ORAL STORYTELLING AND STUDENT LEARNING: 
ONCE UPON A CLASSROOM... 

by 

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts 
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning 
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto 

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Oral Storytelling and Student Learning: Once Upon a Classroom...  
Degree of Master of Arts, 1999  
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This study explores oral storytelling learning in the elementary school setting. The specific focus was on nine grade four classrooms at two urban public elementary schools. One hundred and eighty two students were involved in the study. As part of a community based arts program, a professional storyteller worked with each class over a three session period. The effect of oral storytelling on the students and the teachers is examined.

Although, students engage in personal oral storytelling in their daily interactions with others, being exposed to and learning how to tell oral tales is an experience not readily available. Students often are only exposed to story reading. Being examined are the children, their teachers and the storyteller.
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Chapter 1

In the Beginning...

Once long ago in the Ukrainian region of Bukovinia in the small village of Zadubrivka there lived a man. This man was no ordinary man; he was the village storyteller. People came from far and near to listen to his enchanted words tell of extraordinary and ordinary events. His stories helped the listeners make sense of the world around them. Todor’s stories strengthened the community.

The storyteller had nine children and he bestowed upon them all the gift of storying. In the end, however, it was only his daughter, Mary, who truly nurtured her gift. With great devotion and care Mary tended her gift. She treated it like a flower. Her father began by planting the seed and Mary helped it come to full bloom. Always she worked to maintain the fruits of her labour. Her story garden was always full and she was forever willing to share the best blooms with everyone.

In the not so small Canadian city of Hamilton, Mary would gather her grandchildren, grandnieces and grandnephew around her. For them she would use her enchanted words to tell of extraordinary and ordinary events. They listened in awe and wonder. Favourite tales were requested again and again. Each telling seemed fresh to the young, eager listeners. Mary told stories until the day she died.

In the smaller Canadian town of Oakville, Mary’s gift lived on in her grandniece. The niece treasured the gift she had been
willed. She gathered family tales and tales from all over the world. Sharing stories was her way of passing on her gift to others. Before each story she told she thought of her great grandfather and of her great aunt and silently thanked them for her priceless inheritance.

Eventually, the niece became a teacher and was excited to bring her stories to so many children and to gather many new stories from the same children. She was soon disappointed in the fact that oral storytelling seemed to be missing from her students’ lives. She set out on a quest to learn more about storytelling in the schools.

This is the beginning of my story. I am Mary’s niece.
The Question

What do children gain from oral storytelling in the classroom?

The Sub-Question

What are the roles of the storyteller and classroom teacher in providing an oral rich classroom environment?

What is Being Studied and Why?

This study will explore oral storytelling learning in the elementary school setting. The specific focus was on nine grade four classrooms at two urban public elementary schools. One hundred and eighty two students were involved in the study. As part of a community based arts program, a professional storyteller worked with each class over a three session period. The effect of oral storytelling on the students and the teachers will be examined.

Although, students engage in personal oral storytelling in their daily interactions with others, being exposed to and learning how to tell oral tales is an experience not readily available. Students often are only exposed to story reading. Being examined are the children, their teachers and the storyteller.
Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of Oral Storying

Once upon a time in a village far, far away, the people had only one thing to do, and that was to tell stories.

There was a "Once upon a time..." here.

And a "Once upon a time..." there.

There was no television in the village, just great rain storms, and great stories to tell. Beautiful stories, stories short and long, tall tales and stories so funny they made you want to wet your pants. [1]

In such a village as this one one would be able to witness the benefits of storying firsthand.

At Fayerweather Street School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, oral storytelling is used in every grade. The Director of Development, Claire Ryan, briefly explains how oral storytelling can be such a diverse tool for learning. Storytelling magazine featured an article on the school in which Ryan states:

In the early years, we use stories for learning, socialization. Later on, it (storytelling) becomes a vehicle for self-discovery and for learning about other people, places, and cultures. We use it as a tool for awareness of self, of community, and of issues in contemporary society. [2]

The benefits Ryan alludes to can easily be brought into any classroom through oral storying. The benefits of oral
storytelling are as diverse as the stories we chose to tell.

Bob Baldwin in his article, "The Lost Art of Storytelling—
to raise happy children, tell them tales" writes that "stories are
perhaps the most effective teaching tool ever used. All of the
world’s great religions use tales and parables to preserve and
transmit beliefs and values".[3] What better way is there to
teach about a culture’s belief system? The sixth century Greek
slave, Aesop, has left us with numerous fables each with a strong
moral. For instance, his fable "Hercules and the Waggoner"
espoused the moral, "Heaven helps those who help themselves".[4]

Joseph Bruchac writes of the power of sacred stories in his
work, *Tell Me a Tale*:

> One of the powers of story is to lead the
> listener or reader to discover new
> worlds. Stories of the divine always
> have to do with that which we cannot see
> with our everyday eyes. These are
> stories in which we can look within and
> find deeper meanings that inspire us.
> Every religion has such stories and such
> holy books; the Hebrew Talmud, the
> Ramayana and the Bhagarad Gita of India,
> the Christian Bible, and the Muslim Koran
> are filled with sacred stories.[5]

What is the benefit of sharing sacred stories with our children?
Take for example a creation story such as the tale of Adam and Eve
found in the Bible. It tells Christians how our world and we,
mankind, came into being. Creation stories from many cultures
serve this same purpose. According to Joseph Bruchac sacred
stories also help us to understand both the "mysteries of life"
and the divine.[6]
In all schools educators must justify what they teach and often their teaching methods. An example of how teaching methods are called into question can be found in the whole language versus phonics debate. Oral storytelling has multiple benefits for the learners which enables them to strengthen various areas of learning and growth.

Dr. Margaret Read MacDonald believes oral storytelling is a justifiable teaching method and tool. In her book, *The Storyteller’s Start-Up Book Finding, Learning, Performing and Using Folktales*, she lists the following benefits which can be used to justify the place of oral storytelling in the school curriculum:

- storytelling teaches listening;
- storytelling models fine use of oral language; and
- storytelling models plot, sequencing, characterization (the many literacy devices you wish to convey). [7]

I would also add to the foregoing list that oral storytelling is an essential part of the human fabric; it is an activity that we engage in daily whether we realize it or not.

Catharine Farrell also addresses the benefits of oral storytelling in her book, *Storytelling: a Guide for Teachers*. She writes,

The many advantages that storytelling has for our young students include reading motivation, and active listening comprehension, a modeling of oral language, bonding, providing a safe environment for oral and written language sharing".[8]
The author also cites the importance of storytelling in teaching visualization:

Visualizing is as much a foundation for literacy as hearing voice in words: students must be able to see what the words say. Storytelling mentally stimulates students as they naturally begin to imagine and make sense of the story while they listen.[9]

Television and film provide images, but oral storying by its very nature forces listeners to create their own images. Oral storying forces use of imagination.

Oral storytelling allows students to strengthen their communication skills; thus providing them the tools with which they may successfully negotiate through life’s daily interactions. This idea is presented in the following passage from Kerry Mallon’s *Children as Storytellers*:

Communication through storytelling results in the use of paralinguistic features (gesture, facial expressions) as well as linguistic features (use of tense, linking devices, clarification of ambiguity).[10]

In the same book, Mallon addresses one of storytelling’s greatest benefits, that of fostering and enhancing childrens’ self-esteem:

An important byproduct of storytelling is a new level of confidence, and self-esteem for the teller. Even the shyest child, when given the opportunity to share a story with another person, finds acceptance of both story and self a rewarding experience. Indeed, an
important aim of nurturing children as storytellers is to help them develop confidence in themselves as communicators, a sense of self-worth in their ability to share stories with their peers.[11]

Children who lack self-esteem are not risk takers nor leaders; they are self doubters. Therefore, a lack of confidence hinders learning. Teaching students to be confident communicators is indeed one of the most fundamental functions of oral storytelling as a teaching methodology.

The use of oral storytelling in the classroom enriches children’s learning experience. They learn about themselves and others; values and beliefs are easily transmitted in an understandable and memorable way to students via oral storying. Sacred stories are given voice in a respectful and soulful way. Oral language, listening and visualizing skills are further developed. Children are invited to use their imaginations when hearing or telling stories. Through the practice of oral storytelling, children become more confident and their sense of self-esteem is further developed. Learners develop an understanding of literary techniques which, in turn, strengthens their writing skills. Finally, a strong sense of community is created through oral storytelling as a special bond forms between the teller and the told.

Bond between the Teller and the Told

There is something special that develops between the teller
and the told, those that not only listen but who hear. As the renowned storyteller, Joseph Bruchac, states in his book, *Tell Me a Tale*, "all that is needed for storytelling is a storyteller, a listener, a shared language, and the memory of a story".[12] Bruchac acknowledges the bond sharing a story creates, "Telling a story to someone else is a very special, personal experience. Having that story told to you is just as special and personal".[13] Storytelling is simple. It needs no stage, no spotlights, no props. All that is required is two human beings and a story.

Bob Barton and David Booth write in their book, *Stories in the Classroom*, about the connective force of storytelling. They state;

> Stories do things to people. We know that things happen to people when they read or hear stories, that any theory about the place of story in schools has to begin with this fact. Story is not an exercise in explanation or persuasion but an experience between the teller and the told.[14]

The importance of any story is the connection between those sharing the story. That is the bond that lies at the heart of all storytelling. Not all stories will affect the listener in the same way, but each telling is guaranteed to be a shared experience. One of the reasons I am a storyteller is the bond I feel connecting me to my audience whether it consists of one person or one hundred people. There is something special about being a practitioner of an art form that reminds us that we are
all bound to each other in some small way.

Ellin Greene in her book, *Storytelling Art and Technique*, also addresses the connection between storyteller and listener:

> Storytelling is a sharing experience. When we tell, we show our willingness to be vulnerable, to expose our deepest feelings, our values. That kind of nakedness that says we care about what we are relating invites children to listen with open minds and hearts. Enjoying a story together creates a sense of community. It establishes a happy relationship between teller and listener, drawing people closer to one another, adult to child, child to child".[15]

There was an Emperor who was greatly embarrassed to discover he was naked, that he had revealed his body (as well as his true nature) to others. Storytellers share themselves with their audience. They are figuratively naked, telling stories that mean something to them; stories that reveal something about them. A listener who truly hears feels privileged to be a part of the telling. They feel connected and a bond is formed. They may only encounter the teller one time, but the impact and experience can last for a lifetime. It is through this intimate experience that classroom teachers can and should use storytelling to help create a strong classroom community.

Bruno Bettelheim in his classic work, *The Uses of Enchantment*, recounts a story about Goethe's bond with his mother. He comments:

> The account of how Goethe gained some of this ability and self-confidence through
his mother’s telling him fairy tales illustrates how fairy tales ought to be told, and how they can bind parent and child together by each making his own contributions.[16]

I would like to extend Bettelheim’s thought to include the bond between a teacher (the teller) and the student (the told). Additionally, the stories told do not have to be strictly what we classify as fairy tales. Why limit the potential to connect with another human being? Telling as many types of stories as possible, including personal stories, can expand the audience of listeners.

Oral storytelling is enjoying a resurgence as of late. I found evidence of this phenomena in the form of a recent article located in the Career Section of The Toronto Star newspaper. The author of this article observes that personal storytelling is a trait of effective leadership in the workplace. The writer addressed the issue of bonding:

In these information-crazed times, it is increasingly difficult to sustain anyone’s attention for more than a few seconds or minutes. Yet storytelling has the effect of allowing an audience to enter your inner world and share in your personal hardships and achievements. Your story often results in an emotional connection between you and others.[17]

The author further states that “...storytelling is a way of reconnecting with people”. [18] Reconnecting is essential in today’s society where the simple act of sitting down to eat dinner with your family has to be organized around everyone’s hectic
schedules. Oral storytelling prevents isolation.

Connection to Literature

The written and spoken word need to be utilized equally in the classroom. They are both distinct and yet similar. There is an undeniable connection that exists between the two. Sharing stories orally first and then presenting the same story in a literary form is advocated by Dr. Margaret Read MacDonald: "use tales [also] to lead students into the glorious world of literature and editions of your tale; share literary pieces drawing on themes related to your story". [19]

In *Children as Storytellers*, Kerry Mallon states that, "through storytelling, children will come to the printed text with a degree of familiarity and certain expectations of story structure, language and patterns". [20] With the conventions of the printed words no longer foreign, reading becomes an easier skill to master. Similarly, Bob Barton and David Booth write, "Oral storytelling which invites chiming in draws children naturally into an awareness of patterns. In composing together or alone, these patterns can lead to much experimenting with writing". [21] The oral and the written narrative work together in the classroom to aid in the teaching of literary devices, structures and language appreciation. The challenge becomes balancing the two narratives in the everyday curriculum.
Stories have been told as long as speech has existed, and sans stories the human race would have perished, as it would have perished sans water.[22]

- Isak Dineson-

Anne Pellowski in her work, *The World of Storytelling*, laments that stories are not likely to be passed on orally through the generations anymore. However, on a positive note she says, "...there is universality of storytelling, in that it continues to be used as a form of human expression in virtually all parts of the world".[23] All of us need to do our part to preserve and pass through oral communications personal stories, history and stories that teach us about ourselves and others.

