

FOR-PD's Reading Strategy of the Month

Storytelling Using PACE

(Developed by Smith, L. & Zygouris-Coe, V., 2008) April 2008

Teacher: Before we begin today's lesson on the ocean environment and ecosystem, I'd like to find out what you know already.

Student: One thing I know is that the ocean is very, very deep. Deeper than we really know, probably.

Teacher: That is true. The ocean has 4 zones and the deeper you go, the colder and darker it becomes.

Student: I don't really know very much. I like to go to the beach.

Student: My Dad took me to the Florida Keys and showed me a coral reef. I think that it has something to do with the ecosystem of the ocean.

Teacher: Good thoughts and ideas. The coral reef is a very unique and special part of the ocean. I have spent some time studying them on my summer vacations from all over the world. I'm so glad you know something about them. We'll be learning about all that and more. Let me tell all of you a story...

Rationale:

Remembering times when a family member shared our family's heritage through a story can be a wonderful memory. Perhaps it was a story about Granddad's favorite fishing trip or Aunt Shelby's first day of school. Could have been that it wasn't so easy to understand some elements because of vocabulary used like *fish pick* or *slate*. Yet, the story offered to us was a first-hand account about something important, and just listening to the words would prompt us to ask questions, to become involved in the images we saw in our minds, and to desire to learn more.

Storytelling is neither new nor unique to most societies. Aboriginal communities have used storytelling as part of their educational process, sharing stories through generations, for centuries. As time progressed, storytelling found its way into more formal education instruction but was not usually the most prominent tool used by teachers to engage students or increase content understanding (Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007).

While personal experiences in story format can be effective, teachers should not overlook the use of a narrative structure that incorporates the ideas to be learned into the plot of the story. Using this type of instruction, the material being covered can be "humanized" and the presentation style will gain the curiosity of the students (Hadzigeorgiou, 2006). Also, researchers Meyers and Hilliard (2001) found that students that have issues remembering factual information benefit from hearing stories that use a blended narrative method in which facts of the material being covered are integrated with a personal story.

By using storytelling as a part of classroom instruction, students gain insights about the thoughts and feelings of their teacher and each other, and also become engaged in the material in a way that is different than with the textbook alone. Stories by teachers for students, and by students for classmates, can increase not only understanding of content, but also empowerment and pride (Harris, 2007).

How to Use the Strategy:

Simple Storytelling Method

While storytelling can be used in the beginning or middle part of a lesson, there are specific considerations that we must consider

when planning to use this strategy for instruction (Harris, 2007).

- **Planning your story.** Consider the overall objective of the lesson. Decide on the content you want to incorporate into the story.
- **Organize your events.** Think about the events of the story and put them down on a paper in a timeline fashion.
- **Remember to use your own words.** You're not reading a text, your delivering a story. Practice is good, but don't make it too rehearsed.
- **Feel free to change or exaggerate.** If your story is completely true, or used to convey meaningful content, feel free to add in funny anecdotes, rhymes, and humor. This will make your story, and the material you're covering, more memorable.
- **When used at the beginning of a lesson, grabbing your students' attention is very important.** Begin with something that will engage your students and don't let the story falter and allow students to fade off from listening.
- **Remember eye contact.** From the beginning of your story, use eye contact to assist you with keep students listening.
- **Change your voice:** If you use different characters, changing your voice and/or facial expression can benefit your students' understanding.
- **Use props.** Don't just choose a prop that you think might work. Authentic items that reflect the content you are covering is best. Regalia can be used to assist students in understanding the points you are covering and gives them a visual to remember.

