the student to see where he or she needs to concentrate and what he or she can do to improve his or her storytelling. I also allow the audience to give the students constructive feedback. I call on two or three students and encourage them to tell the group something they learned, what the group did well or something they think the group can improve on.

Before concluding on Friday, I always ask the students if anyone would like to share anything that they enjoyed or learned. I ask if there is anything, as a pair, that they need to improve on, what they found difficult and what they enjoyed. Lastly, I tell the students that next week we will continue our unit on storytelling and be able to choose a story we would like to share with the class.

Week 2, Day 1

The second week of storytelling takes more preparation time on the part of the teacher. I pre-select stories the students will use this week for storytelling. The students will be given the opportunity to choose a story from the pre-selected books that they will be using for this week's storytelling experience. I chose a wide variety of books for the students to look through. Each of the stories has simple language, strong characters, and a clear beginning, middle, and end. The students begin this week of storytelling by reading the different stories until they find a story that they love or have some connection with. There are many websites online that are great resources to use when choosing books for storytelling such as, <http://www.planetesme.com/storytelling.html#storytellingbibliography> and <http://www.augusthouse.com/>. I give the students time the first day to choose the story they want to tell and to get used to the story. The students should have enough time to read the story twice silently to themselves and once out loud. I allow the students to take the story home to read and practice the story for homework. I let the student know that this is the story they will be using this week as they continue the quest to become a storyteller.

Week 2, Day 2

Graphic organizers can be very helpful tools when learning to tell a story. In this lesson the students use a graphic organizer to clearly layout the story structure and to use as an aide

when telling the story (see below for graphic organizer). Today, the students spend time filling out the graphic organizer. This graphic organizer will help the students see how the story is broken down and what the important elements are to include when telling a story. In each space provided on the graphic organizer, the student needs to draw in the story element. This graphic organizer also acts as a visual aide for the student when telling the story.

Week 2, Days 3 & 4

During centers this week the students continue to work on their stories. On Wednesday and Thursday I pair each student up with a different partner and have them practice retelling their story to their partner using the graphic organizer as an aide. The students who are listening to the story also have a job. They fill out a rubric as their partner tells his or her story. Once the student is finished telling his or her story their partner shows him or her the rubric. The group then has the opportunity to discuss the rubric and the listener can tell what he or she thinks was done well and what he or she thinks can be improved on. Before the students get into their groups I remind the students of the mechanics they focused on last week (voice, eye contact, volume, fluency, actions) so that the rubric or expectations are fresh in their minds.

The students continue to take their stories home and practice telling them to their families at home. I tell them that if no one is around to listen to their story they may want to tell their story in front of a mirror for extra practice.

Week 2, Day 5

Students will be working in groups of four or five students today. Each group is assigned a section of the classroom. Today students will be telling the story to their group that they have been working on this week. This will act as a practice session so that each student will see what he or she did well, what was improved on from last week, and what he or she can make further improve on. One at a time, each member of the group will stand up and tell his or her story. The rest of the group will act as the audience. I again remind the students how a good audience behaves prior to starting. After each student has a turn telling his or her story, I allow time for questions and comments pertaining to each story. Peers usually act as good teachers as long as they know the difference between negative criticism and constructive criticism. This should be taught prior to this lesson. I make it a rule that the students must begin by saying a positive comment. I also remember to allow time at the end for a whole group discussion. I ask the students if they learned anything new today in storytelling and allow time for positive comments. I then ask the students how the graphic organizer was able to help them become better storytellers. Continuing the discussion, I ask how they think they could become better storytellers and what types of qualities make a good storyteller?

* Now that the students have been working on storytelling for a few weeks it is a good time to invite a professional storyteller to come into the classroom. This is great for the students to see, so that they have a clear model of what a true storyteller is and the qualities that they possess.