Stories connect people from different cultures. This link is exemplified by common stories which bridge cultural divides, such as the perennial Cinderella story. Ellin Greene addresses this link as follows: "Folklore is living proof of the kinship of human beings. Among various nations, similar stories are found, but they assume a variety of forms according to the culture in which they developed".[24]

If I close my eyes I can still hear the heavily accented voice of my late great aunt telling the Ukrainian folktale, “The Sled”. She told this story to teach us the need to respect and care for our elders. In Aunt Mary’s version a man gives his son the task of taking his grandfather into the forest through the deep snow on a sled and then leaving him there to perish. The orders are given because the old man is no longer able to be a
productive part of the family. The child complies with his father's wishes and carries out the heartless job he has been assigned. However, the boy is clever and returns home with the sled he had been instructed to leave with his grandfather. When questioned the boy tells his father that when it is his turn to be abandoned the sled will be waiting. At last the father sees the error of his ways and he himself goes to rescue the father he cruelly cast aside. I grew up hearing this tale time and time again crying at each telling.

It was not until years later that I came across another version. Joseph Bruchac relates a North American Mohawk version called, "Sha-Tewahsiri:Hen" which translated is, "Half a Blanket". In Bruchac's tale, there was a man whose elderly father lived with him, his wife and his son. The grandfather was unable to take care of himself and his son grew weary attending to his father's needs. The old man was too frail to work. How annoying it is to have him clutter up our small lodge, thought the man, he needs to be sent away. The man called his eight year old son to him.

The child came as called and his father spoke to him and said, "It is time to take your grandfather into the forest and leave him there". Before the child left his father gave him a blanket and told him to place it around his grandfather's shoulders once he was in the forest.

The son did not talk to his father. Dutifully he took the blanket and then led his grandfather far away from their lodge. Once in the forest the child deftly ripped the blanket in half.
Around his grandfather’s slight body he gently placed half of the blanket and he returned home with the other half.

When he arrived home his father saw that he was carrying half of the blanket. He inquired, “Why did you return with half of the blanket?” Patiently the boy explained that he had saved half of the blanket to wrap around his father’s shoulders when his time came to be abandoned in the forest. At first the father was speechless; how could my own son abandon me he thought; then he was humbled. “Now, I understand” he said, “My son forgive me, I was wrong. Bring your grandfather back to his home where he belongs”. [25]

In Tell Me a Tale, Bruchac notes this story’s universality “[this] story is one that seems to be popular all over the world. I have heard it told in many places. I’ve heard versions of it told in central Europe, in Africa and Asia, and among Native American people. Maggie Pierce of Northern Ireland tells this story in Ready-to-Tell-Tales as “The Story of the Half Blanket”. [26] Bruce Lansky in, Girls to the Rescue, presents a feminine version of the tale he calls, “Grandma Rosa’s Bowl”. His version is an adaptation from a story penned by the German Brothers Grimm. This lesser known tale from many cultures has at the the core the same lesson, the same message.

In the introduction to her compilation, Best-Loved Folktales of the World, Joanna Cole provides two theories as an explanation for the universality of certain tales. Her first theory states as follows:
To account for the existence of similar stories everywhere, some scholars believed that the world’s tales originally spread from one source by diffusion; that is, the plots were thought to have originated in India and traveled via pilgrims, merchants and immigrants to local storytellers elsewhere, who adopted the stories as their own, changing details in the telling, but keeping the bones of the tales intact.[27]

The second theory is "...that stories sprang up simultaneously in different countries because the material of the folktales is universal. The themes were said to be those concerning human beings everywhere and the stories were bound to be invented wherever communities developed".[28]

For Anne Pellowski’s book, *The World of Storytelling*, a group of children were asked the question, “What would happen if there were no stories in the world?” The reply from one child which truly speaks to the global need for stories was that, “There wouldn’t be a world, because stories made the world".[29] Out of the mouths of babes....
Chapter III

REFLECTIVE RESEARCH METHODS

How I Came to Be a Teller

In order to fully understand my interest in oral storytelling in the classroom, one needs to understand my own involvement with storying.

Growing up I was not only read stories but I was also privileged to hear oral renderings of tales from various adults in my life. My mother created stories about my treasured stuffed yellow rabbit that I slept with. Every giant story imaginable was provided by my father who used a whole repertoire of voices to portray each giant differently. My older brother favoured ghost stories and urban legends. He had me convinced that a ghost lived under my bed and that I had to feed it oreo cookies so it wouldn’t bite my feet. One can only guess who came to collect the cookie offerings.

My paternal grandparents both shared stories orally. Nan told tales about growing up in England, courting my Papa and about the countless adventures my father and his twin brother shared while growing up. Papa shared stories about the backstage life of the various theatres where he worked. He told me wonderful stories which I grew up to learn were adapted from Shakespeare.

My great Aunt Olga loves nothing more than to have tea with my cousins and myself. During our visits she likes to be caught
up on our lives; so sometimes we are the tellers. What we crave, however, are her stories about her fascinating life. We ask her questions to lead her into the stories that we never grow tired of hearing. Her immigration story is so incredible that it has become somewhat of a family legend. Equally incredible are her stories of England during World War II where she waited for communications from my great uncle who was a radar expert involved in top secret operations.

And, of course, my great Aunt Mary who bequeathed the gift of storytelling to me. "Once upon a time there lived a man and a woman who had two daughters..." Aunt Mary would begin and my cousins and I would squeal with delight. "The Mare’s Head" was one of our favourite tales. She had learned that story on the knee of her father, who, in turn, had learned it from his father before him. Who knows how many family tellers before my great-grandfather had given voice to that same tale.

At the dinner table and at family gatherings, favourite family stories are revisited and new ones shared. My entire family likes nothing more than hearing or passing on a new tale. A couple of family stories have grown to epic proportions. These stories have even reached the ears of strangers. A new friend I made during my first year at university had heard the purple donkey story via my cousin’s boyfriend’s sister’s friend’s friend or some such confusing relay system. The point is the story was shared.

My close group of friends whom I have known practically my
whole life have lived through many tales with me. In addition, they have also partaken in the creation of new tales by the way of shared experiences. It sometimes amazes us how often we revisit favourite stories. It seems we never grow tired of certain tales. We always joke about telling our children one day about the ‘Cayman incident’ or the ‘wedding disaster’ and other choice tales. There are of course some tales that we will always keep among only those who were directly involved.

I am honoured and grateful to have been brought up and surrounded by people who have taught me the importance of the oral tradition. Reading and sharing orally were considered of equal importance as I was growing up. It is no wonder that today I am a storyteller and an educator; I come by it honestly.

During my years of drama training, oral storying always was an area of particular strength and fondness for me. My desire is for as many people as possible to experience the joy and the power of oral narrative. There is a place for the personal and learned tale in all of our lives. This belief is what led me out of my own classroom to become an observer of a master storyteller engaged in bringing story to the lives of grade four students.

**Methodology and Procedures**

As part of my study of oral storying in the classroom, I removed myself from my regular roles as storytelling guide and classroom teacher. I felt that my study would be more productive if I observed and questioned, rather than participated. The
journey was led by a master storyteller. She was responsible for leading the students and their teachers into the world of oral storytelling.

This study looked at oral storytelling and student learning. The study exclusively focussed on my observations from nine urban grade four classrooms. My areas of examination included documenting the effects of oral storytelling on the following participants:

- the storyteller;
- the students; and
- the teachers.

The storyteller was part of an existing community based arts integration program. In this program, artists representing various disciplines are placed into teams of three. The teams are then assigned placement in participating primary and secondary schools in selected urban centres. Each artist conducts three sessions with the students and their teachers in order that they may instruct the students in their personal area of practice and expertise. The ultimate goal of the program is that the teachers will become sufficiently capable in each area, and the students enthused enough, to extend the art learning long after the artist has gone.

As the program was already in operation, my participation had to be secured from the administrators of the program, school officials and the parents of the children involved. Letters requesting consent were drafted for the parents/guardians of the
students outlining the study I was about to undertake and informing them of their ability to withdraw their children if and when desired [See Appendix A]. Oral storytelling was to be explored as a methodology and, therefore, there was no attempt to evaluate students on an individual basis.

The two schools involved in the study were located within a close proximity. Both schools were located in large urban areas. The main housing structures in the immediate surrounding areas were large apartment buildings. Economically they could be described as lower income housing. At each of the schools, a large percentage of the students were visible minorities. Specifically, there were large numbers of students of Asian and East Indian descent. In addition, there were many English as a Second Language ("E.S.L.") students in the nine classrooms I visited. The largest population of the E.S.L. students were Russian-speaking. Finally, both schools contained large numbers of students who had been identified as having learning disabilities ("identified children"). At one school (hereinafter "School A"), two classes that participated in my study consisted entirely of identified students. Several teachers had informed the storyteller about the needs of their class so that the sessions could be structured to focus on the students' unique strengths and weaknesses. The other school (hereinafter "School B") had fewer identified children, but they also had many more students with stronger behavioural difficulties.

As previously stated, I was strictly an observer during these
sessions. The bulk of my data collection, therefore, was in the form of field notes. I openly observed each class’ interaction with the oral storyteller and recorded notes. Outside of rare exceptions when I was called upon by the storyteller, teachers and students to become involved in the sessions, I remained an external non-participant. The field notes that I prepared at the time were subsequently expanded upon to incorporate further reflection and exploration of the data collected.

Three sessions were spent in each of the nine grade four classrooms that participated in the community based arts integration program [See Appendix B for Observation Schedule]. The sessions lasted approximately forty five minutes in length. Due to the preexisting structure of the arts program, my observations were conducted on a short term basis. For a three week period I spent Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at School A, while my Friday’s were spent at School B.

In addition to my classroom observations, I conducted open-ended interviews with the storyteller and the educators, whenever possible. I also created a structured questionnaire to be filled out by the participating teachers after the completion of the oral storytelling sessions with the artist [See Appendix C for Questionnaire]
Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF SESSIONS

The individual oral storytelling sessions are not being examined on an individual basis. As previously mentioned, the findings were divided into the following groups: (a) the storyteller, (b) the students and (c) the teachers. Each group will be discussed separately; with the proviso that given the very nature of the study, they cannot be examined in total isolation from one another. All names have been changed to ensure the anonymity of the study participants. All direct quotes in this text are taken from my field notes.

The Storyteller

"What will you give me?" asked Tiger, stroking his mustache and looking hard at Anansi. He was beginning to be a little suspicious of this Anansi.[30]

These lines from the Jamaican story, Ticky-Picky Boom Boom, ran through my head as Nancy faced the first class of children. They looked at her with excitement, recognition and like Tiger with suspicion. Don’t worry I wanted to assure them, Nancy is not here to trick you unlike Anansi; she is here to give you a gift. As if echoing my thoughts, Nancy began by telling the students, “I am not here to embarrass anyone. My job is to tell you stories and to teach you to tell stories”. The children smiled.
Background

The oral storyteller hired through the community based arts integration program to work with the grade four students has a varied background. Nancy is a storyteller, educator, actress and author. She has had numerous years of experience working with children, teenagers and adults in a wide variety of learning situations. She tells traditional and original tales and often incorporates song. Nancy also appears in role as literary characters such as Mother Goose and historical characters such as Laura Secord. In addition, she offers a storyteller in residence program in which she tailors all of her work to conform with current Ministry of Education guidelines. As well as being a literacy instructor at York University, Faculty of Education, Nancy has guest lectured at over a dozen other post-secondary institutions. Recently, she was invited to Japan and traveled there with her husband and two children to share her storytelling talents. That experience left her with a memorable incident which she turned into a hilarious personal telling performed at the Toronto Festival of Storytelling. Nancy has also created a touring production with storytelling guru Bob Barton. She has written a book on how to be an oral storyteller and has just published her first children’s novel.

Community Based Arts Integration Program

As previously mentioned, Nancy was hired to bring oral storytelling to all the grade four students at participating
schools. This program has been running for four years, with next year being the final year of study. Before I became involved with the program, Nancy had participated in a session with the grade four teachers in September. During this session, the artists and the educators discussed their agendas and expectations for the classroom visits. Concerns, needs and desires were addressed at this time. Also preceding my involvement, the artists in their teams of three held an orientation session with all of the grade four children at each school. This was Nancy’s first year of direct involvement with the program. She did, however, know of its existence and is associated with some of the artists who had been previously involved.

Support Material

Drawing on her background as an educator, Nancy had prepared several rubrics for the teachers which addressed the following:

- assessing non verbal communication skills;
- use of words and oral structures; and
- role playing.

The teachers were also provided with materials that included storytelling games to reinforce the skills Nancy would be working on in her sessions. These exercises were to be undertaken by the teachers with the students as preparation for Nancy’s visits. Creating and providing this material was done on the storyteller’s own initiative. Nancy was helping to support the learning that would be taking place in oral storytelling and assisting the
teacher’s to evaluate an unfamiliar area.