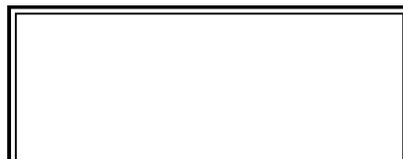
The PACE Method

Looking for a creative way to use storytelling in your own classroom? You may want to try the Pre-reading Activity for Concept Enhancement (PACE). Created by Dr. William Welker (1986), the PACE method was developed as a pre-reading strategy to assist students with setting a purpose for reading, becoming aware of specific concepts, learning or reviewing pertinent vocabulary, addressing specific questions about the story, and tapping into background knowledge. This method for using storytelling also lends itself well to creating a stimulating and quality discussion about the concepts covered.

- **Step One:** Development of the PACE Story
The creation of your narrative will take some time and effort. You will need to consider the major concepts and themes of the text you wish to employ. You should also take time to choose important vocabulary and thought-provoking questions.
- **Step Two:** Teacher Presentation of the PACE Story
Remember to be enthusiastic as you tell your story. As Dr. Welker wrote, "keep the 'pace' moving" (1986). By doing this the excitement will grow and the students' interest will remain high.
- **Step Three:** Student-and-Teacher Discussion of PACE Story
After the story is complete, it's not just time to open the text and begin reading. Now is the time to help your students take an active role in the story by discussing teacher made questions on the story and also student initiated questions. This is a key part of the PACE strategy and must not be eliminated or forgotten. Students will enhance most of their understanding of the concepts and vocabulary during this step, while also sharing and integrating the concepts into their own schema.

Example of a Pace Story
<p>Objective: Students will gain a greater understanding of coral, coral reefs, mutualistic pairs, cnidarians, and how the ecosystem of a coral reef affects the ocean.</p> <p>Just like one of your classmates went to the Keys and saw coral, I went to the Red Sea between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and was able to go scuba diving and snorkeling in the area. I saw the most amazing coral reefs there and was able to see some of the corals that build the reef. The corals have to live in water that is warm and sunlit. I remember the sun reflecting off the water and shining in my eyes as I looked at the coral. I will admit I was a little afraid to be down there with those groups, those colonies of coral. I was told by my guide that the coral are considered cnidarians; that means they have the ability to sting and I didn't want that to happen. The coral look so weird and it's amazing they can be so dangerous. The guide told me that the coral reefs provide shelter for many animals and have a mutualistic relationship with algae. Algae supplies them food and the coral provides algae with protection. That reminded me sort-of like the relationship between flowers and bees. Flowers provide bees with food and bees pollinate the flowers.</p>

Although storytelling is a rich oral tradition, teachers may consider providing students with an organizer to assist them with jotting down ideas, notes, and other thoughts for after they hear and discuss the story. This will assist them with the content of the material as they proceed with learning more about the content in their textbook, online, and other sources.



Assessment:

You can best assess your students by observation during the actual storytelling and also during the discussion. Check for students that have strong eye contact and that look engaged in the story. Take observational notes during the discussion to see the kinds of thoughts, ideas, and questions each student discusses. These will assist you with planning and noting the possible needs of your students.

Resources:

Using Storytelling in the Classroom

<http://teachers.net/gazette/APR02/jones.html>

Storytelling is a useful activity to use in the classroom for the improvement of writing skill or to increase literacy. Ideas are offered from this link to make writing and reading more exciting for students.

Why Storytelling?

<http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/index.html>

Storytelling is a tool that is suited for student exploration and is available to all ages and abilities. Storytelling can act as a reminder that spoken words are powerful, listening is important and clear communication between people is an art.

Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

<http://www.adobe.com/education/digkids/storytelling/classroom.html>

Storytelling can be used in non-fictional content to share what students know and understand about topics. Six elements of good storytelling are outlined from this link.

Storytelling: How to tell a tale

<http://www.libraryspot.com/features/storytellingfeature.htm>

Many resources are available over the internet support using storytelling. Storytelling continues to be part of most cultures heritage.

Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling

<http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling/resources.htm>

A list of articles supporting digital storytelling are available from this link.

References:

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FOR-PD would like to give Dr. William Welker a very special thank you for assisting and working with us to include his PACE strategy.

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