Week 3, Day 1

This week the students will be working on and coming up with their own stories to tell. These stories will be true stories coming from their own lives, including family history, traditions, personal experience, a time when they got hurt, a vacation, a favorite relative, etc. To begin this lesson I model a story from my own personal experience as an example. The example I use is a story about my two brothers and me. In this story I make my brothers strong characters with distinctive personalities. There is a clear beginning, middle, and end to the story, giving it a simple structure. This makes the story easy to follow and understand, yet exciting to listen to. After I have told my story to the class, the students are usually very talkative, each student wanting to tell his or her own story relating to family. All of this talking is not bad. The students are actually practicing telling stories to each other. I give the students a few minutes to talk to their friends and tell each other their stories before moving on.

Next, I tell the students that this week the stories we will be telling are true stories about our own lives. With the students' help I make a list of the different types of stories they can choose to tell this week. After generating a list and giving the students many options, I give the students two minutes to silently think of and choose a story to tell. Once the students have come up with a story I ask them to think of the beginning, middle and end of their stories so that it is clear in their minds. Then, I have the students turn and talk to their neighbor, telling their stories. When both of the partners have had a chance to tell their story, I have a discussion with the class. I start by asking the class if they used any of the techniques they have learned about storytelling. Then I ask what techniques they used and how they were helpful. If time allows I have the students fill out the graphic organizer used previously as an aide for future use.

The students' homework tonight is to go home and talk to their families. The students need to come up with a story relating to their family. The story might be how their families came to New Haven, a special cultural tradition they may have, a vacation they have gone on, etc. I have the students take home a storytelling graphic organizer that they can color and fill out to help them tell the story the next day in school. On the back of the graphic organizer I write a letter to the parents explaining the unit on storytelling and telling the date of the storytelling festival coming up.

Week 3, Day 2

I divide the class into groups of three and the students take turns telling the story that they did for homework last night. When the students are finished telling their stories to one another I allow time for group members to ask each other questions, and to tell what they did well and what they could improve on. Next, we all move to the carpet. I tell the students that today's focus will be using the five senses when we are telling our stories. To begin, I start by asking the students to raise their hands if they can tell me one of the five senses. Once the class has named all five senses we take time to discuss each of these senses, one by one. We also talk about how using the five senses in our storytelling can help improve our stories and make them more exciting. After we have discussed the advantages of using the five senses to

elaborate and make our stories more descriptive, each student returns to his or her seat and takes out his or her graphic organizer.

Using their graphic organizers, the students' job is to look at each box and add a sense to the box. The students first need to write the name of the sense that can be used to enhance their story at the top of the box; then at the bottom of each box they need to write how they used it, either through something they smelled, what they heard or saw, what an object felt like or what they said. When they retell their stories again they will add in these details, making their stories more interesting and descriptive. I allow the students five more minutes to retell their stories again but this time using their five senses.




Homework: I ask the students if they know what props are, then I tell them that props are used to help people imagine, understand, and get a better image of a story. Next as a group we come up with a list of items that are props. The students need to go home and find two or three props that they can use tomorrow to help to enhance their stories.

Week 3, Days 3 & 4

The students will continue working on their family stories, now adding the props that they brought from home to help tell their stories. Students can work with a partner, when they finish their centers, practicing telling their stories including both the five senses in their stories as well as the props that they brought from home.

Week 3, Day 5

This is the class storytelling day! The students will take turns telling their stories. I will use a rubric to score the students, adding in both the five senses and the use of props.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Title of the Family Story Performed _____	0 Needs Improvement 	1 Room to Grow 	2 Excellent Work! 
Voice- Did you speak clearly and loudly enough so everyone in the audience could hear you?			
Eye Contact- Did you look at the audience as you were speaking? Could the audience see your eyes?			
Fluency- Did you stumble over a lot of your words? Were you speaking at a good pace- not too slow and not too fast?			
Actions- Did you use expression and get involved with the story? Did you change your voice to fit the characters?			
Five Senses- What did you hear, see, smell, say and feel?			
Props- Did you use visual aides to help tell your story?			

Week 4, Days 1-4

This is the last week of the storytelling unit. The students this week will be able to choose one of the three stories they told in the past three weeks to share at the family storytelling festival. The students' parents, guardians, and relatives will be invited to attend the festival during the school day on Friday. The festival will be held on the school stage. The students will be able to use a microphone and become a real storyteller.