Structure of the Sessions

The sessions were structured around technique. Each lesson built on skills and techniques learned the previous session. During her initial meeting with the educators, Nancy’s and the teacher’s expectations were set for the three session period. The material to be covered was explained to me as follows:

Session #1
• Viewing and Analyzing the Art of Storytelling
• Developing the Use of Imagery and Imagination
  Experiencing Storytelling Techniques and Skills (Use of Memory, Eye contact, Body Language, Gesturing, Facial Expression)
• Enjoying Literature

Session #2
• Viewing and Analysing Different Forms of the Art of Storytelling
• Advanced Development of Storytelling Techniques and Skills
  (Stance, Sweep, Openings and Closings, Audience Participation, Movement, Props, Working with an Audience)
• Enjoying Literature

Session #3
• Exploring Story and Story Characters through Role Play and Story Drama

When I first saw the above outline for the sessions, I admit I thought it was very ambitious, particularly given the timeframe. I also feared that the children would not have much oral storytelling experience on which the draw. In addition, all classes immediately followed each other and, therefore, it was virtually impossible for any class to have extra time, if
required. However, my field notes indicate that all areas outlined above were addressed. Obviously every skill and technique taught needs to be further developed before one can become truly fluent and versed in the art of oral storytelling. Nevertheless, the students were successful in exploring and attempting virtually all elements needed to become an oral storyteller.

If time had permitted, I feel it would have been beneficial also to explore diaphragmatic, or whole chest, breathing with the students. It is vital to know how to control and maintain proper breath support for engaging in any form of oration. Diaphragmatic breathing allows one to loosen the chest and as a result a richer and fuller speaking voice is achieved. A trained voice is a powerful voice. The practice of whole chest breathing takes years to perfect properly, but beginning when children are young it can become second nature to them.

**Story Selection and Presentation**

The same stories were not necessarily heard in each class. To enable this flexibility, no specific stories were set. Instead, Nancy matched the stories to what she observed to be the individual class’ mood, needs, desires and skill levels. Stories from a variety of cultures were shared, including Jamaican, East Indian, Irish, British, Italian, Greek, Japanese, North American, Native American, and German stories.

Every session began with Nancy warmly greeting the students,
engaging them in discussion and then sharing an uninterrupted tale. After this first story, Nancy again engaged the class in conversation which was then followed by another story told in segments. During the numerous pauses in between the segments, Nancy asked the students to retell the segment they had just heard. It was their turn to be the tellers. Nancy taught and assigned specific skills to be worked on during each stage of the retelling. In the last session, the students were asked to explore being in role from within the oral story told.

**Cultural Significance**

As previously mentioned, the stories were varied by Nancy when needed. This flexibility enabled Nancy to utilize the cultural background of the students in her selection. Several times Nancy told me that she had chosen a story reflecting a particular culture in order to reach out to a student. Ellin Greene writes, “Storytellers find that whenever they tell a story from the cultural background of their listeners, there is an immediate excitement”.[31]

Not only did Nancy tell stories to reflect the cultural diversity of her audience, but she also surprised and delighted a number of students when she chose to tell her stories in another language. One story in particular was a mere two sentences in length, but it nevertheless elicited a great deal of excitement.

“Does anyone speak Punjabi?” Nancy asked. Three children raised their hands. Nancy told the short story in Punjabi. She
had the three students act as translators. They fulfilled this role with ease. I wrote in my field notes at the time, "The three Punjabi speaking children were grinning from ear to ear as were several other East Indian children. There was an excited buzz heard all around the room". The entire class appreciated her effort and were also amused by the tale. All were silent during the telling, as if amazed by Nancy’s ability to speak Punjabi. On a micro scale, for the three children who acted as translator, Nancy’s brief tale created a special bond. On a macro scale, the fact that Nancy had learned a story in Punjabi attested to her general respect of other cultures and, therefore, their legitimacy.

During another session at School A with a different class Nancy again inquired, "Does anyone speak Punjabi?" A boy answered, "I speak Urdu, but I understand Punjabi." Nancy asked him to translate her story. The class laughed upon hearing the thirty second story. During the telling, another boy called out "I know what it means." The first child translated the story as follows: "There once was one King and one Queen and they both died. The end." Nancy thanked her translator and incredulously he said, "That’s it?"

When Nancy told a Bengali story, "The Woman and the Rice Thief", she said one word, "Acha", repeatedly. Upon completion of the tale, one of the Punjabi speaking students raised her hand and said, "Miss, she wants to tell you what the word Acha meant." She pointed to her neighbour. Nancy asked the child indicated to
share her definition with the class. The girl replied, “It means yes”. Nancy confirmed the meaning and thanked her for sharing. The child was left smiling broadly.

For the many children from the West Indies, she told the Jamaican tale, “Gull and Wife”. She prefaced this story in two ways by asking, “Is anyone from Jamaica?” or by saying “This is a story from Jamaica.” She also used a traditional Bahamian and West Indian opening,

Once upon a time, a very good time
Monkey chewed tobacco and spit white lime...

Once upon a time, a very good time
Not my time, nor your time, old peoples’ time...[32]

In addition she used a call and response method. Nancy said the word ‘cric’ at various times and ways throughout the story and the students responded with ‘crac’ in the same way. This shows the teller that the listeners are following along and are inside the story.

The initial response upon hearing the tale’s origin was two-fold. Either students announced aloud to Nancy that they or a relative were from Jamaica or nearby, or they excitedly whispered the same things amongst themselves. Their smiles were undeniable marks of their pleasure at hearing a Jamaican story. These smiles could also have been engendered from their familiarity with the form:

..., black children may be more receptive to learning that allows them to use their skills in the oral tradition (a trait
Barwell [1981] also reports among native Americans, although mainstream children are thought to have a stronger orientation to the written word as a major source of gathering information. Brett (1983), for example, cites Smitherman: "The crucial difference in American culture lies in the contrasting modes in which black and white Americans have shaped their language ... a written mode for whites, having come from a European, print-oriented culture; a spoken mode for blacks, having come from an African, orally oriented background."[33]

Incorporating the oral tradition of societal groups such as native Americans and African Americans also works towards the creation of tolerance in our classrooms: "our world is as rich as it is, because we have shared our stories across cultures, and with them our hopes, our beliefs, our ways of seeing."[34]

Not only did Nancy tell a story that reflected some of the students' cultural heritage, but she placed some of those same students into the story. During the first session at School A, Nancy put a Jamaican student into the story in a risk-free manner. The child had shared the fact that he was born in Jamaica. Nancy said that the boy the man hired to watch his wife looked a lot like you, and she pointed at the student. Then she asked, "What is your name?" "Jason", he replied. Upon hearing the child's name Nancy feigned surprise and asked, "Have you heard this before? The boy's name is Jason too, can you believe it?" Jason grinned happily and shook his head. Nancy continued the story calling the boy, Jason. At various points she stopped and asked
Jason a question to be answered in role. Such as, "Would you tell the husband Jason?" The student’s classmates also appeared to be pleased by hearing their friend’s name in the story as they smiled and exchanged glances every time Nancy used it. This was also done in several other classes where there were boys of West Indian heritage. How proud they were to be in the story.

**Literature Connection**

Nancy: "Where do you think I get my stories from?"
Boy 1: "Your imagination".
Boy 2: "Another storyteller".
Boy 3: "Books".

Nancy not only brought interesting and culturally diverse stories to the students, but she also made the literature connection. At some point during the three sessions at both schools, Nancy made a point of sharing a written version of a number of the stories she had told. Sharing this link with children is vital:

> By making a connection between storytelling and books—by telling a story and indicating the book from which it comes and pointing out that hundreds of other wonderful tales can be found in books—the storyteller is introducing reading as a source of enjoyment throughout life.[35]

It was at the last session at School A when Nancy shared the oral and written connection with the students. She began as usual by telling a story, in this case, one about an ape who became a
supply teacher. Upon completion of her tale, she held up the book, \textit{The Teacher Went Bananas}. Smiles and looks were exchanged between classmates. In my field notes I asked, "Do they know this book? , or are they just excited to see how Nancy has told an oral story that she has learned from a book, something they could also do?" Next, she shared her favourite volume of fairy tales and explained, "It doesn't have many pictures, but that is good, because it allows you to use your imagination. I don't get my own pictures in my head, when I'm busy looking at theirs."

Lastly, she shared a picture book and an anthology version of the story \textit{Tailypo}. The class erupted into conversation at the sight of the two literary versions of this story. Many children called out in recognition. Judging from their excited reactions, if they had not heard this story orally before, they had definitely heard it read aloud.

In all the classes where Nancy introduced the books her oral stories were based on, the children were excited. The story of "Tailypo", in particular, caused an enthusiastic response. In School A, Nancy opened this book to reveal a picture of Old Thomas. Upon seeing the artist's representation, one boy called out "Mine was a little bit younger," referring to the way that he had visualized Thomas. Nancy continued the discussion by showing a picture of the tail and asking, "Did your tail look like that?" This gave the children a chance to discuss the pictures in their head and compare their visualizations with the illustrated version. If the students had been read the storybook only, they
would not have had the chance to create their own mind pictures. The book provides you with the pictures, leaving less room for imagination. Nancy brought the conversation to a close by saying, "I'm an artist with my words".

Two significant moments dealing with a connection between literature and oral storying stand out. The first was at School B. Nancy had been telling a story in which the father, a coal miner, is coughing up blood. The students were asked to provide possible explanations for his ailment. A boy suggested, "He might have a dry cough." Then a girl responded, "The cough is dry, because I read in a book called *Pony*, that when you work in a mine, the dust comes off the coal and makes your cough dry." This child made an intertextual reference of a written work to help her understand an oral text. It is vital for children to be able to draw on all forms of literacy when needed.

The second moment also occurred at School B in another class. After Nancy had finished the same story, she was asked, "Can you show us the book?" (Earlier she had told the class that the story was based upon a book). The children wanted to see what the main character, Meena, looked like. Nancy warned, "I'll show you the picture, but it may be disappointing. If you don't want your picture disturbed, don't look at it." Several children covered their face, turned away, or shut their eyes.

The oral story created such a strong vision in some children's imaginations, that they did not want it changed. In any illustrated book, the children need to learn that just because
an illustrator has drawn their version of the story, it is not the only valid representation. Individual representations are equally valid.

The children needed to see the connection between the oral stories they were hearing and the books that some of them were derived from. At School A, Nancy was telling the story, "The Porcelain Man", and she casually commented, "Sometimes when I retell a story, I don't remember everything in the book. I change it." A boy questioned in utter disbelief, "It's a book?" This comment stemmed from his belief that the story was born full grown like Athena from Zeus' head. His question was followed by a classmate asking, "Do you memorize it?" Nancy used the children's curiosity as a springboard for teaching them about her craft. She said, "A poem is set, a script is set, but storytelling is not set."

By presenting the bridge between the two worlds of written and oral stories, Nancy was able to show the importance of both. Her introduction to the connectedness between the two formats will act as encouragement for students to seek out other stories to read and to tell. She also encouraged them to revisit the ones she had told in both formats and showed them where they could find endless stories to retell orally.

It is through the retelling that the students make stories their own. Nancy enforced the importance of both types of storying. As Bette Bosma writes, "children who hear and read many traditional tales gain structural insights that help develop their
intuitive ability to understand narration.”[36] Story listening and story reading both allow for a greater understanding of story structure and of language in general. The written and oral story should be accessed equally in the classroom.

**Genre**

Sometimes Nancy allowed the children to select the type of story they would like to hear. Sometimes she selected what genre was best to be used based on the mood of the class at the time of the telling and on what story would help her accomplish the session’s goals. I classified the stories Nancy shared with the students into the following categories:

- mystery,
- supernatural,
- humour, and
- drama.

Most of her stories could also be classified as being Folktales.

It was beneficial for Nancy as a teller to be able to share a type of story that the children were enthused about hearing. The most requested genre was the supernatural or the ghost story, which was often referred to by the students as ‘scary’ stories. Given the popularity of this genre with middle school children, Nancy made sure that she was prepared to tell some. As Ellin Greene writes, “children in the middle grades also seem to have an affinity for scary ghost stories- the grosser the better!”[37]

Nancy’s ghost stories were not the typical kind heard
around campfires. She told a Japanese folktale about a horrible egg creature, a southern story about Death coming to call on a woman named Ellie Mitchell and the popular “Tailypo”. My personal favourite was an Irish story called “Black Blood Pudding,” about a girl named Mary MacGregor and her dealings with a newly buried corpse. The following are short interchanges which serve to illustrate the children’s desire for scary stories:

Nancy: I am going to take you inside one of my favourite stories.
Boy: Is it scary?

Nancy: I’m going to tell you my favourite story.
Girl: Is it scary?

Nancy: I’m going to tell you a story now.
Boy: Is it a ghost story?

Nancy: It’s time to tell a story.
Girl: Scary?

Boy: Can we have a scary story?

Girl: Can you tell us a short scary story?

Boy: Will you tell the same scary story you told the other class?
Nancy: I’ll tell you another one and then you can share it with them.

