



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

The Magic of Oral Storytelling

The art of storytelling has been shared throughout time and across cultures, even to this day. Oral storytelling is defined as a story told through voice and body language. It encourages the listener to use his imagination to “see” the pictures without the use of a picture book. Studies have shown that exposing a child to oral storytelling has many benefits, including cognitive, language and literacy, and social-emotional.

Before you begin, consider the developmental age of your child and the types of stories that he might be able to relate to. Keep this in mind as you choose from the following sources:

- ♥ **Personal Stories** are based on childhood or current experiences. Children are curious about what it was like for you growing up. Telling a story about a mistake you made and the lessons learned helps to support him in learning how to make mistakes and be resilient.
- ♥ **Folk and Fairytales** are stories that you probably remember from childhood. Most of them have magical elements which are perfect for young children. Discover stories from different cultures around the world.
- ♥ **Favorite Books** - Stories that you have read over and over can be told using puppets, flannel boards, or other props. Repeated readings help to build oral language and comprehension.
- ♥ **Social Stories** are made up stories to teach a routine, help the child deal with a conflict, or reduce challenging behaviors. Such stories are effective in teaching these skills, as they are tailored with the child in mind.



The key elements of good storytelling are making eye contact, varying your voice, using gestures, and using descriptive and unique words. You may also consider involving your child by adding props or costumes to engage your young listener. In this newsletter, we will discuss ways to make storytelling come alive! We will also share how storytelling can be integrated into daily experiences for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child’s development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Storytelling with infants supports cognitive development, encouraging connections in the brain. In fact, research shows that the back and forth interactions, such as responding to baby with a smile, holding him at eye level, and talking to him influences the brain's neural circuitry. You are helping his brain to grow!

Storytelling happens naturally as you respond to an infant's coos with a back and forth exchange, much like a dance. Here are some tips for storytelling throughout your infant's day:

- ♥ While changing his diaper, recite *This Little Pig Went to Market* while you touch each of his toes.
- ♥ During feeding time, narrate your actions to create a story. For example, say "I'm mixing your yummy poi. The big spoon is turning into an airplane now. It is flying up *Ziiip!* It's flying down *Zoop!* It's flying into baby's mouth!"
- ♥ As baby settles down for nap, tell him a story in a calm, soothing tone. Make up your own words with simple objects in the room, such as in *Goodnight Moon*.



Activity for Infants: *Baby's Story Time*

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. Settle down in a comfortable chair and snuggle baby close to you so that he can see and feel your mouth as you speak. Offer a pacifier or other comfort items if needed.
2. Use your imagination to weave a tale. Begin with "Once upon a time there was a little baby (insert your child's name)." Let your imagination take the story along, using creative words and varying the tone of your voice.
3. If baby becomes restless, you can also try signing songs or reciting nursery rhymes. These are alternative forms of storytelling with music, rhythm and rhyme.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Toddlers

Storytelling with toddlers can be helpful in developing social-emotional skills through a shared intimacy as your child focuses on your facial expressions, while also building empathy as he relates to the emotions of the characters in the story. In various cultures, storytelling is used to teach children lessons. You can teach a toddler why he needs to wash his hands, take a bath, or clean up through using stories. You can use your real life experiences or use your imagination to weave a silly imaginary tale! Here are some examples:

- ♥ **Handwashing stories-** “There once was a boy who never washed his hands. One day, the dirt on his hands grew and grew and got so sticky that he stuck to everything he touched! He stuck to the wall, he stuck to the floor. He couldn’t eat lunch because he stuck to the door!”
- ♥ **Bath time stories-** “Once there was a little mouse who never wanted to take a bath. He got dirtier and dirtier! He got so dirty that his



mommy didn’t know who he was. She thought he was a stranger and yelled, “Squeeeek!” while throwing a cup of soapy water on him. Luckily the soap washed all the dirt off and there appeared her little mouse!”

- ♥ **Clean up stories-** “When I was a little girl, I forgot to clean up my toys. I heard the ice cream truck outside. I ran towards the door and tripped over the blocks. CRASH! It all fell down with me on top of it. The ice cream truck left and I didn’t get any ice cream that day.”

Activity for Toddlers: *Finger People*

What You Need:
Washable nontoxic paint (assorted)
Paintbrush

What to Do:

1. Use washable paint to create a character on your hand. Make a finger person by turning your hand upside down so that the pointer and middle finger are the legs. This may also be done on your child’s hand if he is willing.
2. Start by painting shoes on the fingernails, then the pants, working your way up to paint a shirt and face on your finger person.
3. Begin the storytelling fun by using the finger people as characters, such as “Once upon a time a boy named Kai was walking along. A girl named Taylor bumped into him. Kai fell down and started to cry. Taylor asked, ‘Are you okay?’ and helped him up. Kai felt much better and they became friends. They danced and played all day long.”