This week will be spent practicing and getting ready for the big day. To do this there will be a storytelling center, giving students time to practice and get their stories ready. Once the students have chosen the story they want to tell, the students will need to work on making it better, adding the five senses and props to the story. We will have a "dress" rehearsal on Thursday on the stage to get the students comfortable and ready for the festival the next day.

Week 4, Day 5

This is the big day, the storytelling festival. To make this as professional as possible I create a program listing the individuals who will be storytelling. To begin the festival, I invite a professional storyteller to come into the school and perform for the start of the festival. After the professional storyteller is finished each student performing tells his or her story taking turns on the stage. After the students have finished telling their stories I allow about fifteen minutes for food, drinks and mingling. To end the festival each student is awarded a storytelling certificate, making them an official storyteller.

Resources

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*Lists techniques and provides links to additional resources to use and research how to tell stories.

Mellon, Nancy. *The Art of Storytelling*. Rockport, MA: Element Books, Inc., 1992.

*A guide outlining the essentials of a good story through the use of visualization and imagination.

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Oral Language Activities Compiled by Melissa Wing, Genesee Intermediate School District and Literacy Coaches from Genesee and Lapeer Counties, 2010.

*Folktales and legends where the central characters are successful females.

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*How to improve oral language of ESL learners

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*A collection of folktales.

Reading List for Students

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Storytelling Graphic Organizer

Characters	Setting	Problem	Beginning
Middle	End	Solution	Ending/Author's Message

<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/2008/2/08.02.01.x.html>

ORAL LANGUAGE WEBSITES

<http://www.literacyconnections.com/OralLanguage.php>

Reading Rockets: search oral language activities--

<http://www.readingrockets.org/>

http://www.wiu.edu/itlc/ws/ws1/litfound_2.php

<http://www.literacyconnections.com/Songs.php>

http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/lesson_plans/language_arts/

Oral language site for speech---directed for parents, but good reminders for all:

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/suggestions.htm>

Here is a website that has oral language games to play with students. Most say they are for 1-4 players, but they can be adapted to play with whole class. They are nice because they have colored picture cards for every game you can print out to use.

The website is www.treasureforteachers.com but the direct link to the language activities is: <http://www.treasureforteachers.com/langvoc.html>

There are 2 different links: Handy Games for Teaching Language, section 1 and section 2.

They are both zip files, but once extracted have a bunch of different language games/activities.

http://www.wiu.edu/itlc/ws/ws1/litfound_2.php

<http://educationaltoyfactory.com/Listen-directions.htm> (receptive)

<http://www.oafccd.com/factshee/fact26.htm>

Website for Finger Plays, Songs, and Rhymes for learning

www.head-start.lane.or.us/education/activities/music/songs-fingerplays.html

www.nncc.org/Curriculum/fingerplay.html

www.songsforteaching.com/fingerplays/index.htm

www.funfelt.com/fingerplay.html

- [Paper Finger Puppets](#)
 - <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/puppets/twofinger/>
- [Puppets and Marionettes](#)
 - <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/puppets/>

Places where you can get graphics for use in making your own Language Development materials

- [#1 Free Clip Art](#)
- [ClipArtClub](#)
- [Flash!Pro2](#) - Lots of graphics in the Sample area.
- [Microsoft® Clip Gallery Live](#)
- [Royalty-Free Clip Art Collection for Foreign/Second Language Instruction](#) - You won't want to miss this one!
- [ArtToday.Com](#) - This one isn't free, but it's the first place I look when I need clipart.

Promoting Literacy Through Music <http://www.songsforteaching.com/lb/literacymusic.htm>

Website-computer games

McGraw-Hill

Vocabulary, with partner, time for discussion, pictures to guide discussions

<http://treasures.macmillanmh.com/national/teachers/resources/grade1/oral-language-activities>

Website for Oral Language Activities for ELL

<http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tcl/elemlit/orallanguage.shtml>

Books:

<http://teachchildren.com/tcr-3393.html>

<http://www.buyteachercreated.com/estore/product/3393>

<http://www.acadcom.com/scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=768>

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Activities-for-Oral-Language-Development-K-2/Jodene-Lynn-Smith/e/9781420633924>



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