Nancy: What kind of story do you want?
Class: Scary.
Boy 1: Castles
Boy 2: Haunted castles.
Girl: The scariest story in your head.
Nancy: What’s the most interesting thing you have done with me so far?

Girl: The part where you told the scary stories.

The children knew what kind of story they wanted to hear from Nancy, even though they had never before experienced a professional oral storyteller. Scary stories were popular with the grade fours in both schools.

Why are the children so interested in this particular genre? A conversation between Nancy and two students helps to shed light on this question:

Nancy: I’m going to tell you my favourite story.

Boy 1: Stephen King?

Nancy: Better.

Boy 2: R.L. Stine?

Nancy: He’s tame.

This interchange attests to the fact that some students have a knowledge of the horror genre in the written format. R.L. Stine is the author of the extremely popular Goosebumps series of horror books aimed at the middle grade reader. Given his largely adult audience, I can only postulate that the mention of author Stephen King may be in reference to the movies based on his books. Movies and television shows are a way in which children have been familiarized with the horror or ghost (scary) story.

In discussing the man at Ellie Mitchell’s door before he was let in a child speculated, “He’ll probably have a hook in his hand”. A girl sitting near him then said, “Yeah, like I know what you did last summer".
Storytelling is an art that you cannot really learn from books. Books tell you about it. They can offer suggestions on how to do it. But storytelling is something you can only learn by doing. The real learning comes when you start telling stories.[38]

Nancy’s belief that children learn by doing is evidenced in her storytelling methodology. If storytelling is an art, then,”...like all arts, it requires training and experience”. [39] Nancy’s job was to teach the children how to become storytellers by using proper techniques.

In the course of the three sessions Nancy covered a wide range of techniques with the children. The areas taught included:

- memory strategies,
- eye contact,
- gesture,
- stance (posture),
- vocal expression,
- facial expression,
- awareness of audience,
- audience participation,
- opening/ closing,
- telling in chair/ standing,
- composure, and
- affective listening.

These storytelling skills, which in a broader sense are effective
communication skills, were taught by Nancy in a variety of ways. In the written version of a lecture/storytelling she presented, Nancy said, "Modeling storytelling for children and then instructing them in how to tell a good story gives them the foundation of effective communication techniques they will rely on the rest of their lives". To the children she said, "The best way to learn to be a storyteller is to watch one and then do what they do".

Nancy instructed the students to, "Watch how I use my arms. My whole arm gestures. Imitate me". On another occasion, Nancy instructed, "Next time I want you to add gesture, watch me. Use your hands and arms to express your story to make it interesting". Each time, she asked the children to focus on a specific skill which, in turn, she would invite them to use. By presenting each skill in isolation, Nancy was able to focus on how well the students were able to accomplish the technique. Once they were secure in the execution of a specific skill, Nancy then felt free to move on to the next. If the students needed further work, she accommodated them.

By first demonstrating the skills for the students Nancy allowed them to see what they were expected to try. This gave the students the confidence needed to attempt the unfamiliar skills themselves. Some students are visual learners and as such they especially benefited from the demonstration. Nancy did not ask students to duplicate her every word and gesture when retelling as this would limit their creativity. She did tell the students
repeatedly that, “there is not one way to tell a story.

Sometimes Nancy would ask the students to look for the ways in which she conducted a certain skill, “Watch and see how many ways I show you the end of the story”. As a result, the students would have to be more observant as they knew that she would question them on their findings.

Other times Nancy would tell a section of the story to the students and then ask them to retell the section, often focussing on a specific skill. This was an excellent technique, in that, it only required the students to remember a small piece of the story at a time. This technique made their recall of the story more successful and, therefore, encouraged them as tellers. The students were eager to retell and then return to the story. Every time Nancy stopped a story after only sharing a small section, the students became quite verbal. “I’ll stop there” Nancy would say and the students’ voices would rise in protest: “Nooo”, “You’re tormenting us”, “You always stop”, and “Finish it now”. Sighing was often used to signal the students’ displeasure at having the story interrupted. At the beginning of one session Nancy asked, “What do you want today?” “You not to stop in the middle” a boy quickly responded. After the students had retold the section they were always excited to return to the story; a collective “Yesss” was often the way they expressed their pleasure.

During her telling, Nancy would also ask the students to “show” her things. “Wait or thought are the action words, how do you show it?” “Like this” a boy responded and he assumed the
position of The Thinker. Nancy was not asking the students to imitate, but to create. "It is not enough to say it, I have to see it," Nancy would often say during her telling. Next she would repeat the line she wanted the children to "show", i.e. "He got tired".

Nancy was a very supportive teacher and offered a great amount of encouragement to the students. This is vital when teaching oral storytelling, as people of all ages may become afraid or embarrassed assuming the role of teller. Nancy offered encouragement by walking around to address children individually and in their small groups. She would often adjust the teller's position quietly and at the same time offer a smile or a positive comment. Nancy did not single out any children in a negative fashion. Verbally she offered many encouraging comments, "I saw some wonderful storytelling going on and I was amazed at your memories." "You are all working well, you are making natural gestures not just putting them in. You are relating well to your audience". Although these comments were directed towards the whole class, Nancy also made encouraging remarks to individual students. For example, "Good, keep going, using your hands to show and tell", "You were very brave to take that role" and "Good job". Nancy's supportive and encouraging manner let the students know that it was safe to make mistakes. Through her actions, the children understood that she wanted them to succeed.

Lastly, one of the major strategies Nancy used in teaching the students the techniques of oral storytelling was offering
advice throughout her sharing. One boy who was having trouble remembering parts of the story was told, “You can ask for help or listeners can add it in [anything missed] when it is their turn”. If the children took a few minutes to settle into her story, Nancy would wait then offer the tip, “When I have complete silence as a teller then I begin my story”. Audience behaviour was often used as a teaching tool for Nancy who took the opportunity to make helpful comments to the students.

Paramount to becoming a good oral storyteller is having a good teacher. Through the use of the various oral storytelling techniques, Nancy was able to verse the students in the many skills required for oral storytelling in an understandable and non intimidating manner. Nancy’s instruction techniques were designed to promote student success. It is impossible to achieve success as an oral storyteller if one does not ascribe to the idea that, “storytelling as an art form, involves a whole lot of wonderful skills and techniques”. [40] The techniques in conjunction with the story structure are the bones of any telling.
Chapter V

STUDENTS

The focal point of my study were the students. The program they were participants in was designed expressly to broaden their arts experience. They were taught to be oral storytellers and I was there to witness and to record the process.

Children are natural storytellers. They engage in personal storying everyday of their lives, on the playground, in the classroom and at the dinner table. Unfortunately, in the classroom, “we have generally neglected the two important language arts skills of speaking and listening—discouraging the former in our classrooms and assuming the latter”.[41] Oral storytelling is the way to rectify this practice; as one child said, “We can listen to be a good storyteller”.

As Listeners

Intrinsic to learning is the ability to listen. What is listening?

To listen is to do more than hear. Hearing is a physiological function and involves receiving a message; listening is a mental function that involves perceiving a message.[42]

Storytelling by its very nature encourages listening. The students demonstrated their ability to listen, not just hear, in numerous ways. They reacted to Nancy and their fellow tellers physically, verbally and emotionally.
Physical

In all the sessions that formed part of this study, students either moved or leaned forward during the tellings. This movement indicated that the students were interested and involved in listening to the story. In trying to move closer to the teller, the students were in actuality attempting to get closer to the story. When frightened by a story, the students often repealed back.

Nancy asked the students to be aware of and demonstrate to their student tellers that they were listening and interested through their body language. The students' body language was an important indicator of their listening. When scared by something in a story, for example, the children reacted physically in numerous ways. I noted, "...the boy shivered as he said, 'It was scary'". I watched a girl pull her shirt up over her face to just under her eyes during a telling of "Black Blood Pudding". She remained hidden for most of the story, occasionally pulling her shirt down, and then immediately pulling it up again. During a telling of the same tale in a different class, a boy reacted to the image of the corpse digging his nail's into Mary MacGregor's back. He said, "Ow" and then leaned back and began to bite his nails. Many students leaned back when Nancy delivered the line, "He crunched it [his finger] right off". Many students shuddered, covered their face or moved back. Another boy in the same class plugged his ears and cringed when Nancy said the word 'scream'. At the end of "TailyPo" the creature shouts, "Mine" and the
students listening jumped. In another class many students covered their mouths with their hands when Death came to find Ellie Mitchell.

The children did not only physically demonstrate their listening when frightened by a story. In one sad story, Nancy said, “Clemmy is my little brother” and a boy near her leaned forward and pretended to pat the imagined child on the head. It was a very touching image and surprising as the child had been chatting through most of the story and I assumed he was not following along. In another session, Nancy was singing the Coyote’s song. Nancy had told the students that the song was a powerful song, so powerful that it would transform you forever. In reaction to the song, a boy sat up on his knees, put both hands on his stomach and closed his eyes. When another group of children heard Nancy sing a different song, they swayed along to the beat, some with their eyes closed. Upon hearing that Ojisan was to have the tree growing in his head cut down, a girl vigorously began shaking her head in disbelief. When the character, Porcelain Man said to Angelina, “I love you,” a group of the students responded in a variety of physical ways including smiling, clapping, covering their ears and placing a hand over their heart. In all the sessions, nodding was a common form of expression for the listeners.

The students also responded physically to what they heard by turning to others to confirm the stories’ events. They exchanged glances when finding something humorous, upsetting, scary and/or
pleasing. Often children would look around before they settled on a particular friend to share this exchange. I witnessed countless nudges between neighbours for a variety of reasons. All these manifestations by the students were physical responses to something they had heard and understood.

As a result of the students' responding physically to what they had heard, Nancy was quickly able to gauge their interest and ability to sustain listening. If needed, she was then able to act accordingly to secure attention by utilizing various techniques including questioning, call and response and lowering of the voice. When a number of children in any class had trouble sustaining their attention to the story, Nancy would use a participatory story in which the children were required to respond as a group vocally or physically and/or be invited up to be worked into the telling. Authors Judy Sierra and Robert Kaminski advocate the use of participatory tales for this reason in their book, *Twice Upon a Time*:

> Participation stories are an important part of every storyteller's repertoire. They provide an outlet for restless children who have trouble sitting still and listening. [43]

Involving the audience is almost always guaranteed to make an audience listen to a story.

Some of the ways I witnessed students demonstrate a lack of attention included looking around the room instead of focusing on the teller; playing with other students' hair, shoes etc.;
touching other students; playing with pencils, pistachio nuts or other objects; and lying down and turning away from the speaker. Admittedly, students who were engaged in any of the aforementioned activities would sometimes surprise me and demonstrate that through their actions or words that they were, in fact, listening.

**Verbal**

The students laughed, gasped and cried in reaction to the various stories they heard. In addition, they participated in what I refer to as murmurings. In reaction to the stories, they would add their voice to others in saying, “Oh’”, “No”, “Yesss”, “I told you so”, “Cool”, “Yuck” and other similar words. When a large portion of the class was saying different words at the same time it created a murmuring or a buzzing sound.

The students also demonstrated that they were listening by responding in ways requested by Nancy. For the story “That Pig”, Nancy asked the students to say as a group, “No, it would not” at certain points during the story. Similarly, as a class the students were asked to become the voice for the freedom bird saying, “Na, na, na, na,na,na” and clapping three times. As previously mentioned, for the Jamaican story the students were asked to show that they were listening by responding ‘crac’ to Nancy’s call of ‘cric” and imitating the way she said the call. If Nancy called, “cric, cric” the children would reply “crac, crac”. One class at School A liked this idea of call and response
so much that they created their own calls and responses. During the second session with the class, Nancy called out “cric” and the children quickly responded “crac”. Their teacher then yelled out, “We have a better one, Shesh-kabob”. Then he proceeded to call on a group of students to share their versions with Nancy. “Hot dog”, “Maple Leafs”, and “Space ship” were the ideas shared. One boy was too shy to share his; he just giggled and shook his head no when it was his turn. The teacher did not force the issue.

The children also demonstrated their listening by asking questions or making comments during or after the telling. When Nancy said, “The seal wriggled out of its skin” a boy whispered in awe, “A mermaid”. During another telling of the story mentioned above Nancy said, “If you marry me and live with me for seven years then I’ll give it [her seal skin] back”. One boy responded with, “What a rat”. Another said, “He steals”. A final example is as follows, Nancy ended by saying “Ojisan became very, very, very, very...” and several students filled in “rich”.

“Cool”

“Cool” was the word most often repeated by the students during the course of my study. Both girls and boys utilized it freely. From the way in which the students were using the word, I was able to ascertain its meaning to be, ‘the ultimate’. It was used as a means of expressing pleasure and admiration. Nancy, upon hearing the word, understood that the students were listening and they liked what they were hearing. There was not a session
that went by without 'cool' being said. I never heard it used fewer than ten times. After one session I wrote:

"Cool" said a voice to my right. "Cool" piped up a voice from the front. "Cool" whispered a girl. "Cool" from behind. "Cool" said a voice to my left. "Cool" said a boy to his buddy. "Cool" said a child in the front. "Cool" said a boy in a hushed tone. "Cool", "Cool", "Cooool". This one word created a murmured symphony. It was an immediate reaction over in fewer than thirty seconds this time. "Cool" I thought to myself smiling as I furiously attempted to record.