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Preschoolers

Oral stories can be used to teach concepts in ways that engage your child's interests. Your child begins to build language and literacy skills by learning unique words throughout the story. Involve your preschooler in oral storytelling during everyday routines, such as:

- ♥ **Indoor time**-When telling the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, count your breaths as you involve your child in huffing and puffing and blowing the house down. Throw in some descriptive and unique words such as, "The third little pig made his house out of *hard* bricks with *cement* to hold it firmly together. This made it *sturdy*." Your child will begin fast mapping, or quickly learning new words, by the context of other familiar words within the story.
- ♥ **Taking a walk**- Create patterns in your stories. As you and your child go for a walk, pretend to be the *Billy Goats Gruff*. Invite him to clomp over the bridge with you, saying "Clip-clomp,



Clip-clomp, clip-clomp" while standing up and dipping down. This helps your child to use his whole body to create patterns.

- ♥ **Meal times**- Tell your child a story as you sit down for a meal, or have him tell you a story! Involve your child in narrating his own story by encouraging him to tell a story about his favorite character or a recent experience he has had. This powerful literacy tool provides a positive way for your child to learn the structure of a story.

Activity for Preschoolers: *A Tall Tale*

What You Need:

Pencil
Paper

What to Do:

1. Begin by asking your child to tell you a story. If this does not happen naturally for your child, help him by bringing up a familiar experience such as the time he helped catch a fish or went camping.
2. Write down the story exactly as he says it. You can ask questions to extend the story such as, "And then what happened?"
3. Next, have him act out the story. Have him choose which character he wants to be, and you (or other members of the family) can be characters or other props in the story. Read the story while your child and other family members act it out or listen as part of the audience.
4. By doing this over and over, your child will enjoy being the author and main character in his own story, thus building self-efficacy (belief in his abilities) and literacy skills.

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How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Learn to use her body with intention
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others
- ♥ Develop a close bond with you

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language
- ♥ Learn to ask and answer questions

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Increase her observation, listening, and understanding skills
- ♥ Develop her thinking and problem-solving skills



Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show him how to handle items safely and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Praise his efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

Microwave Mochi

Ingredients:

1 box rice flour (mochiko)	1 tsp vanilla extract
2-1/4 C sugar	Potato starch
2 C water	Cooking spray
1 (12 oz) can coconut milk	Food coloring (Optional)

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, help keiki mix rice flour, sugar, water and coconut milk.
2. Add vanilla extract and food coloring and talk about the changes in texture and color.
3. Spray a microwave bundt pan with cooking spray; put half of the mixture in the bundt pan.
4. Place pan in a dish with water and cover with plastic wrap.
5. Microwave on Medium-High for 10-12 minutes. As you are waiting, weave a tale about the “mochi man” who jumps off the plate and runs away, much like the story of The Gingerbread Man.
6. Dust plate with potato starch and invert mochi. Cool and help keiki cut mochi with a plastic knife.
7. Repeat with second half.



Resources

Once Upon a Time: Using Storytelling, Creative Drama, and Reader's Theater with Children in Grades PreK-6 by Judy Freeman

This book, available at The Hawai'i State Public Library, gives practical tips on how to tell a story as well as creative ideas rhymes, songs, chants, and folk literature.

Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>

A resource of folktales, folklore, fairy tales, and mythology from around the world, compiled and translated out of the University of Pittsburgh.



Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Pip and Pup by Eugene Yelchin

Pip the chick spots a new friend to play with—Pup! This wordless story of friendship will help you in weaving a tale for your young listener.

Keiki Shark in Hawai'i by Jane Gillespie

Follow along to the popular Baby Shark song, but with a local spin! Auntie shark, Uncle shark, and Tutu shark spending the day with Keiki shark as they explore, surf, and make new friends.

Preschoolers

The Tortoise and The Hare by Jerry Pinkney

This nearly wordless book is the classic story about the slowest tortoise defeating the quickest hare. This tale will encourage preschoolers to tell their own versions of *The Tortoise and The Hare*.

Chalk by Bill Thomson

This wordless picture book is about three children who go to a park on a rainy day where they find an unusual bag of chalk. They begin to draw and are astounded as their drawings come to life.



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