Emotional

The students' emotional response to the stories they were hearing was evidenced by their outward displays of expression. Whether they were crying, laughing, smiling, frowning or surprised, the students showed this in their face or body or by their words. The teller or any observer could see and hear what the students were feeling. They could understand the students' emotional involvement to the story and this in turn demonstrated that they were indeed listening and understanding.

As Tellers

Knowing a story is only half of what makes someone a storyteller. Telling the story, being able to effectively share it, is the other half.[44]

Unlike most professional oral storytellers, Nancy was not in the schools strictly to entertain the students. She was there to
teach the students the art of oral storytelling, which meant teaching them to tell.

The students learned quickly; a testament to Nancy's teaching methods and to the fact that they were interested and wanted to become oral storytellers. The intent of the program was not to turn every student into a professional oral storyteller, but to allow them to experience some success with this art form. Were they successful? Yes! Did they view themselves to be successful? Judging from their own words, Yes:

Nancy: Did you discover anything about yourself today?
Girl: I'm a good storyteller.
Boy: I'm not shy.
Girl: I don't have stage fright.
Boy: I thought it would be hard to be a storyteller but it was okay.
Girl: At first I thought I wouldn't want to be a storyteller but then if you tried I knew you could do it.

[School A, Session One]

Nancy: What did you discover this morning?
Boy: That I storytelling.
Girl: That I could tell a story back to other people easily.
Boy: You should never be nervous telling a story because it was fun.

[School A, Session One]

Nancy: What did you discover about storytelling?
Girl: Once you are relaxed your audience is focussed on you
and it’s like much easier.

Girl: When I saw their...my groups...eyes the words were in their eyes.

Girl: If you try you can be a storyteller. If you really put your head to it you can be a good storyteller.

[School B, Session Two]

Nancy: What did you discover about storytelling?
Girl: I can do it.
Boy: I’m good at being a storyteller.
Boy: It’s cool. Storytelling is.
Boy: I can make people laugh when I storytell.

[School B, Session Two]

Another indicator of success as tellers was evidenced in the fact that the students shared what they learned. They told to students from other classes and to people outside of school. Nancy had encouraged the students to share both at school and with family. She told one class that she would tell them a different ghost story so they could share it with another class. After teaching one class “Henny Penny” Nancy asked, “How many of you have young brothers and sisters?” There was a show of hands.

“Good”, Nancy said, “Now you have a story to tell them”.

“Did any of you try to tell any stories?”, Nancy asked one class. A boy raised his hand and Nancy invited him to share his telling experience.

Nancy: Who did you tell?
Boy: My sister.
Nancy: Did she like it?
Boy: She ran around flying like a bird because she wasn’t
listening.

Nancy: How old is she?
Boy: Five.
Nancy: [smiling] That means she heard, congratulations. She was playing with the story you told.

Nancy began by asking another group of students, “Have you been telling stories?” Several of the students answered positively:

Girl: I did.
Nancy: Who did you tell?
Girl: My sister.
Nancy: How old is she?
Girl: Fourteen, she laughed so hard when she heard Ojisan.

Boy: I told my four year old brother and my three year old sister.

Girl: I told the story to my brother.

Girl: I told four adults my mom, dad, my uncle and aunt.
Nancy: How did you finish it when you didn’t know the ending yet?
Girl: I asked them what do you think will happen next.

Sharing the stories they learned with others showed that the students saw themselves as tellers. They had the confidence in their ability to tell. Their telling outside of the sessions with Nancy also demonstrated their enthusiasm for oral storytelling.

Recall

The skill of remembering a completely oral text is foreign to most students. Nancy made this area virtually risk-free. If the students were unable to retell the tales that Nancy presented for
them, they were not made to feel as if they had failed. Nancy lead the students back through the segments they were to retell after she had told them. She asked the students to fill in the words she would leave out. As well, visual support was offered in the way of prop picture cards and key words written up on the board. In addition, Nancy made accommodations for students with special needs. As a memory aid for one student, she developed a personal set of visual reminder cards. Once the first sentence was provided for John, he then proved capable of carrying on without any visual reminders.

The groups were instructed to be supportive of their teller and when necessary, to assist them by providing a memory jog. Although, Nancy told the students that they had to maintain the same events, setting and characters, they were not to mimic every word she had said. The students all proved very capable at retelling. They used the strategies taught to them by Nancy to assist them with recall.

Knowing in advance that they would be called on to retell the stories also helped to sustain the students’ attention.

Although memory and attention are not the same thing, it is true that things are not likely to be remembered if they are not attended to in the first place. [45]

Several teachers had commented to me during the course of the sessions that many of their students are weak readers and writers. Learning an oral tale from another teller eliminates the difficulty those students have with the decoding of written text.
This is especially important in the context of the E.S.L. students who lack familiarity with the English language:

As children listen to stories, verse, prose of all kinds, they unconsciously become familiar with the rhythms and the structure, the cadences and conventions of the various forms of written language. They are learning how print ‘sounds’, how to ‘hear’ it in their inner ear.[46]

Oral storytelling, therefore, could instill in E.S.L. learners the confidence needed to excel in other areas of learning.

**Gesture and Expression**

Gesture plays an important part in oral storytelling. By using gestures, the students became more expressive. Gesture is another way to help recall a story. Gail Myers and Michele Tolela Myers write on the importance of gesture in their book, *The Dynamics of Human Communication*: “Gestures help in many ways to interpret the content of communication”. [47] Timothy Gura and Charlotte Lee define gesture in their book, *Oral Interpretation*, as being “...any movement that helps to express or emphasize an idea or emotional response”. [48] Vocal expression is paramount to any oral interpretation. In any oral rendering, the voice is your primary instrument. Facial expression should be reflective of the interpretation as well. Gesture, vocal and facial expression need to be combined in order to produce a successful oral telling.

The more relaxed a speaker is, the less tension will effect their voice. Tension in the voice is marked by a pinched, often
higher vocal quality than normal, a rapid pace or a monotone delivery. When a teller is not as confident or comfortable they tend to gesture less and use less facial expressions. The arms are generally kept tightly against the body sometimes only moving from the elbow down. Often the posture is rigid. When experiencing tension the face of the unconfident speaker can take on a tight controlled, mask-like expression.

When students are more confident, or are really excited about the material they are orally rendering, they become freer with their gestures. They no longer look as if they are afraid that large gestures will call unwanted attention to them. When relaxed facial expression takes on a natural appearance and will change accordingly to reflect the content and meaning of what is being shared. When confident in one’s orality, the voice becomes more expressive, warmer, freer, more melodious and often louder.

The students in my study exhibited various levels of confidence which were reflected in their gestures and expressions. As the sessions went on, I noticed that an increasing number of students became more confident in their oral storytelling capabilities. When Nancy asked, “Did you discover anything today?” a boy replied, “Using hands and face for expression makes storytelling more interesting”.

When Nancy was telling “The Persimmon Tree” a student offered a gesture and sound to use when Ojisan was thinking. She raised her right index finger and said, “Bing”. The other students laughed at her addition. Nancy incorporated the student’s idea
into the story. This action greatly pleased the student. Later
when the students were retelling the story they too used their
classmate’s gesture and sound.

Nancy reinforced in the students that the techniques used in
oral storytelling take time to perfect. She told the students
that they would just work on a few at a time, asking “Can you tell
a story with all of this? as she pointed to a list of techniques.
Several students replied, “No”. “Of course not” said Nancy, “But
we can one at a time. It takes me ten weeks with adults to train
them”. In addition, she cautioned, there are always things that
can occur that may have a negative impact on even the most
professional, polished oral storyteller.

**Eye Contact**

Before Nancy began her sessions she provided the teachers
with a handout on storytelling games at their initial planning
period. All the games were to work on the skills she would be
emphasizing during her work with the students. The one that Nancy
told me she requested the teachers do before any others was the
eye contact game. This is outlined on the handout as follows:

**TECHNIQUE-EYE CONTACT**

**GAME- EYE SEE**
- sit in a circle, 4-6 students
- starter says a sentence looking
directly at each member of the group on
each word
- last person to get a look and a word
must say the next sentence
using the word that was given to them

She had requested that the teachers work on this particular skill
because it is a vital if not the most vital aspect of oral storytelling. By nature oral storytelling promotes the connection between the teller and the told. This is almost impossible to achieve if the teller does not look at their audience or if the audience in return does not look at the teller. Of course, in a large audience it is hard to make direct eye contact; however; the teller does turn his/her head to address different areas of the audience so that the members will gain a sense of the bond that eye contact helps create. The teller also needs to look at his/her audience to gauge their reactions.

Only a few of the teachers had managed to play the requested game and most only did it once or twice. This was one area in which the students had the most difficulty. Two classes who had worked on the technique via the game were able to efficiently play the game for Nancy. Throughout my field notes are comments such as, "...not all tellers were able to maintain eye contact with their listeners", and "..the tellers seemed to have a bit more difficulty in this area". However, a few tellers I originally cited as having trouble maintaining eye contact I later realized were actually looking away at times when they were trying to recall a detail of the story.

Often this technique required for storytelling is one of the last to perfect. It is the very intimate nature of direct eye contact that can unsettle some students. It should also be mentioned that in some cultures it is disrespectful to maintain eye contact.
Surprises

When walking into a new classroom and meeting its occupants for the first time, there is no way of knowing who will excel at oral storytelling. In fact, it is counterproductive to learning in general to make such presumptions. All students can experience success as oral storytellers, especially when they are taught to believe in their own ability. Some of the teachers involved told me that they had been surprised at several of their students. At School B, one teacher came over to me during the second session. She pointed at two girls who were partnered and expressed to me that although they are very bright students, they were extremely shy. The one girl who was the teller was sitting in her chair in perfect position. She was very expressive and animated and the listener was acting out alongside. Earlier in the same session, these girls were working with other students. At that time, I had observed that they were much more subdued. The teacher informed me that they were good friends, which explained their increased comfort level.

On Nancy's last day working with their class, these two girls approached me on their own initiative. They told me that they are going to share a story with their grade one buddies today and that they had been practicing. I was pleased to see how excited they were about passing on an oral story.

My biggest surprise, however, occurred at School A after a session with the two classes of mostly identified students (they joined for Nancy's sessions). I had been watching one girl, who
had such a commanding presence when storytelling. She stood to tell before any other students in the class. When I asked her why she told me, “It felt right”. Her voice was deep and rather raspy. She was relaxed and her expressive voice showed no signs of strain. Her arm gestures to indicate the gull wife were wide and sweeping. She incorporated every technique taught by Nancy into her telling. This student had her audience spellbound. One of her listeners was sitting with wide eyes and his mouth open. This student was entirely caught up inside her story. I wrote later that night, “I had trouble taking my eyes off the girl with the braids, she is mesmerizing. Her storytelling skills are incredible, is she a natural. Is she a product of a mostly oral culture? No matter this child has it!”

I expressed to the teacher how wonderful and focussed I found this girl to be and how impressed I was by the power of her oral storytelling. The teacher agreed that she was doing extremely well, but she sadly informed me that she was being considered for a special behaviour class, because she had become so out of control as of late. I found this information very hard to reconcile with my image of the child.

The same teacher motioned to a student and whispered, “She is my shyest child in this class”. I looked over at the area she indicated and noted that the girl was fully participating as a member of the audience in her telling group. When I looked over I caught her eye and she looked away quickly. She then immediately became less animated. Thereafter, I made sure to be more
discreet.

Another teacher approached me during the session to say how pleased and surprised she was to see that Nancy had reached out to the difficult students in her class. She indicated a group of four boys. Amongst them was the boy who told Nancy in the morning that he had been embarrassed by a teller before. The teacher said normally the boys would have said they were “too cool” to tell stories. This group of boys, however, were genuinely caught up in Nancy’s story. In my field notes I had indicated that this teacher had previously singled out the same group of boys by saying, “Too bad there is a group of boys that think they are just too cool to relax and enjoy it”.

Several teachers shared with me that they were surprised at who amongst their students were the best tellers. They explained that some of the children they thought would excel, due to their confidence and outgoing natures were very quiet and subdued tellers. Perhaps when these students became more accomplished practitioners of oral storytelling and, therefore, more comfortable with the forum, their true natures would be revealed in their telling.

**Inside the Story**

Being “inside a story” means more than hearing it; it means more than reacting to it; it means truly feeling it. Being inside the story allows the listeners to become participants; they have a say in the action and, in addition, are able to take on and
explore the story through role playing. In the third and final session the students explored an oral story via role play. Nancy guided the children inside the story.

The students were asked to explore the story by being questioned in role as one of the characters. Nancy had the students work alone at developing role through movement and expression. In addition, Nancy invited several students up to the front of the class to adopt the character’s persona and be questioned by the other students. Both methods invited the students into the story. An example of the first method occurred while Nancy told the story, “Seal Mother”. She asked the class, “If you were Andrew and you found the seal skin what would you do?” The students then had time to discuss with their neighbours the action they would undertake. Then Nancy addressed the entire class and said “Andrew, Andrew what are you going to do? Stand up and tell them what you are going to do”. Various Andrews came forth and Nancy invited the class to ask them questions.

Girl: I’m going to give it back to my mother.
Boy: Will you cry when she leaves?
Girl: Yes.
Boy: What if she took you with her?
Girl: I’d be happy [said determinedly].

Boy 1: I’ll get the seal skin and run home and give it to her and set her free.
Boy 2: Are you going to go with your mother?
Boy 1: Yeah.
Boy 2: What will you do when he comes
back from the beach and sees you with the seal skin and beats you?

Boy 1: I would hide it. [mimed placing down his shirt]

Boy 2: What if he asked you why you were late?

Boy 1: I would tell him I fell and broke my leg a little.

Girl: How can you breathe underwater?

Boy 2: I’ll ask her for a piece of seal skin for me.

Boy 2: I’d get her mother [Andrew’s grandmother] to make one for me.

Demonstrating their ability and willingness to step into role, the first two students to come up and become Andrew were girls.

In another class a boy assumed the role of Henny Penny. As he walked up to the front of the room a boy exclaimed, “It has to be a girl”. Nancy retorted with, “Why, haven’t you ever heard of acting?” A girl then said, “He doesn’t have to be a girl”. The boy’s willingness to step into role as Henny Penny is a testament to the power of storytelling.

The exchange which occurred between Boy One and Boy Two documented above is significant for several reasons. First, by way of explanation, it appeared to me that Boy One had spent much of the session prior to becoming Andrew not listening. He had brought back a piece of string to the carpet when Nancy had asked them to be the mom finding her skin and he had made a big joke out of it. He earlier suggested that the father be called, “Mr. Pencilhead Buddha”. However, he had a logical answer for every question put to him as Andrew. As evidenced by these answers, he
was taking the role seriously. The questioner of Andrew was a boy who had a great deal of trouble concentrating during a previous session. When questioning Andrew, he was very intent and serious. Both boys were thinking in role. Although Boy Two was not in character, he behaved as if his classmate was Andrew during the questioning. Boy Two was not trying to make Boy One break out of role. Unfortunately, this was a behaviour that I had witnessed with other questioners in previous role playing situations. From Boy Two’s questions, it appeared as if he was trying to really understand Andrew and his actions.

“It’s time to explore a story, really get inside, climb inside of it, become the story” Nancy told a group of students at School B. Then Nancy began to tell them one of her favourite stories, “The Rag Coat”. After telling a segment she stopped and said, 'I want to see what you heard, learned and felt”. After soliciting the student’s suggestions, Nancy then announced, “Todd Widdock is going to come in here. What is one thing you want to know?” This time it was Nancy’s turn to be in role. Through their questions, the students demonstrated that they too were inside the story:

Girl: Do you feel sad because you had to stop work and your family has to work so hard?
Girl: How did you get sick?
Boy: Do you think that’s the case that you just have to rest?(in response to Nancy saying the Doctor said ‘he’ just needs to rest)
Boy: How do you think your family will live on after you die?
These questions asked by the students showed their sensitivity towards Nancy’s character and their understanding of ‘his’ fate, i.e. death. Nancy divided the class in half and had one half take on the role of Tom Widdock. The other half of the students were to act as the questioners. Some of the questions that were asked included, “Don’t you care about your daughter a lot?”, “Are you poor?”, and “How do you feel right now?”. Again the questions showed the children’s willingness to accept others in role.

Questions asked by another class of Nancy while portraying Tom Widdock were as follows:

Boy: What caused your cough?
Girl: Has there ever been a time when you came home?
Boy: How old is your daughter?
Boy: What’s your wife’s name?
Boy: How old is your son?
Girl: Why did you choose coal mining for work?
Girl: Can you describe what your daughter wears?
Boy: Would Meena steal?
Girl: Can you describe your daughter in her looks?

In this class, as well as in others, there were some students who had more trouble than others playing along and stepping into role. When Nancy returned into the classroom as herself, a boy exclaimed, “I know it was you for a fact because you had your earrings on and a braid on the back”. Nancy replied, “You’re absolutely right”. Then she asked the students, “What was I doing?” They responded in chorus, “Acting”. “Yes” Nancy confirmed, “I was playing a role”.

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Nancy also asked the students to physically become a character. Often she would assign them a task to do in role, such as searching for their seal skin. When exploring the story, "The Porcelain Man" with a class Nancy said, "In twenty seconds you have another assignment, to walk as J.T. and sit in your own chair as J.T. and think about all you have to do today". I observed and recorded, "Nancy counted and the children moved in role to their desk. Many stomped their feet and shoved their chair back. Six children turned their chair around backwards and sat as Nancy had. Once the students were in position Nancy said, "Those of you who I tap become yourself again and find a J.T.". One question I heard repeatedly was, "Why are you so mean to your daughter?" The children did not like the character of J.T., because they felt he was cruel to his daughter as he kept her a virtual prisoner in her own house. Some children were able to maintain their role better than others while being questioned. I recorded an example of a child who excelled at staying inside the story as follows:

(Questioner sat down sniffing the air and making faces, alluding to J.T.’s occupation as garbage picker)

Questioner: (Silence)
J.T.: What do you want dimwit?
Questioner: Why are you so grouchy?
J.T.: I’m not grouchy, scram.

I was impressed with this J.T.’s ability to maintain his angry and imposing posture and expression throughout the questioning. He looked away in between questions as in disgust. His concentration was maintained even when the questioner lost control and began to
hysterically giggle.

In the same session as quoted above Nancy said, “Is anybody willing to be the Porcelain Man?” A child stood up. Nancy invited him to come up and sit in the ‘hot seat’ to be asked questions while in role. The boy sat down and before allowing the questioning to commence Nancy said, “Give him a chance to sit like the Porcelain Man”. The child adjusted himself and ended up sitting stiffly with his legs apart, his back perfectly straight, his elbows on his knees and his bottom lip tucked into his mouth. A girl called out, “Since when does porcelain talk?” “I don’t know,” the boy replied. Another girl said, “Why do you have glass eyeballs?” He answered logically, “I was born that way”. After a few more questions, Nancy thanked the child and sent him to join the class on the carpet. He walked back with stiff legs, but then sat down and crossed his legs. When I looked over at him a few minutes later he was lying on his back with all of his appendages straight up in the air. At first I dismissed him as not paying attention. It was my error. He then proceeded to ask a question of Nancy, and when I looked over, I was struck by the fact that he did not bend his legs or arms to sit. He was back in role as the Porcelain Man. The students’ ability to be inside the stories was a product of their ability to visualize story characters and events. Their natural ability to imagine was encouraged by Nancy and furthered through her teaching techniques discussed below. When Nancy said, “We are going to explore the story, go inside it” a boy called out, “I was inside them all”.

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“Close your eyes”, said Frederick, as he climbed on a big stone. “Now I send you the rays of the sun. Do you feel now their golden glow...” And as Frederick spoke of the sun the four little mice began to feel warmer. Was it Frederick’s voice? Was it magic?[49]

No, it was not magic. It was Frederick the mouse’s ability to capture the imagination of the other mice. His words gave them the ability to visualize what he spoke about. Donald Davis writes in his book, Telling Your Own Stories: “If we, when we are listeners, can visualize, the story, then the teller’s descriptive skills are being used effectively”. [50] Tellers must choose their stories wisely; they must ask, “Can I really see this story when I tell it?”[51] If tellers are not able to feel the story, to visualize it themselves then it is virtually impossible and unrealistic to expect an audience to see it. At the end of a session one boy said, “I learned what theatre I should always go to?” Nancy inquired, “What do you mean by that?” “My imagination” he replied with a smile.

Nancy often asked the students questions for which she had provided no answer for such as, “What colour was her hair?” This question in particular was in reference to the character Ellie Mitchell. Many students called out enthusiastically in response blond, red, black and brown. Only one girl said, white and Nancy asked her the reason for her colour choice. The girl replied in a matter of fact manner, “Because she’s old”. Nancy had never
mentioned Ellie’s age at all. Once the student voiced her opinion, the other students began sharing the age they had visualized Ellie to be. Nancy stopped the discussion by asking, “What in the story made her a certain age?” The room became silent and I imagined the students had all begun to worry that their answer was wrong. Nancy assured the class that they were all correct and she added, “You pay attention to the story I’m telling you and the story going on in your head”.

One group of students in particular excelled at visualization. The images they shared in response to Nancy’s questions were very vivid and detailed. When describing a character from a Japanese folktale one girl said,

I imagine in my head that he is bald here [pointed to the top of her head] but he has a black ponytail to [indicated shoulders] and is wearing work clothes, sandals and gloves.

Another girl offered the following description,

He has brown hair, dirty hands and face and dirty ripped clothes. He is not very old and he is missing teeth.

So many students wanted to share their descriptions that Nancy was forced to have everyone turn and tell a neighbour. After which she asked them, “Who’s right?” A girl said, “All of us because everyone has their own imagination”.

Joseph Bruchac writes, “...when you experience a story, you will understand it better if you can see it in your mind”.[52] This notion of seeing a story in your mind was also put forth by a
student. Nancy asked the students, “Did anyone see anything?” after telling a story segment. The girl exclaimed, “I saw two stories. I saw you telling the story and I saw the story in my head”. At the end of the session Nancy posed the question, “Did you discover anything today?”. In response the same student said, “It’s like watching two movies when you are watching a story, one is inside your head”.

Telling and hearing stories therefore is a way of using one’s imagination and powers of visualization. It should be kept in mind that:

During the next decade we will be witness to a new emphasis on an old theme - the use of the imagination and its value in educating the individual towards personal empowerment. It is the most important component of a child’s mind, a component which is often neglected and not even considered worth mentioning.[53]

With the advent of the first printed book, oral storytelling began to decline. This generation of children can be a part of the revival. They just need guidance, lessons and support in order to become true practitioners of this lost art. As the Ompa-Lompas’ warn:

The most important thing we’ve learned,  
So far as children are concerned,  
Is never,never,NEVER,let  
Them near your television set  
Or better still, just don’t install  
The idiotic thing at all...  
IT ROTTS THE SENSES IN THE HEAD  
IT KILLS IMAGINATION DEAD...[54]
Chapter VI

TEACHERS

Teachers, the workbook will be forgotten by tomorrow, but the sound, the feel, the senses, the heart of that story may stay with the child as long as he lives.[55]

The last group involved in this study are the teachers. The nine teachers in the program demonstrated varying degrees of participation and involvement in the oral storytelling sessions being conducted in their classrooms. It is important to note that the teachers had no choice but be involved in Nancy’s oral storytelling sessions, as the schools were committed to the community based arts integration program.

There was the highly involved teacher who participated alongside the children, not only monitoring behaviour and assessing but joining in by doing the actions and the words. In the course of my study I only encountered three teachers who I determined showed such enthusiasm. One teacher was particularly outstanding in regards to her involvement. When the students were pretending to pull a persimmon out of their head, she did too. When the students responded vocally as a group her voice was loud and clear. This teacher was motivated to learn about oral storytelling and to incorporate it into her curriculum. The teacher had also carried out the activities with her class Nancy had requested be done prior to her arrival. The suggested games were played several times and a chart had been prepared to indicate what elements an oral storyteller needs to use when
telling. The chart read as follows:

Communication
(Storytelling)
1. Make eye contact
2. Talk in an indoor voice
3. Could touch the person
4. Gesture with your hand
5. Change the **tone** of your voice
6. Loud, soft, high, low
7. Get into a role character voice
8. Voice, face is alive
9. Eyes light up

I was informed by the teacher that the chart was completely student generated. She also had a handful of difficult behaviour identified students that she was diligent about monitoring. By keeping those students focussed, she was better able to ensure a more positive experience for all students in her classroom. During student retellings she circulated and offered advice and encouragement. In this teacher’s classroom, a writing activity was displayed that also had an oral language component attached to it. A picture of an elephant was posted with the instruction, “Write a humorous story about what happened here?” Additional information was added and the following suggestion, “Make it an outrageous storytelling story!” At the end of the three session period with Nancy this teacher indicated that she would continue to use and promote oral storytelling in her classroom.

I did note her handling of a new student’s oral storytelling experience. The student had just arrived from Russia and he had no knowledge of English. At first he sat and watched Nancy as she told; but then the teacher removed him from the group and gave him
paper to draw on at his desk. There was also another Russian E.S.L. student engaged in the same activity. I saw the one boy, in particular, keep stealing glances at what was happening. He appeared interested in both Nancy’s and his classmates’ stories. Neither boy had to be removed from the group. They both could have benefited from watching the non-verbal cues, gestures and facial expressions, and from hearing the English language expressively spoken especially in a program that uses the arts to develop literacy.

The two other teachers I previously alluded to were at a different school. These teachers who team taught mostly identified students joined their classes together for the sessions. They were very keen and highly motivated to use oral storytelling in the classroom as a tool for learning. As so many of their students had difficulties with written text, they recognized and valued the special benefits oral communication afforded their students. Both teachers participated vocally, offered support to students and used the assessment rubrics provided by Nancy. The teachers also borrowed extra resources from Nancy and had both prepared their students well for Nancy’s sessions by recording what makes a good oral storyteller and doing the provided exercises as asked. One of the teachers told me she had started to tell oral stories to her own two young children.

Five of the six remaining teachers seemed enthusiastic and involved in the program. What differentiates them from the other three teachers is the amount of preparation done for Nancy’s
sessions. Some had prepared the requested chart; others had not. Some had done a few exercises on the morning of the first session; some had not. For the most part the five teachers offered support to their students by way of advice and encouragement but did not participate themselves. Occasionally, however, Nancy called on a few of them to take a role in a story. I had no evidence that Nancy’s teachings would become a regular part of their classes' learning, or if they would be elaborated on once the sessions were completed. Many of these teachers seemed uncomfortable with the idea of telling orally.

One of the five seemed to me at first to belong to the first category. He stated that his class contained twelve students with identified behavioural problems and he initially tried his best to make sure they were successful. However, in the end he failed to understand what was being taught by Nancy. His agenda for the sessions emphasized dramatic activities over learning to tell stories orally. When Nancy asked this teacher if the rubrics she prepared were helpful he answered, “Not for anything we’ve done yet”. I was confused by his response because the rubrics were set to follow through with the skills Nancy was teaching his class.

As this teacher spent a fair amount of time discussing things with Nancy (and indirectly me as I was always with her) I heard several comments he made and his prevailing attitude disturbed me greatly. The comments were, “I think it was worthwhile, except for some kids. They will continue to be challenging throughout the year” and “I felt it went better [yesterday]. The kids who
deserve to have a better experience out of it got it with less distraction”. As the intention of my study was not to evaluate or critique the teachers, I will not delve into this issue further.

On a positive note this teacher was pleased when the children experienced success, “I was pleased with the boy who got up as Meena it gave others confidence”. Also, this teacher has previously told oral stories to his students. Lastly he acknowledged, “You’re [Nancy] a neat fun thing for three days but it depends where the teacher will take it”.

Another teacher in this category was admittedly very shy and was not always one hundred percent involved with the oral storytelling. When he was not at the back of his room, sitting at the round table doing work, however, he was involved with the students and he did carry out the suggested exercises before Nancy’s first visit. Also, he had asked Nancy questions to further his understanding of the form he acknowledged he had little previous experience with. He did want to continue with what Nancy had started.

Finally one teacher stood apart from the others. She did not seem to express any interest in what her students were learning with Nancy. She often left the room during the sessions and on the first day spent half of Nancy’s visit writing up a lesson on the chalkboard and sitting at her desk working. My field notes indicate that this teacher became defensive when asked by Nancy to work on visualization with her students, and as a result, Nancy did not make many more suggestions to this teacher.
Questionnaire

I had a great deal of difficulty trying to arrange for informal interviews/meetings with the teachers involved. The teachers were either too busy to meet with me, or did not appear for scheduled appointments. One teacher, in particular, rescheduled three times with me but did not manage to keep one appointment. Being an educator myself and understanding the time constraints the teachers faced, I developed a questionnaire. I offered the teachers a free workshop, this year or next, and my Storytelling Activity document to thank them for taking the time to fill in my questionnaire. I made it clear that all the teachers knew this questionnaire was optional. The questions were constructed out of inquiry not judgment. I wanted to provide the teachers with a voice. Every teacher, with the exception of one who went on leave, said they would gladly complete one for me. I left self-addressed and stamped envelopes at both schools with the lead teacher. In the end, I only received three responses. Surprisingly the teacher I placed in the category of lowest involvement and interest level was one of the three.

The general consensus of the three teachers who answered the questionnaire was that oral storytelling is important in the classroom because of the many benefits it offers to students. Among the benefits highlighted in their responses were; increased self-confidence, motivation, imagination, ability for at risk students to achieve success, improved writing and listening skills.
Question number twelve read as follows: "What has been the most beneficial aspect of Nancy's work for you and your students?"

The highly involved teachers responded as follows:

-the storytelling develops their confidence and imagination
-they can see and hear how to present an oral story
-seeing the students especially those who were not usually engaged have their chance to "shine"
-realizing the importance of oral telling and seeing the reality of it working for the students

The teacher who demonstrated the lowest level of involvement wrote:

-learning to express themselves, communication (and for me as teaching tool)

The answers from the two highly involved teachers reflected the attitude they exhibited in their classrooms during the sessions and what I had observed. The answer provided by the teacher with the low level of involvement both pleased and confused me. It was reassuring to see that she had witnessed the benefits of her children's involvement with oral storytelling. If this teacher had valued oral storytelling as a teaching tool why had she not been an active participant in the instructional sessions? Her answers made me question the validity of the questionnaire format. Did the participants answer honestly or in the way they felt they should? In general, I was very frustrated by the teachers' lack of response to the questionnaire. Through this questionnaire, the
teachers were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and/or concerns about the community based arts integration program they were participants in. Most of them chose to ignore this opportunity. As a result, they also lost the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching methodology with respect to oral storytelling in the classroom. It is only through such reflection and self-evaluation that educators can improve their teaching practices.

Comfort Level

The teacher’s own comfort level is what determines the way oral storytelling is used, or not used, in the classroom. Many of the teachers I encountered in the course of this study together with those with whom I had previously worked, express concern about not being comfortable sharing stories orally with their students. Some teachers felt erroneously that reading aloud from a book was the same as telling a story orally. As Kerry Mallon asserts:

The important difference between storytelling and storyreading lies in the interaction that occurs between teller and audience with storytelling, the interaction is creative, as both teller and listener create the story. Words are used to create mental pictures of the story. The storyteller’s face, voice, body and personality help to convey the meaning and mood. [56]

Storytelling is far more personal.

In order to support a truly rich oral literacy environment,
teachers must verse themselves in the different methods of oral storytelling. In math rooms there are text books and countless manipulatives; in English rooms there are books from all different genres, pens, markers and paper. In strong oral classrooms there should be story tapes, blank cassettes for recording, stories reflective of a wide variety of cultures and a teacher who is a teller of stories and a teacher of technique.

It is my assertion teachers should be taught about the advantages of and the techniques of oral storytelling in Teacher’s Colleges so that they would utilize the power of oral storytelling on a regular basis. When I shared this idea with Nancy she said, "I think you are right about having people learn to tell stories in Teacher’s College". Many years ago Marie L. Shedlock wrote in her book, The Art of the Story-Teller:

One of the surest signs of a belief in the educational power of the story is its introduction into the curriculum of the training-college and the classes of the elementary and secondary schools.[57]

I believe that all student teachers should have to tell a minimum of five learned tales and three personal tales in order to graduate from their education program. Teachers who are practitioners of oral storytelling and have learned how to pass their knowledge onto others will not have a problem with confidence and they will never confuse story reading and storytelling. As teachers are charged with facilitating student learning they should use all available methods of carrying out this function.
Evaluation

The process of evaluation is essentially the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realized by the program of curriculum and instruction. However, since educational objectives are essentially changes in human beings, that is, the objectives aimed at are to produce certain desirable changes in the behavior patterns of the student, then evaluation is the process for determining the degree to which these changes in behavior are actually taking place.[58]

Not only should teachers be exposed to oral storytelling but, also the methods through which it is be assessed in the classroom. Nancy, as previously mentioned, provided the nine participating grade four teachers with rubrics for evaluation. The skills for assessment were, non verbal communication [See Appendix D], and use of words and oral structures [See Appendix E]. In addition Nancy created a storytelling skill checklist for the teachers [See Appendix F].

Five of the nine participating teachers evaluated their students during one or more of the three sessions. In my field notes I observed that two teachers used the forms provided by Nancy, while the other teachers used checklists and made anecdotal comments.

At one school a conference between Nancy and the teachers occurred the day she arrived to lead the first session. I noted that the teachers were unhappy about the time in which the artist was scheduled to be in their school. One teacher in particular
indicated that she felt the timeframe for the sessions was not convenient for her, as she had other material to still cover for the impending report cards. Nancy reminded the teachers that her work with the students was structured to be used as a basis for drama evaluation for the upcoming report card. In the end, the teacher who had felt inconvenienced was highly supportive of Nancy and of her students' learning; this teacher used the evaluation rubrics provided by Nancy.
Chapter VII

PERSONAL AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Personal Learning

Stories are like growing living things.[59]

My own learning during the process of conducting this study occurred in three areas. I grew as a researcher, as a storyteller and as a teacher.

As a Researcher

"What factors [do] we take into consideration when making our decisions about how to participate and how to observe in a school setting?".[60] In deciding how to conduct my study I first asked myself this question: Should I look at the effects of oral storytelling in my own classroom? As I had previously conducted a brief action research study based on oral storytelling in the classroom I decided another approach would perhaps afford me with a different perspective. When the opportunity to research in another school setting presented itself I accepted the challenge. The community based arts program already in place at the schools in which I was to carry out my observations established the form of my research as it precluded me from being a participant. The professional oral storyteller would be the facilitator of the students' learning in the area of oral storytelling. This time I would be able to observe unobtrusively from the sidelines.

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In the end I asked myself: What would I do differently in the course of conducting similar research? I arrived at no definitive answer. For me, research is a learning experience to constantly be improved and built upon. I knew that when conducting a similar study I would go into the schools before and after the students had participated in their storytelling learning with the visiting artist. In addition, I would try other methods to engage the involved teachers in further discourse.

In my readings on the role of the researcher I came across the following statement; "A researcher’s intended presence does not always match how others perceive an outsider’s presence". In the course of conducting my research I found this to be true. When attending the first two sessions at both participating schools I wore clothes that I would as if teaching in my own classroom. At the schools while observing I had intended to be unobtrusive and to basically fade into the background. I did not want my presence to impinge upon the students in anyway. During the first few sessions I noticed that the students looked over at me quite frequently. As they did know who I was and why I was there I felt their looks were more than curiosity concerning my function. Later, through student comments I came to the realization that they were sometimes distracted by my appearance. One student came over to me and said, "You have really nice clothes". On another occasion a child commented, "You wear pretty things" as she touched my necklace. She added, "I like your jacket". A boy said, "It’s nice when you wear long skirts".
The reason my appearance caused some interest amongst the students I felt was because their teachers, mostly wore what I deem casual clothes, jeans, sweatshirts, leggings etc. I dress in a fashion which many would call conservative. Typically while teaching I wear suits, blazers with long skirts or dress pants. The school where I teach has an unwritten but actively practiced dress code. In the end I dressed to better blend in, as the storyteller did from the beginning. I was left wondering in how many other ways did I unknowingly impact on the classroom dynamics and interaction by my presence as a researcher.

An educational researcher wrote in her journal:

What are the implications of my movement? Even If I can’t see or hear as well if students start moving, I should stay seated in the same place unless my intent is to interact.[62]

I too had considered this question during the course of my research. I did debate whether or not to circulate amongst the students. In the end I decided I would move around only as long as I could see that I was not interfering or becoming an obvious distraction to any participant. During the study I learned to trust my natural instincts. I realize now that I would have missed hearing so much had I remained in one position throughout.

Questions Remaining

I wondered how my research would have been altered had I been able to watch a professional storyteller work with students over a more prolonged period of time. Also, I wondered what would have
happened had I worked alongside the oral storyteller. I would still like to explore the question of the impact of the oral storyteller’s work on any of the teaching practices of the grade four teachers. There are always more questions, seemingly an endless list, as I hold true to the belief that all research begets more questions.

As Storyteller and Teacher

I learned new stories to pass on which excites me as a storyteller and as a teacher. As well, I learned new ways of instructing children in the art of oral storytelling. As an educator I was reminded to always incorporate as many different teaching strategies as I can into each lesson. I saw firsthand the effects of telling a story in another language and the excitement and the sense of validation it creates in the listeners. I grew stronger in my resolve to bring oral storytelling to as many educators and students as I possibly can.

Next Research Step

Who I am now is best shown by the stories I can now tell and who I am to become is best determined by the stories I can learn to tell.[63]

The completion of this study by no means signals the end of my research into various areas of oral storytelling in the school. The area of personal oral storytelling is of great interest to me both as practiced by educators and students. Also, there is the
idea of studying a specific type of oral story, for example Tall Tales, and its use in the classroom.

A logical continuation to this study would be to explore schools where storytelling is a main feature if not the driving force behind their curriculum, such schools as Fayerweather, previously mentioned, or a Waldorf School. Storyteller and educator Nancy Mellon describes her entry into Waldorf education in her book, *Storytelling and the Art of Imagination* as follows:

At long last I discovered Waldorf Education, and this was my true entry into an old cause. To tell a great story well, I learned in my education classes as I prepared to teach in a Waldorf School, is my duty. Not to know the story as part of my mental collection but to feel it, as the liveliest child might, all the way down to my toes. Not to think of imagination as a historical activity but as a daily necessity. Soon I would have to make up and tell stories every day to maintain the high standards of the best Waldorf School teachers. According to this creative method, I began to strengthen and to regulate my own sporadic imagination in new ways to meet the needs of the children I was teaching. I began to believe in earnest that storytellers have as profound a purpose as any who are charged to guide and transform human lives. I knew it as an ancient discipline and vocation to which everyone is called.[64]

American educator, Kevin Cordi has established three youth storytelling troupes, called Voices of Illusion, in California. His goal is to, “have storytelling in all the high schools and middle schools across California and then across the country”.

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Research into the effectiveness of his award winning program would no doubt prove to be fruitful. Cordi says,

Students have told me time and time again that they want to join in the renaissance of storytelling, I know there is a place for them. Let’s open our doors, invite them in, and set the table for another generation of tellers. There is room enough for everybody.

Educational Implications

Curriculum

Does oral storytelling belong in the daily curriculum of our schools? There is only one answer to this question, a resounding yes. Justification for this reply lies in the examination of the results gained by the students who formed the nine grade four classes in this study. If students can gain so many rewards from oral storytelling in such a short period of time, just think about the impact oral storytelling could have on students lives if it formed a central part of their everyday learning.

What kind of preparation does including oral storytelling in the classroom entail? It does require knowledge of technique, stories and audience. It does require teachers to learn how to be effective tellers through practice. It does require putting the storyreading books down occasionally. It does require a love and appreciation for the stories you are sharing and those your students will share in return. It does not require countless
photocopies to be made. It does not require purchasing special materials on an already strained budget.

Oral storytelling should not only be utilized in the drama or language arts program. Oral storytelling needs to be used in all areas of the curriculum. Student interest in any topic of study can be fostered though oral storytelling. Educators can use oral storytelling to:

- introduce units or concepts;
- draw students in;
- involve them;
- instruct, entertain and challenge their ways of thinking;
- explore and celebrate various cultures;
- get to know their students as individuals; and
- to allow their students to get to know them.

Oral storytelling is easily integrated into all areas of the elementary school curriculum. In the math classroom oral tales can be used to enforce or introduce a number, "...the number 3 (and its multiples) is the most common". (45 Mallon) Numerous stories can be found to explore this number. Among them are; 'The Three Little Pigs', 'The Three Little Bears', 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff', 'Bastionello', 'Three Magic Oranges', 'The Stranger and the Three Wishes', and 'Clever Manka'. For science utilize a myth, legend or folktale that offers explanation for something in the natural world such as, 'Why the Sea is salt', 'How Platypuses Came to Australia' or 'The Hungry Goddess'. The possibilities are endless. Use stories about dancing such as the Haitian story
'Bouki Dances the Kokioko' and 'Seven Dancing Princesses' in physical education. There are countless stories to fit any subject you are teaching. Stories can be used to teach just about anything. The adventure is in searching for the right story. Teachers often say there is not enough time to learn or tell stories. Educators cannot afford not to take the time to learn and tell oral stories.

In the Ontario Curriculum for various subject areas the Ministry of Education has established expectations for student learning. Ontario teachers are responsible for ensuring their students meet these set expectations. Educators teach the required skills in a variety of ways. It is my assertion that oral storytelling affords teachers with an exciting and successful way to help their students to learn. I have highlighted one grade four expectation from the Ontario Curriculum in all subject areas for which oral storytelling can be used as a teaching methodology or as a means of demonstrating student learning;

[Science And Technology]

-describe ways in which humans can affect the natural world (e.g., urban development forces some species to go elsewhere and enables other species to multiply too rapidly; conservation areas can be established to protect specific habitats);[67]

[Health And Physical Education]

-identify the challenges(e.g., conflicting opinions) responsibilities in their relationships with family and friends;[68]
[Mathematics]

describe patterns encountered in any context (e.g., quilt patterns, money), make models of the patterns, and create charts to display the patterns;[69]

[Social Studies]

-communicate information (e.g., about the roles of women and children in medieval society), using media works, oral presentations, written notes and descriptions, and drawings;[70]

[The Arts]

demonstrate control of voice and movement by using appropriate techniques (e.g., projection and enunciation in choral speaking);[71]

[Language Arts]

-use effective openings and closings in oral presentations (e.g., begin by asking questions of listeners; conclude by summarizing key points)[72]

The oral stories to be used when teaching or learning the material required in the aforementioned expectations may take the form of either learned or personal stories.

Oral stories have always been used to explain the world around us, to teach. They belong in the classrooms of today. As educators oral storytelling strengthens our teaching and therefore our students' learning. Oral stories speak a universal language. Through oral storytelling we explore not only our own culture and the culture of others but also our communities, our families and
most importantly ourselves. Oral stories help us to make sense of the world.

There is no disputing the importance of oral storytelling in the classroom. Of utmost importance in this methodology of learning is the teacher. Personal storytelling is a part of our daily lives but learned tales shared orally are of equal importance. Teachers are required to provide instruction in technique and to explore ways in which to extend the story learning.

Research Results

The benefits of oral storytelling in the classroom are numerous. Both the students and teachers gained from being involved in the process of learning to become oral storytellers. The children involved in the study gained important communication skills that will stay with them much longer than Nancy did. The skills learned will help guide the students through life.

I borrow Kevin Cordi's question and ask, "What better educational gift can we give our youth than the ability to storytell?"[73] Nancy gave the grade four students this gift. From Nancy the students learned how to communicate oral narrative expressively by utilizing vocal and facial expression in conjunction with gesture. They had the all important skill of listening reinforced. Listening is central to all communication. They learned tales from other culture and something of the culture itself. They heard a white Anglo Saxon woman tell a story that
she had made the effort to learn in Punjabi. Stories validate all cultures. They worked on cooperation skills with a partner and then in small groups. With Nancy’s guidance they learned to see the stories and to trust the pictures they created in their mind. Hearing stories allows students to create their own stories. They explored imagination. They role played story characters, trying on other people’s character traits and problems. They empathized; they expressed feeling. They learned about the important connections between the spoken and written word. They learned about story structure. They learned that they can tell stories, they learned that people will want to listen. They gained confidence.

Conclusion

The implications of this study are obvious: children need stories; we all do. As Harold Rosen wrote, “The impulse to story is present in every child; a storytelling culture in the classroom refines and enlarges upon that impulse”. [74] The power of oral narrative is in every student; it just needs to be explored and more importantly validated. Oral storytelling needs to be seen as vital to our survival as human beings not just as a frill of an arts education. It belongs in all areas of the school curriculum and in all areas of our lives. Educators, and parents, have the important job of making sure that the children of today know the value of the spoken word and continue to practice oral storytelling.
The grade four students of this study only needed three sessions for the seed of oral storytelling to be planted but it will take a lifetime to mature. They in turn will continually share the bounty of their harvest with others. Oral storytelling is circular by nature. Each teller makes a story his/her own when s/he tells to others; each listener makes a story their own when they hear.

Students who are oral storytelling practitioners experience the multiple benefits from this art form. They experience growth intellectually, socially, spiritually, and emotionally. Through oral storying students connect with others both living and dead and experience the power of community. Oral storytelling allows even the shyest student to gain the confidence which is needed to succeed at life.

There is an old Korean folktale in which a young man collected stories from everyone he met but he never shared in return. Instead he placed what he gathered into a bag which he secreted away in his closet. Eventually, the stories conspired to harm their collector for keeping them to himself. Luckily, for the selfish young man a faithful servant proved to be his salvation. In the end, “...he realized that he could not be greedy and hide away the stories he heard. Stories are meant to be shared and passed on to others”. [75] What better place to be shared but in the classroom?
Endnotes

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Ibid p 52.

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Ibid p 15.
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Ibid.

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Anne Pellowski, *The World of Storytelling*, H.W. Willson


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Appendix A

Consent Form

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am a graduate student at OISE/UT working on my thesis in the area of oral storytelling. I am looking at how storytelling impacts on student learning in the classroom. I hope to observe in your child's classroom during the storytelling session with the **** program your child is already participating in.

I have no intention of assessing any child on an individual basis, rather I am looking at the impact of storytelling in general. No identifying names will be used in my final paper. The school, teacher and student names will be replaced with a pseudonym when/if necessary.

If you do not wish to have your child be a part of my observations you may opt to not have your child participate or withdraw your child from this study at any time by writing me of your intent.

Sincerely,

Hilary Munn

My son/daughter ______________________ may___ or may not___ be a part of the research project being conducted.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)
Observation Schedule

School A

8:45-11:30 (approximately forty minute sessions)
rotated between six grade four classrooms
February; 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17

School B

8:45-11:30
12:30-2:00
rotated between three grade four classrooms
February; 5, 12, 19
Appendix C

Teacher Questionnaire

1. How much preparation did you do before Nancy’s initial visit?

2. What were you able to do between Nancy’s visits?

3. How frequently do the children write in their **** journals?

4. Do you keep a **** journal? If so what type of things do you record?

5. What, if anything, surprised you about the sessions with ****?

6. What were your expectations from the artist sessions? Were they met? If so how did you feel they were met?

7. How did you think things went with your class during ****’s sessions?

8. Was there any discussion about the sessions after **** left between the students or the other teachers involved?

9. Does the structure of the **** program offer you enough to work with as an educator after the artists leave? What did ****’s sessions offer you?

10. What have you learned about oral storytelling personally? Do you feel that oral storytelling should be a part of your classroom on a daily basis?

11. Are you comfortable sharing oral stories with your students now as a result of what was learned in ****’s sessions?

12. What has been the most beneficial aspect of ****’s work for you and your students?

13. How many years have you personally been involved with ****?

14. How many years have you taught grade four?

15. Do you have any prior experience with storytelling? If so can you please elaborate?
16. What do you see your role in the class as when the artists are there?

17. What are your suggestions for improvement and change in regards to the storytelling component? How would you implement your ideas?

18. How do you think we can get all of the teachers involved in storytelling in an equitable and responsive way?

19. How did the storytelling sessions work in relation to the other sessions you have had thus far?
### Rubric For Non Verbal Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE OF EXPRESSION</th>
<th>EXCELLENT</th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>SATISFACTORY</th>
<th>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You used full natural hand gestures and arm movements</td>
<td>You used hand gestures consistently</td>
<td>You used some hand gestures</td>
<td>Your hands did not express the story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You consistently used exaggerated yet appropriate facial expression</td>
<td>Your face reflected the story most of the time</td>
<td>Your face changed in some way to reflect the story</td>
<td>Your face did not change during the story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE OF VOICE</th>
<th>EXCELLENT</th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>SATISFACTORY</th>
<th>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your voice varied in pitch</td>
<td>You used 3/5 techniques suggested in the excellent category</td>
<td>Your voice stayed the same through most of the story</td>
<td>Your audience could not hear your story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your voice varied in volume</td>
<td>Your voice varied in pace</td>
<td>Your voice conveyed a variety of emotions during the story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your voice conveyed a variety of emotions during the story</td>
<td>You used silence for emphasis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATING TO AN AUDIENCE</th>
<th>EXCELLENT</th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>SATISFACTORY</th>
<th>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You consistently swept across your audience and made eye contact with most members</td>
<td>You looked at the audience most of the time</td>
<td>You looked at your audience some of the time</td>
<td>You did not look at your audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix F

#### Rubric For Use of Words and Oral Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXCELLENT</th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>SATISFACTORY</th>
<th>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATING THE STORY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You used words and sentences your audience could understand yet you challenged them with new vocabulary</td>
<td>You used words and sentences your audience could understand easily</td>
<td>Your audience understood most of what you said</td>
<td>Your audience did not understand most of your story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You remembered the entire story in sequence without fumbling</td>
<td>You left out part of your story but corrected yourself during the telling</td>
<td>You forgot some of your story</td>
<td>You did not complete your story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You used proper sentence structure all the way through the story</td>
<td>You used proper sentences most of the time with only a couple of repeated words.</td>
<td>You used several incomplete sentences and repeated words more than 4 times</td>
<td>You consistently used incomplete sentences and repeated the words 'and', 'then' or 'uh' You mispronounced several words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You pronounced all of your words clearly and properly</td>
<td>You mispronounced two words</td>
<td>You mispronounced 3 words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPOSURE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You looked calm and secure and appeared to enjoy the experience</td>
<td>You looked calm</td>
<td>At times your nervousness detracted from your presentation</td>
<td>You appeared nervous and/or flustered most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You held your spine erect, your shoulders open and you displayed enthusiasm</td>
<td>You held yourself up tall</td>
<td>You held up your head but crouched over</td>
<td>You slouched and hid your face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were aware of your audiences' reactions at all times and responded to their involvement in your story</td>
<td>You reacted to your audience at times</td>
<td>You appeared aware of your audiences' reaction to your story but did not react or relate to them</td>
<td>You ignored your audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

109
**Storytelling Check List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>All the time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eye Contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facial Expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arm Movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hand Gestures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate Posture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocal Expression</td>
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<td>- Pace</td>
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<td>- Volume</td>
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<td>- Pitch</td>
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<td>- Silence</td>
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<td>Clear Speaking</td>
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<td>Confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
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Comments: