

Part 2: Components

Vocabulary and Language

Goals:

- Children develop vocabulary and word knowledge.
- Children develop facility with a variety of language structures and begin to make choices about their use in their own speaking and writing.
- Children appreciate the complexity of language and strive to use it with delight and precision.

Vocabulary and Language activities in *1st Grade for ME* are designed to help children develop powerful vocabularies and accurately use language to make statements, ask questions, and offer opinions. Throughout the day, children have opportunities to engage with words in ways that allow them to increase their knowledge and use of vocabulary and to better understand how word choice affects the meaning of texts. In a cycle of weekly lessons, children encounter six new words and draw on their own experiences to understand their meanings (Days 1 and 2), learn and play with specific features of language with examples from texts they are currently reading (Day 3), practice those features in context through sentence study and other activities (Day 4), and demonstrate their understanding of the week's words (Day 5). The work of the Vocabulary and Language lessons is reciprocal with children's efforts in both reading and writing.

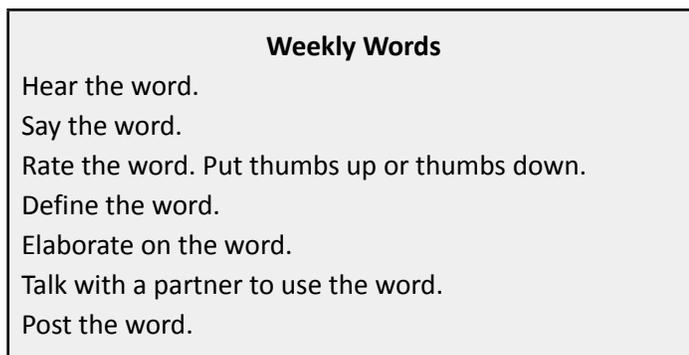
Weekly Words

At the core of vocabulary instruction are six Weekly Words. These are drawn from read alouds and other curriculum content and selected to build children's understandings of the unit themes. Teachers might substitute words based on needs revealed through observation and other assessments.

Each week teachers create a chart of Weekly Words for use during lessons and for children's ongoing reference. Make sure all children can see this chart when they work independently. Weekly Words cards with images are provided and should be accessible for adult use during Text Talk and Vocabulary and Language lessons and for children's use throughout the day, especially in Stations and Studios. Sliding the cards into sheet protectors will help them stay in good shape and differentiate them from other words, such as sight (or "trick") words and high frequency words.

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It may be helpful to create a chart with the steps for introducing new words. A half-sheet of chart paper is sufficient; images or icons will make the chart more useful to children.



Opportunities for expanding vocabulary

Each Text Talk lesson includes a list of words from the relevant text(s) and their child-friendly definitions. Some of these are specifically referenced in the lesson; others are listed to support discussion and comprehension.

During each visit to the Vocabulary Station, children complete an activity called Draw for Meaning. Regardless of their development as writers, all children can capture their understanding of new vocabulary through drawing and writing.

In Science and Engineering, content-specific vocabulary is central to understanding and working through investigations.

In Writing, children develop domain-specific vocabulary to talk about their own writing and the writing of others with precision and clarity.

In a classroom rich with conversation about meaningful topics, teachers note words that children use frequently and accurately, words that reveal misconceptions, and words of high interest. These are words to teach, along with the Weekly Words. These can be added to the Vocabulary Station and/or to Vocabulary and Language lessons.

English Learners

1st Grade for ME has been created with linguistically diverse groups of children in mind. Vocabulary and Language lessons should be modified to meet the needs of children with various levels of linguistic acquisition and proficiency. For example, foundational words may be added, along with visual supports. Alternate word choices give ELs an opportunity to work independently and can be used by interventionists who deliver small-group language lessons for newcomers.

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Text Talk

Goals:

- Children learn how to analyze a variety of texts in multiple ways.
- Children discuss, draw, and write about text, grounding both conversation and drawn and written response in the text itself.
- Through discussion with teacher and peers, children flexibly use academic and content-related vocabulary and language.
- Children encounter different media, expanding their understanding of the word *text*.
- Children engage with grade level literature and informational standards.
- Children access culturally and linguistically sustaining texts at grade level and above.
- Children build knowledge on a topic and draw on funds of knowledge to collectively construct meaning of new texts.

Every day, children and teachers gather in the whole group for a conversation centered on a text. Often this text is a book; once or twice a week the text is in another format, such as video, photographs, quotes, articles, or a combination of these. Text Talk conversations simultaneously bring experiences with text to the center of classroom work *and* create a structure from which all other activities emanate. Text Talk demands high engagement around content, language, and social-emotional standards, as well as with academic vocabulary. The work done in Vocabulary and Language lessons supports the language development fostered during Text Talk.

Design of Text Talks

Children build content knowledge and reading acuity through multiple reads of both narrative and informational text. Photographs, their captions, official documents, videos, data, and other texts enrich and deepen exploration of a topic and expand children's experiences with literacy, perspective-taking, and communication. Like the forms these texts take, the ways they are presented and discussed are varied.

Lessons are designed to build deep comprehension; this is accomplished through targeted work with standards, talking, drawing, and writing about reading, and attention to vocabulary. In some Text Talk lessons, the focus is on an entire text; in others, teachers and children pause to deeply analyze one section of a complex text. During Text Talks, children may:

- identify and explain character development and story structure in narrative text;
- identify and fluidly use text features of informational text;
- ask and answer questions that demonstrate understanding of key details of the text;
- discuss words with multiple meanings;

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- speak and listen to peers, building on each other's ideas; and
- encounter and discuss text that is culturally and linguistically sustaining.

Weekly Question Charts and Unit Question Charts

1st Grade for ME is built on Big Ideas. Each week, children explore a Weekly Question that emerges from the Big Ideas and focuses and guides conversations. The Weekly Question Chart serves as a common space to catch and preserve children's ideas and responses to the Weekly Question. It is formally introduced on Day 1 of each week, revisited throughout the week at various times, and then wrapped up on Day 5. Related ideas are added to the Weekly Question Chart by both teachers and children. Each week's chart is saved, as on Week 5, Day 5 and Week 8, Day 4, the class works to synthesize ideas onto a Unit Question Chart.

For a detailed description of how to implement the Weekly Question and Unit Question Charts, refer to Routines (Introduction Part 1: Design).

Stations

Goal:

Children develop the skills and motivation to meet the decoding and comprehension challenges of complex texts.

First grade is a critical year in reading development, during which children rapidly develop decoding and meaning-making skills. Reading instruction in *1st Grade for ME* is informed by established best practices, current research, standards, and the perspectives of teachers. Multiple components of the *1st Grade for ME* curriculum support these goals.

Stations provide opportunities for children to practice literacy skills in developmentally appropriate, cognitively demanding, targeted, and engaging ways. This 40-minute component includes time for teacher-led **small groups**, and the **Reading, Listening and Speaking, Vocabulary, Science Literacy**, and **Word Work** Stations. Activities build language and literacy through small group work and conversation. Connections to each unit's content are critical, as children are more likely to learn academic skills when applied to things that make sense to them. Stations activities use resources from the current week (except in Vocabulary, which uses the previous week's words); however, some teachers may choose to move the stations activities to the following week so that children have more exposure before being asked to practice independently. As children engage in this teacher-identified but independent and collaborative work, they build confidence and mastery in learning and applying developing skills.

The work during Stations will be meaningful only to the extent that it is **responsive**. Thus, careful observation of children's literacy behaviors is required in order to meaningfully differentiate instruction. The provided activities should be seen as the beginning of a library of resources for targeted practice from which teachers can draw as appropriate for the needs of the children in any given classroom. Where more than one activity is available at a station, teachers plan whether to offer children choice or whether to direct specific children to specific activities, depending on their needs. (One of these needs may well be the development of self-regulation, in which case offering choice is particularly beneficial.)

Facilitation

In order for children to work independently and productively during Stations over the course of the year, special attention must be paid to setting up **routines and expectations** in the early

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weeks. These routines will include identifying which stations to attend to, moving from one station to another, finding needed supplies, storing individual work, and cleaning up.

At the beginning of the week, teachers provide a brief **introduction** to new activities; demonstrations will sometimes be helpful. However, all activities will repeat over time, so simply naming the activities will likely suffice once activities have become familiar.

Occasionally during the Stations block, the class will engage in Community Conversations. These conversations offer the opportunity to debrief and troubleshoot the Stations experience, thus supporting children's independence and investment in the work. Community Conversations serve as a place for the group to check in about process and content. They can occur at the beginning, middle, or end of the Stations block.

During Stations, children should work in **heterogeneous language level groups**. Think strategically about which children will work together.

The **schedule** is flexible. Once children are settled, teachers begin to pull small groups, and children transition to activities in the Reading, Listening and Speaking, Vocabulary, Science Literacy, and Work Work stations. Through careful planning, teachers direct children to spend this time appropriately; some children will need more time in Word Work, while others will benefit from more opportunities to listen to and talk about unit texts, for example. That said, it will be important to regularly set schedules in order to be intentional about supporting children as they practice and to determine the frequency of work with each teacher-led group.

Organization in the environment will support children's learning and independence. Each station's activity sheets can be housed in a clearly-labeled bin with needed instructions and supplies. Keeping each station in a regular, designated space will ease transitions among them.

Finally, set up **spaces** around the classroom **that invite reading**, such as a reading corner with pillows and a rug. Allow children to decide where and how they will be most comfortable and successful. Some children prefer the rug, others like to sit in a tight space such as in a corner or under a table; others prefer lying on their bellies or backs, sitting in a chair, or even standing at a shelf or counter.

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Shared Reading

Goals:

- Children develop as a joyful community of readers.
- Children develop as fluent readers.
- Children practice and apply knowledge and skills in print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and word recognition.
- Children practice text with the support of a teacher and then read with partners and independently.

Shared Reading is a critical component of foundational literacy development. Engaging children’s natural playfulness and enjoyment of rhymes, songs, and poetry, shared reading builds a community of joyful readers. With teacher support, children engage in echo and choral reading of texts that allow them to directly practice phonetic and phonemic concepts, as well as develop automaticity, accuracy, and expression. *1st Grade for ME* provides one Shared Reading text each week, with the recommendation that teachers *also* use decodable text in shared, guided, and independent reading to support readers’ development. Shared Reading texts and lessons reinforce the knowledge-building units of study; at the same time, texts and lessons follow the progression of skills in the *Foundations* program.

Optional extension activities listed in the Shared Reading lessons support additional word work instruction. These activities extend practice with the specific skills highlighted in the Shared Reading lesson plans. Shared Reading extension activities use total participation techniques, such as the use of individual whiteboards and magnetic tile boards for phonics and spelling practice.

Shared Reading Best Practices

- Ensure that ***all children can see the text***. In whole group settings, the text should be projected or written in large print on a chart.
- Provide ***repeated exposure***. Beyond the one formal weekly lesson, each text should be re-read for fluency in the whole group for five minutes at the end of the Foundations block, and then again with partners and independently in the Reading Station.
- Provide opportunities for children to “share” the reading using ***echo, choral, and partner*** (or triad) reading routines.
- During all reads of the shared text, ***track print*** with a large pointer. This will draw the children’s gaze to the print and support them in chiming along. Use a gesture to signal echo reading, so it is clear to children when they should read and when they should track and listen.
- Use ***formative assessment*** to inform Shared Reading instruction. Although lessons are provided, instruction should be responsive to children’s foundational literacy needs.
- While the Shared Reading texts are designed to reinforce phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency, ***comprehension*** should always be the goal when reading. Vocabulary visuals and body gestures can be used to support comprehension.

Materials

- projector and screen for Shared Reading slides (optional)
- Shared Reading texts (provided)
- chart paper and markers
- pointer
- highlighters and/or highlighting tape
- sticky notes
- Shared Reading child copies for independent and partner reading
- letter-sound cards
- whiteboards, markers, erasers (4-6, for a small group);
- magnetic letters or teacher-made letters

Studios

Goals

- Children experience agency and autonomy.
- Children grapple with and expand conceptual knowledge.
- Children access a variety of media and processes with which to express their understanding.
- Children use discrete skills in authentic ways.

Standards

While particular studio activities may address other ELA, Science and Engineering and/or History and Social Studies standards, the Studios experience supports the following ELA standards.

- **Maine Preamble** - Writing is a lifelong, essential tool for communication. In order to prepare students for varied and evolving writing tasks, students should write routinely, in both long- and short-time frames, as a means of building writing stamina. Moreover, students should write in a breadth of modes and forms across all disciplines.
- **SL.1.1** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about Grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- **SL.2.1.b** Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.
- **SL.3.1.a** Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.
- **SL.4.1** Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.
- **Standard L.1:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- **L.6.1** Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., because).

In addition, Studios supports the following Social Emotional Learning standards. (**Boston SEL Standards**)

- **SA 1.1.** Label and recognize emotions. Express understanding of emotions using different forms of representation. (Art, Drama)
- **SA 4.3.** Identify interests, motivators and aspirations. Demonstrate self-efficacy and confidence.
- **SM 1.1.** Recognize ways to self-regulate and manage thoughts and behaviors in an effort to join or engage in an activity or task.
- **SM 3.1.** Demonstrate ability in preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts in

constructive ways.

- **SR 2.1.** Develop rewarding positive relationships and work collaboratively with others.
- **DM 2.1.** Apply responsible, constructive choices in daily academic and social situations. (Thinking & Feedback)

Studios provide opportunities for children to dig deeply into each unit’s Big Ideas and to express their developing understandings through diverse means. Studios materials and activities are designed to further push children’s thinking about the Weekly Questions, thus deepening and expanding children’s understandings. New possibilities for the topic of study emerge from the discoveries and questions that arise as children direct their activity with purpose, seriousness, and playfulness. Adult observation, peer collaboration, and ongoing feedback all contribute to high-quality work. In Studios, first graders apply their developing skills in literacy and language; their thinking as scientists, historians, artists, and mathematicians; and new vocabulary in every discipline. In Studios, children and adults engage in a culture of creativity, exchange of ideas, problem solving, and revision as they negotiate the subject matter at hand.

There are six studios: **Art, Building, Drama, Library, Science and Engineering,** and **Writing and Drawing.** They overlap and share links to the topics of study; each studio also offers distinct possibilities based on the particular materials and processes available. Because knowledge building in one domain happens in concert with experiences *across* domains, Studios provide the ideal conditions for the consolidation of knowledge and extension into new thinking. Ideas children play with and refine in the studios thread their way back to whole class and small group discussions and into their writing. Skills practice in Stations bolsters Studios work.

Studios also provide time to foster those skills and dispositions not easily measured: self-regulation and self-expression, creative and critical thinking, collaboration, communication (often called 21st Century skills). The work in Studios is both dynamic and challenging. Children’s social emotional engagement is stimulated by invitations to make personal connections to the topics of study, through multiple points of entry, and through the demands to work collaboratively with others and to reflect on one’s own work and the work of others.

How studios work

The studios “lessons” for the first weeks of school center around establishing routines and expectations for how Studios will work. This gives classroom communities time to develop and settle into systems and routines for working in the studios, including

- the set-up, care, and use of materials;
- clean up, storage, and accessibility for each studio;
- methods for children to choose studios;

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numbers of children who can work productively and safely in each area and systems for fluid movement between studios;
signals for clean up and finishing work;
places for keeping ongoing and finished work;
tools for documentation (used by children and adults); and
use of walls or other space for display of Studios work.

This set up time will be crucial for the ongoing success of Studios time. When children have clarity about systems and shared expectations, they can apply their full attention to the work at hand.

Studios activities generally continue for more than one week. A rhythm will emerge in response to children's work, pacing, and interests for introducing new activities and sustaining or extending existing ones. The following questions can help teachers decide whether and when to add a new activity in any studio.

Does it reinforce or expand children's thinking about the Weekly Question or the unit's Big Ideas?

Does it take advantage and build upon children's existing schema?

What tools, resources, and background information will children need in order to be productive and successful?

The Studios lessons in *1st Grade for ME* intend to offer ways to investigate the Weekly Question and make connections among other parts of the day (Text Talk, Writing, Science and Engineering, Stations). In planning, teachers consider suggested activities and materials in light of their particular classroom communities and determine how and when best to introduce, continue, or replace ideas for a particular studio.

Each week, Studios time opens with a *brief* whole group meeting – five or so minutes to describe new materials, highlight a successful technique or strategy, or pose a challenge. Once children have this information, they plan their work. This should happen quickly, in order to maximize active work time and need not happen every day.

Children choose where to work. At very few points in their school days (and indeed outside of school as well) do children have the chance to make decisions about what they will do next. Being able to choose from among studios supports children's executive function *and* engages them authentically in work they care about, with materials that are intuitively challenging, aesthetically pleasing, and inspiring. Children's investment in their work will be intrinsic and profound. Teachers may sometimes suggest that children experiment outside a preferred, familiar studio, both to stretch their capacities and broaden their skills, and to afford other children space in a coveted area. However, teachers will not force children to produce something in a particular studio or to visit each studio presented. Extended projects are

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encouraged, as this is how children will be able to design, research/explore, work, revise, get feedback, revise again, and come to a satisfying completion. Add in time for collaboration with interested peers, and a single idea may evolve over a couple of weeks.

Children will want to save their work. Because materials are shared and other children may want to use them the following day, encourage children to capture their work through a sketch or photo and then to clean up. Work that is truly in progress and work that has received feedback should continue. Devise a system for setting work aside. Children can make signs such as “Still working” or “Please do not disturb;” make sure they include their names. The class should make agreements about in what circumstances and for how long work can reasonably be saved.

Some children will move around a lot. While some will become absorbed in their work in a single studio and be frustrated that the time passes too quickly, other children will want to move around to see what the possibilities are. These children might find it challenging to settle into their work, and the opportunity to move around freely may provide too much stimulation. Telling them to “pick a studio and stay there” will likely feel unsuccessful for teachers and children alike. Provide constrained choices; be present while they try new materials and processes; arrange partnerships with other children; and document successes. A timer might be useful, as well, with incrementally increasing expectations for sustained attention in one studio.

Children solve problems. A particularly powerful opportunity inherent in studios work is that children will encounter dilemmas with materials, with processes, and with each other. They will sometimes have trouble realizing their aspirations. Offer support and resources, and let children take on as much of the problem solving as possible. Taking a stance as teacher-researcher, curious about what will unfold with notebook in hand, helps teachers resist jumping in to offer solutions. The innovations and resolutions children come up with on their own, especially after a struggle, will be most satisfying, most informative, and most useful in developing perseverance and confidence.

At the end of Studio time, depending on classroom schedules but *at least* once a week, another brief whole group meeting will include the Thinking and Feedback routine about a piece of children’s work. During a whole group meeting, teachers may also choose to highlight a persistent challenge with a material (the clay won’t stick together), discuss how to communicate class work to a broader audience (essential components for a hallway bulletin board), or to surface themes in work across studios (one child is exploring through a story what others are building or researching). As studios are being established, and occasionally throughout the year, it will be important to revisit the systems, routines, and expectations for how studios work, to make sure that all children are participating meaningfully and cooperatively.

Environment

A purposeful environment supports learning, as well as the logistical functioning of Studios. The short time allowed requires that materials and tools get into children’s hands efficiently; this in turn requires organization, labeling, accessibility, and systems for children to set up, maintain, and dismantle studios. The space for any given studio should accommodate children’s various ways of maintaining physical attentiveness to their task: they may wish to sit, stand, or move around as they work. Studios should provide possibilities for children to work side by side, in small groups, or independently, as they choose. The sound environment (noise level) should both encourage conversation and allow children to sustain their work with intention and focus. The visual space might host images, tips and strategies (from adults and children), models and/or photos of children’s work, and clear cues for learning, such as guiding questions, prompts, and/or specific learning standards.

The role of the teacher

Once studios are up and running with increasingly smooth navigation of materials and space, classroom adults can begin to spend more time paying attention to the learning that is happening. As teachers circulate, they dip in and out of each studio, listening and observing, asking questions, and offering a balance of support and challenge, as needed by individual children and by small groups. Teachers draw children’s attention to each other’s work and to the developing expertise of their peers and encourage collaboration.

In the studios, teachers introduce a vocabulary of possibility that encourages children to work thoughtfully and with patience for mishaps. The language teachers use in Studios can appropriately complicate children’s thinking about how a task might be approached and make problem solving an accepted—not frustrating—part of learning.

For example,

Think about...

What if...

Experiment with...

It might be because...

Have you noticed how other children are...?

Rather than simply praising or critiquing children’s work, this kind of conditional or “maybe...” language provokes children to think more deeply about what they are doing, to look critically at the results of their efforts, and to persist through challenges.

In whole group meetings to introduce and reflect upon Studios work—guided by the Thinking and Feedback routine—teachers model strategies and facilitate conversations to address challenges children are encountering. This also sets the stage for children’s investment in each other’s ongoing projects. Please see the Routines document in Part 2 for a description of the Thinking and Feedback routine.

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Of course, teachers are also responsible for keeping materials replenished, refreshed, organized, and accessible. Studios spaces and materials should be consistently inviting.

Formative assessment

The process of **observing**, entering children’s conversations and experiences, intervening and making suggestions, and then observing further helps a teacher understand a child’s thinking. A bank of questions guides this assessment:

- What words and language is this child using?
- What ideas is she expressing?
- What questions is she asking?
- What understandings does this work reveal? What misconceptions does it uncover?
- What concepts need further exploration?
- What is the quality of the child’s interactions? What is she learning from others?

Answers to these questions are collected in notes, transcriptions, photographs and video, children’s work, and notes from small group conversations and whole group meetings; it may also be useful to keep logs of children’s visits to each studio (children can sign in/out to create these logs themselves). Develop a good system for collecting your documentation of Studios work. **Reflecting** on these artifacts, both independently and with colleagues, is essential to appreciating a child’s development and to planning next steps for individual children and for the group. This formative assessment will be used alongside assessments from Stations and standardized assessments to form a comprehensive picture of a child’s learning trajectory.

Children’s responsibilities

Inherent in the opportunity to choose where they will work and how they will proceed with their projects is the children’s responsibility to make very good use of their time. This is not a “free choice” time. Rather, in making careful decisions about their work, children are agreeing to embark on serious and fruitful exploration. Sometimes children will initiate activities that surprise us. Refer children back to texts, class discussions, work on the walls, and other resources, and remind them of the Weekly Questions that anchor class activity. Ask them how their work connects to the topic of study, and listen carefully to their responses.

Children will be tasked with taking care of materials, keeping things organized, and perhaps signaling clean up time. They may be given rotating jobs to oversee the care of specific studios or materials.

Children contribute to each other’s work as they sink into compelling tasks: they exchange ideas about how to approach materials and activities, evaluate together the success of their evolving projects, offer suggestions to one another, and put new vocabulary to use. Once the studios are

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established, children are likely to move around to see what others are doing, make connections, offer advice, and celebrate successes. Some children will prefer to work independently, and this should, of course, be respected. Teachers can remind the class that the studios provide opportunities for everyone to be working on a shared idea or question in various ways, so that children see the connections among their efforts.

Connecting with Families

Teachers are encouraged to extend connections to children’s home lives by creating invitations for family participation: Ask a family member to tell you a story about ...; See if you can find an artifact at home about ...; Ask a family member to describe how she or he learned to The possibilities will be wide open. These invitations need not be bound by a family’s facility with English (stories can be told in any language), nor life experience (all experiences inform who we are), nor access to extensive resources (every family throws things away that could be useful in the Art Studio). See the Home Links for more ideas for connecting families to classroom learning.

A final word: Patience

It will take time and practice for many teachers to become comfortable in and confident about the work in Studios. For some, the challenge will be in releasing decisional control to the children and trusting that the work they do in the studios has real value for cognitive and academic growth. For some, management of materials will require rethinking and perhaps retooling classroom spaces. Others will worry about the “loss of instructional minutes.” Have patience. With agency in their learning, guided in positive and productive habits, and given supportive structures, the children will reveal themselves as competent, innovative, and engaged. They will make meaningful connections to all aspects of the first grade curriculum. You and they will find yourselves immersed in joyful, vigorous work.

Beautiful Stuff

To a young child, the world is full of materials to touch, discover, and explore. To find, collect, sort, and use materials is to embark on a special kind of adventure. For adults, gathering materials means rediscovering the richness and beauty in natural, unexpected, and recyclable objects that are all around us, but not often noticed.¹

Topal and Gandini, Introduction



Beautiful Stuff provides children with the opportunity to gather, explore, and build understandings about various **recycled and natural materials**. Children then use these materials to inspire and support their ideas across units of study, in the Art Studio, and beyond. “The goal is to allow children to become fluent with materials—as if materials were a language” (Topal & Gandini, introduction), in order to widen the possibilities of media that can effectively communicate ideas.

Many children will already have had experience with Beautiful Stuff in PreK or K. The materials you present at the beginning of the year will act as a suggestion for the kinds of materials children might collect from home to add to the classroom supply during Unit 1. Make sure to send home a letter to families inviting them to contribute to the classroom collection.

Logistics

In preparation, identify a space in the Art Studio (open shelves are ideal) to accommodate materials and works in progress. Beautiful Stuff will be available throughout the year for children to access with other materials as they determine the best media to communicate their ideas. Children should be involved in maintaining the space and materials, which can be

¹ Topal, C.W. and Gandini, L. (1999). *Beautiful stuff!: Learning with found materials*. Worcester (Massachusetts): Davis Publications.

replenished and reorganized as needed. Families can be a constant source of materials, and collecting Beautiful Stuff is a concrete way that every family can contribute to classroom learning.

Aside from the Beautiful Stuff materials themselves, you will find it helpful to have:

- containers for sorting and storing, such as recycled trays, plastic containers, cups, jars
- materials to use as **bases**, such as cardboard squares
- trays, to define work space, organize materials, and transport works in progress
- images for inspiration, unit-related, if possible
- adhesives (scotch and/or masking tape, liquid glue) and attachers (paper clips, string, rubber bands)

Introducing the materials

Begin with materials you have collected. When you introduce them to the children, model how you might sort them and organize them in labeled containers.

Leave the task of sorting and organizing for the children. As children sort, they consider the various attributes of each object and make decisions about what categories to create. Is a cap from a water bottle sorted with other things that are round, made of plastic, red, or small? Is a piece of yarn wiggly, soft, something to hold things together?

Have the children label containers with words that describe the materials in each one.



Exploration

Make sure that children have ample time to explore the materials without the use of adhesive to start—understanding their properties and entertaining possibilities for their use—before assigning something in particular to accomplish with them. With exploration, trying out different ways to use various objects, children are more likely to make intentional decisions about which materials will be most effective for a specific purpose. Children might explore materials individually or in small groups, or in a guided whole group conversation.

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Document how children are using materials with notes and/or photographs. Take note of the language children use as they talk about materials, and support children with descriptive and precise vocabulary.



Maintaining a robust and exciting stock

You'll become frustrated to be constantly collecting materials and then have them disappear.

- Periodically throughout the year, send a letter to families asking them to participate in collecting Beautiful Stuff for the classroom.
- Children who are not able to bring materials from home might be invited to collect recycled materials from around the school (bottle caps from teachers in the office) or natural materials in the school yard or during a walk (acorns, pinecones, sticks).
- Keep a bag or box in your own home to gather materials.
- Be conservative with **adhesives**, offering them only when a piece of work needs to be saved. As long as materials are not glued or taped together, they can be deconstructed and used over and over again, as blocks are. You might take a photo of a finished piece of work to include in a child's portfolio, to share during Thinking and Feedback, or to send home. A community conversation might begin with, *I have noticed that we are running out of Beautiful Stuff. Where do you think it is going?* This can lead into a conversation about use of adhesives and re-use of Beautiful Stuff.
- Keep materials organized in the classroom. This will signal to children that these materials are as important as the others they use and encourage them to use Beautiful Stuff judiciously.

Supporting and facilitating learning

As in other moments, as children work with Beautiful Stuff, talk with them about their intentions, challenges, ideas, and questions. Some guiding questions include:

- What words can describe this material?
- Why did you choose this material? How is it working?
- What is similar about these objects? What's different?
- How does this feel?

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- Is there another material you can use to communicate your idea?
- What do you think this material might have been used for before?
- Which adhesive is best for this particular part?
- Have you looked at anyone else's work to see how they solved that problem?



Beautiful Stuff in the Boston Public Schools is based on the book *Beautiful Stuff! Learning with Found Materials* and inspired by the pre-primary schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Introduction: Beautiful Stuff

Focus on First/ 1st Grade for ME | Boston Public Schools Department of Early Childhood P-2/
Maine Department of Education

Science and Engineering

Goals:

- Children investigate phenomena using hands-on materials.
- Children read, talk, and write about science and engineering ideas and experiences.
- Children use science journals to record and analyze their findings to deepen thinking.
- Children use the science and engineering practices to make sense of phenomena and their own experiences.
- Children connect science and engineering concepts to real life situations.
- Children share and discuss their work in “Science Circles.”

In *1st Grade for ME*, Science and Engineering work takes place in three different components. Explicit, investigation- and discussion-based instruction happens during Science and Engineering lessons; children continue these investigations in the Science and Engineering Studio and record observations and make sense of investigations at the Science Literacy Station. This model provides children with the opportunity to think, act, and communicate as scientists and engineers for more than two hours per week.

Science and Engineering Lessons

Each week, two 30-minute lessons are dedicated to explicit science instruction with the classroom teacher. These lessons are connected to work in Stations and Studios; it is crucial that teachers carry them out.

Science Literacy Station

One integral part of science and engineering teaching and learning is providing time and space for children to make sense of their investigations. In *1st Grade for ME*, this practice takes place in the Science Literacy station. Each child keeps a science journal to record thinking, observations, and understandings throughout the year. Each journal entry has a relatively uniform setup. Teachers use a model journal which is displayed at the Science Literacy Station as a guide. Journals can be reviewed regularly to assess the development of children’s questioning, thinking, and communicating as scientists and engineers.

Science Circles

Young scientists share their work, ask questions about observations, and flex their critical thinking muscles during Science Circles. The routine, similar to Thinking and Feedback, follows.

Introduction: Science and Engineering

1. Review science journals to select a specific entry, and choose a few journals (3-5).
2. Place them in the middle of the whole group meeting area, facing outward.
3. Gather children to sit on the perimeter of the space.
4. Children walk carefully around and look at the selected journals.
5. Once every child has had the chance to see the journals, begin the Science Circles:
 - Looking (Children silently observe the journals for one minute.)
 - Observing (Children describe what they see in the journals.)
 - Evaluating and communicating information (Children whose work is presented describe how their journal work connects to a particular lesson or question.)
 - Analyzing and Interpreting Data (Children look for patterns and make connections across each other's work.)
 - Asking Questions and Defining Problems (Children share new questions that come up.)
 - Suggesting (Children provide feedback.) and Inspiring (Children articulate how the work gives them ideas of what they could do next.)

Teachers take notes on the feedback provided and share them back with presenting children.

Science and Engineering Studio

The Science and Engineering Studio serves as an extension of the investigations begun during Science lessons. Sometimes children will continue an activity or investigation that was introduced in a previous science lesson. Other times, children will use arts media to explain their understanding of a targeted scientific concept.

Assessment

A variety of methods and tools can be used to assess science learning through the year. With the intent to plan successive experiences and conversations, teachers:

- review children's science journals to understand their thinking,
- assess children's writing across domains,
- determine children's use of pertinent vocabulary, and
- assess children's application of science and engineering practices.

Writing

Goals:

- Children learn the purpose, structure, and language of various genres of writing.
- Children write to authentic audiences for authentic purposes.
- Children write using a variety of media.

Throughout the *1st Grade for ME* day, children communicate through writing, which continues to include drawing. Children write at the Writing and Drawing Studio, during Text Talk, at Studios and Stations, and during the dedicated Writing lessons.

The *1st Grade for ME* Writing block is grounded in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory and based on the work of Dr. María Brisk.¹ Throughout the year children become experts in writing in various genres through deconstructing mentor texts and jointly and individually constructing text. Children write for specific audiences, in the context of the content they are exploring during the unit.

Over the course of the year, children write across genres that fit into the three major categories of writing: opinion, informational, and narrative. **Genres** in SFL are defined by their purposes and structural and language features. More detailed introductions to each genre can be found in the unit introductions.

In addition to writing in different genres, children produce work in different **media**, including books, letters, posters, and poetry. It is important to note that in SFL, poetry is a medium, rather than a genre, because a poem is a form through which any genre can be expressed. For example, both a personal recount and an argument can be written in the form of a poem.

The Teaching and Learning Cycle

The Writing block takes place for 30 minutes each day. Through a teaching and learning cycle that includes **negotiation of the field**, **deconstruction**, **joint construction**, and **individual construction**, children are apprenticed in the **purpose** of each genre, as well as its **structure** and **language** features. Lesson titles direct teachers to the stage(s) of the cycle addressed in each lesson.

¹ Brisk, M.E. (2015). *Engaging students in academic literacies*. New York, NY: Routledge.

All writing in *1st Grade for ME* exists within the context of the content knowledge developed throughout the unit. Most of the content knowledge development—or, **negotiation of the field**—occurs throughout the day, including Text Talk, Studios, and Science and Engineering. So while negotiation of the field is not explicitly named with children or identified in the titles of writing lessons, it is embedded throughout children’s interactions with the unit content.

Children learn about the features of genres through the **deconstruction of mentor texts**. Together with the teacher and classmates, children listen to, read, and analyze mentor texts to uncover their purposes, structures, and language features. Several mentor texts are used for each genre.

During **joint construction**, the teacher and children compose text together in the given genre. This stage allows children to practice the aspects of the genre uncovered during deconstruction before they are sent to write individually.

After exploring a genre through deconstruction and joint construction, children move into **individual construction** of text. During this stage children write from what they have learned, with support from their classmates and the teacher. Conferences with teachers and feedback from teachers and classmates focus on the aspects of the genre they have been studying, including its purpose, structure, and language, as well as the audience children are writing to and the topic they are writing about. Children then make revisions based on this focused feedback.

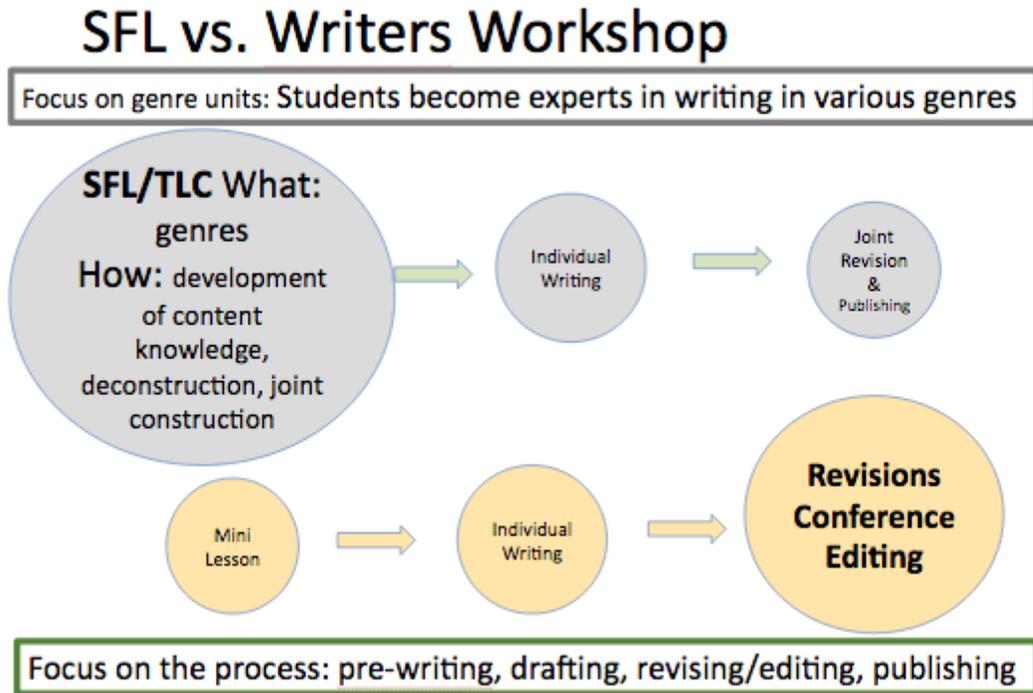
As its name indicates, the teaching and learning cycle is not a linear process. Units jump back and forth through the three stages to provide a supportive, coherent experience for children.

Although children do engage in the various stages of the writing process—as in Writer’s Workshop—the focus of instruction is on the development of knowledge about the genre, rather than on the steps of the writing process. The practice of apprenticing children in a genre before sending them to write addresses the concern presented by Lisa Delpit in *Other People’s Children*: “Although the problem is not necessarily inherent in the method, in some instances adherents of process approaches to writing create situations in which students ultimately find themselves held accountable for knowing a set of rules about which no one has ever directly informed them.”²

As evidenced in the following graphic, the bulk of instruction in SFL occurs at the beginning of the unit—with the development of content knowledge and through deconstruction and joint construction of text—before children are sent to write independently. In contrast, the bulk of

² Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people’s children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press, 31.

instruction in Writer’s Workshop occurs at the end of the unit, with conferences that lead to children revising and editing their work.



Brisk, 2017

Conventions

Because the focus of writing in *1st Grade for ME* revolves around the purpose, structure, and language features of genres, detailed lessons in mechanics are not provided, except for those features related to the genre or medium. For example, when writing a letter, children learn to include commas in the greeting and closing. Teachers will, of course, continue to model proper writing conventions when writing with young children. In addition, time is provided during each unit for teachers to embed additional instruction in conventions, as needed.

Regular, explicit instruction in conventions occurs during Foundations. In addition, children should be held accountable to the rules learned in Foundations as they edit their writing. Further, attention to conventions will surface in other components, such as Shared Reading and Vocabulary and Language lessons.

Introduction: Writing

Glossary

audience: the person/people for whom the text is written

deconstruction: analyzing mentor texts for genre features, such as purpose, structure, and language

genre: a type of writing defined by its purpose, structure, and language

individual construction: composing text individually

joint construction: composing text together with the teacher and classmates

medium: the form used to produce the writing, such as a book, poster, or poem

mentor text: a text that illustrates the features of a genre

negotiation of the field: the stage of the teaching and learning cycle in which children develop the content knowledge necessary for writing

purpose: the reason a particular genre of writing is produced

stage: the (structural) part of a piece of writing; for example, the title, orientation, or conclusion

Storytelling and Story Acting

Goals:

- Children’s voices are recognized and stories are honored.
- Children develop skills in language and literacy, creativity, communication, and social and emotional development.
- Children understand themselves as part of a larger community of storytellers and understand that storytelling enriches our world.

At the heart of Storytelling/Story Acting (ST/SA) is **listening**—adults listening to children, children listening to their classmates, and children listening to adults—all in service of better understanding each other and getting inside of each other’s stories.

ST/SA promotes **language and literacy skills** as children develop narrative structure and conventions, practice and consolidate emerging vocabulary, and travel the bridge between the contextualized language of early childhood speech (telling about the here and now of personal experiences) and the decontextualized language of formalized, printed language. When adults tell stories, they offer models of narrative and rich vocabulary on which children can build.

ST/SA gives children an outlet for **creativity and communication**. They tell their own stories, remembered or invented, and tell them in their own way. Even a story a child has heard before becomes her own when she adds details, assigns feelings, and uses facial expressions and gestures in the telling.

ST/SA supports **social development**. While children can write down or tell an individual and personal story quietly to their teacher or peers, story acting enlivens opportunities for the development of these language and thinking skills alongside the demands of collaboration. Children work together to create the experience and develop story characters, events, and resolutions.

ST/SA fosters **emotional development**. Children practice self-regulation and negotiate their responses in relation to their peers’ ideas. Through stories, children encounter and recognize their own and others’ emotions. ST/SA fosters a strong classroom community in which each child feels an integral part.

Introduction: Storytelling & Story Acting

The guide (found in Part 2) identifies and explains specific components that make for successful ST/SA. You and your children will discover others. In the words of Vivian Paley, “A teacher’s own observations will inform her best about all these details.”

Logistics

Materials

- Storytelling Books, one for each child
- paper
- writing tools
- masking tape (optional)

Preparation

Read the Storytelling and Story Acting Guide in Part 2.

Identify times during the day when children may dictate stories to an adult (1-2 children/stories per day), such as during arrival, snack, Studios, or transitions.

Create a calendar or other system for letting children know when they will be dictating stories that will then be acted.

Designate time in the day and week for story acting (10 minutes, twice a week).

Prepare a notebook for each child.

Physical Space

- Writing and Storytelling Studio or any place in the classroom where an adult and child(ren) can sit together and hear each other well, for dictation
- whole group meeting area, for Story Acting

Guide to Storytelling and Story Acting

Logistics

Materials: Each child will have her or his own storytelling notebook. Beyond that, ST/SA has only a few material requirements: paper, a pencil or pen, and perhaps masking tape.

Physical Space: For storytelling, stories can be written down or dictated anywhere in the classroom. Studios are an ideal place for children to tell and write down their stories; it may be helpful to designate a “storytelling table,” corner, or chair for adults to take dictation.

For story acting, you will need an area where the whole group can comfortably sit in a circle with space in the middle for acting. It is very helpful to delineate the acting area—the stage—with tape.

Who tells stories: Any adult can model storytelling: teachers, paraprofessionals, classroom volunteers, administrators, family members, community members, and even older students in your school all can share stories. ST/SA is a great way for administrators to connect with the children. Including a range of storytellers helps ensure that children will hear stories from different perspectives and cultural backgrounds.

Taking dictation of children’s stories provides a regular opportunity for adults to have engaging, fun, one-on-one interactions with each child in the room. In addition, children who are fluent writers can write down their own or their peers’ stories.

When: Children’s storytelling (dictation) can occur during arrival, Studios, snack, or any other time when the class is not engaged in whole group activities. Story acting (dramatization) is designated for one 15-minute period per week but can also occur at the end of the day, during morning meeting, or during a transition between other activities. ST/SA can happen every day or on certain days each week. To provide predictability for children (helping them wait for their chance to tell a story), *it is essential that story acting be included in the classroom schedule*. To build successful routines and get the most benefit from the practice, ST/SA should happen reliably at least a couple of days each week.

Adult stories can be told at any time throughout the day, including during transitions.

Modeling Storytelling

Adults' stories provide models for children to draw upon—ideas for how to organize stories, characters to include, and plot lines to spin out. Children will rarely copy these models directly, but rather mine them for inspiration. Hearing adults tell stories helps create a culture of storytelling, inspiring children to share their stories with their classmates. Thus, children need to hear adults telling stories on a regular, even daily, basis.

You and your colleagues can draw from a wide variety of sources to find stories to tell children. These include personal experiences, folk tales, imaginary tales, children's stories from previous years, and stories connected to curriculum.

Note: A beginning adult storyteller may worry about remembering all the parts of the story they intend to tell. It is perfectly acceptable to use notes.

Stories are compelling—perfect for attracting and keeping the attention of groups of children. Here are some tips:

- Use a ritual opening. Rituals might include turning on a special light, ringing a bell or chimes, or reciting a chant. Rituals can be tied to cultural practices. Some teachers introduce the “Crik-Crak” call and response ritual: “On the island of Haiti in the Caribbean, storytellers often start their stories by saying *Crik*. Now you say, *Crak*. I say, *Crik*. Now you say, *Crak*.” Inviting children's input in creating rituals can be part of building and maintaining a healthy, democratic classroom community.
- Connect stories to the children, including them as the protagonists.
- Mine children's interests for story themes and characters.
- Tell stories that respond to ideas and counteract stereotypes children are expressing.
- Use puppets and props; this can be especially helpful for children who are learning English.
- Give the audience (children) a role such as participating in call and response or contributing motions and gestures.
- Include songs and chants. Stories such as “Abiyoyo” have songs embedded in them.
- Repeat familiar stories. Children love hearing stories they enjoy multiple times; repetition helps children understand stories and practice vocabulary.
- Modulate pacing, voice and gesture. Slow down; alternate volume and tempo; incorporate gestures.

Storytelling: Listening to and Collecting Children’s Stories

Supporting children as storytellers involves careful listening and gentle scaffolding. Listening to children’s stories provides an opportunity for building relationships and getting to know children deeply. Over time, children’s comfort with storytelling and their narrative abilities will grow. During story dictation, “teacherly moments” will arise—times when, because a child shows interest, we can support children’s specific literacy and language skills. However, it is critical that ST/SA not be turned into a phonics lesson. The adults’ primary roles in dictation are as listener and recorder.

Guidelines for Dictation

- Begin the year by taking dictation yourself, so that you have a couple of stories from each of the children. As children become more comfortable writers, they can be invited to tell their stories to peers who will write them down, or to write down their own stories.
- Aim to collect and act out one story from each child about every two weeks (two stories per month will result in each child having a significant story collection by the end of the year). A calendar will help children know and anticipate their storytelling days.
- For stories that will be acted out, limit each story to one page. Lengthy stories take a long time to copy down (robbing other children of the opportunity to tell stories) and can be very difficult to act out. Let children know at the beginning of the year that their stories can be as short as they like, but no longer than one page. The idea of “to be continued” can be introduced to children whose stories exceed the one-page limit.
- Write down stories verbatim. Modeling this method will help children when they are scribing for each other.
- Read the story back to the storyteller. When a child has finished telling his or her story, ask, “Is there anything you want to add or change in your story?” At this point, also ask for a title.

Issues that may arise in children’s stories

Some stories may be inappropriate for sharing with the whole group because they concern private matters. We recommend that you listen to and scribe these stories and invite children to tell alternative stories to act out.

Some children are exposed to violence through the media or in their personal experiences. Grappling with issues of power and control, many children are drawn to stories involving superheroes and fighting. Whether or not to censor stories with violent themes is a controversial issue. Because stories are a way children make sense of the world, we recommend that they be allowed to tell and act out stories involving superheroes and fighting.

Supporting all children as storytellers

While some children will begin the year confident in their storytelling abilities, others will have trouble getting started. The challenge is to provide just the right amount of support that aids children’s development without taking away their ownership of the story (and thus decreasing their motivation to participate in storytelling). Variability in children’s language and communication styles will emerge as children tell their stories. Even very short stories—even one-word stories—should be celebrated.

Some children who are not immediately comfortable expressing themselves in spoken English will benefit from certain kinds of supports. These include adults modeling storytelling, visual prompts (such as story cards or dice), verbal prompts (“Where does the story begin?” “How did you/the character feel when that happened?”), and co-construction (teachers or peers giving suggestions to help children start their stories or providing a word). Children can certainly tell stories in their home languages; they might then try telling the story again in English. Fortunate classrooms will include an adult who can transcribe these stories in their original languages. Others may look to other children, family members, or other members of the school community for assistance.

Not all children will want to tell a story at the start of the year. Storytelling should *always* be a choice. Experience shows that, over time, almost all children choose to tell stories.

Supporting literacy skills

During dictation, first and second graders will read familiar words and recognize features of print. Without making it a formal reading lesson, teachers can support children’s encoding, decoding, and understanding of printed language conventions. Many Reading Literature standards can be addressed fluidly and in context. For example, after the story is completed, the child can go through the text and underline all the characters in preparation for dramatization.

Promoting language development

During dictation adults have opportunities to supply new vocabulary words. Dictation is also an opportunity to discuss elements of stories, such as characters, setting, and action, and of genre writing, such as purpose, language, and audience.

Grammatical errors will appear in children’s stories.

- Write down exactly what a child says, staying true to his or her words.
- If a child is making a grammatical error, and you feel that they are able to learn the standard grammar or that the mistake will make it difficult for others to understand the story, offer an option—“I can write this as you told me, or I can write it as it would be in a book. In a book it would go like this: ‘_____.’ How does that sound?”

Note: In reading stories to the whole class, some teachers with a high proportion of children learning English will correct grammar in order for children to hear the stories in standard English.

Story Acting (Dramatization)

Story acting brings children’s ideas to the group. It gives a compelling reason for children’s storytelling, celebrates children’s ideas, and provides an opportunity for the class to create meaning around a text of great interest. Conversations about stories and dramatizations extend children’s literacy learning.

Getting Started

Many but not all of the children in your class will have become familiar with ST/SA in K1, K2, and first grade. To help children learn the routines of story acting you can act out stories and books, work with small groups of actors, and act out scenes more than once with different actors.

Stage rules

Stage rules create a safe environment for story acting. Two simple rules are usually sufficient:

1. Stay one arm- or leg-length from one another when pretend fighting.
2. Stay off the stage while you are a member of the audience; come onto the stage if you are acting.

Acting out the story/choosing the actors

Begin the dramatization by reading the first words of story. When you come to a role (character or inanimate object), turn to the child next to you and ask, “Can I see you be the ___?” Likely she or he will come onto the stage and start acting the part. Of course, a child may always decline the role. Continue reading the story fluidly, going around the circle to invite actors to come on stage as parts appear in the story. You and the children can be expansive in your definition of characters; a house, a forest, wind, or rain can be acted out, as well as people and animals. Including inanimate objects allows more children to participate in the dramatization. In stories with many characters, have actors sit down when their parts are finished to make room on the stage for others.

Avoid negotiating with children about roles they want to play—it should not be an option to say, “I don’t want to be the princess, but I do want to be the knight.” Going around the stage in the manner described here is fast and efficient, allowing many children to participate in dramatization and many stories to be heard.

Notes:

1. Let the author of the story choose the role he or she wants: to act, narrate or watch the dramatization. This can be determined when the story is dictated.

2. Some children may be hesitant to take on gender-specific roles (a boy being reluctant to play the mother). You might say, “In acting, boys can pretend to be anything: girls, flowers, dinosaurs, anything.”
3. Early in her career, Vivian Paley had the story author choose the entire cast. She changed this practice out of considerations of fairness (some children were asked to be actors far more than others).

Further roles for first and second graders

Once children are familiar with how Story Acting works, they can facilitate or direct the dramatization by calling on peers to act (still going around the circle) and reminding actors of stage rules and audience members of their role. First and second graders can also narrate stories by reading them aloud—either their own or their classmates’ stories. They will likely need support in maintaining the pace and scale of the acting to stay within established classroom boundaries. In second grade, children can begin to take over full ownership of narration and direction during dramatization. This may additionally include management of props, sets, and/or costumes.

Supporting the actors

New actors may be shy about performing on stage and use only small body movements and facial gestures. Over time, children will expand their repertoire of movement. Some teachers read a story twice, so that during the first reading the class can discuss and practice different ways to act out particular roles. When acting is happening, read slowly so actors have time to perform.

Supporting the audience

Focusing the audience’s attention on the actors, rather than spending time trying to manage the audience’s behavior, helps everyone attend to the acting on stage. In addition, the audience can become involved in the dramatization (singing a song that is part of the story), and the audience might applaud at the end of stories.

Conversations to extend learning after dramatizations

Invite children to offer compliments and suggestions immediately after story acting, taking time at the beginning of the year to define compliments and suggestions, teach some parameters, and practice as a group. These group conversations about storytelling and acting can produce high-level conversation and sophisticated acting. Teachers can also draw connections among stories, share their impressions, and ask children their impressions about individual stories and emerging themes across stories. Terms such as characters, setting, plot, and mood can be included in such conversations. Important concepts in writing can be reinforced, such as purpose, language, and audience. Over time, you and your children will establish your own way of dramatizations. Occasionally, you may want to discuss how your rules are working.

Communication

In the Writing and Drawing (first grade) and Writing and Storytelling (second grade) Studios—as well as at other times of the day—after stories have been told and enacted, teachers can provide additional opportunities for children to enjoy the stories and communicate their ideas. Teachers are encouraged to provide individual notebooks to collect stories and related drawings. Children may also choose to revise or develop additional chapters in these notebooks. Specifically, in first grade:

- children may begin to dictate stories to peers;
- children may write down their own stories;
- children illustrate stories in notebooks and/or with diverse materials at the Art and Building Studios;
- children give and receive feedback about both their stories and the ways they are acted out.

In addition, in second grade:

- children revise stories based on peer feedback (in a group, with a partner);
- children can try to tell stories in a particular genre, as connected to writing; and
- children take ownership of how acted stories first emerge (told with friends, dictated to an adult, writing it down, etc.)

Family Involvement

Many families have intrinsic knowledge and deep traditions about the value of storytelling. It may also be helpful for families to understand how stories support children’s success in school by enlarging vocabulary, learning about sequencing of events, developing creativity, and learning to express and regulate, along with the strong ties to literacy development. Teachers can also:

- share children’s stories at conferences with parents/families;
- encourage families to tell stories and listen to the stories their children tell;
- invite families to share stories in school;
- learn from families what stories are important to them and share these in class;
- share stories from school with families;
- share video of story enactments, via email or during parent-teacher conferences;
- request stories from home; or hold a family story event at school.

Acknowledgements

The original version of this guide was written by Ben Mardell (Lesley University) and Marina Boni (Boston Public Schools) with input from the teachers in the BPS Storytelling and Making Learning Visible Seminars, as well as by BPS colleagues Jason Sachs, Ben Russell, Nicole St. Victor, and Hua He, as well as Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Gillian McNamee, Trish Lee, and Patsy Cooper. Theresa Vilcapoma, Brian Gold and Lily Holland offered input for the current version.

Revised by Marina Boni and Melissa Tonachel, 2017.

Our gratitude to Vivian Paley for her wisdom and deep faith in children.

Appendix: Developmental expectations about children’s stories

It is valuable to know what to expect when collecting children’s stories, as children’s abilities to tell stories expand over the course of the early childhood years.

age	description	example
3 year olds	“Leap Frog” stories While connected in the child’s mind, to adults they seem to hop from one event to another.	“I went to the doctors. Sarah came over. I had cake for breakfast.”
4 year olds	Chronologies, also referred to as “and then and then and then stories.” These stories are connected temporally, but do not have a well-articulated beginning or end. Can continue for a long time.	“I had cake for breakfast. And then I went to the doctors. And I got a shot. And then we went home. Sarah came over. We played with my dolls.”
5 and 6 year olds	“Classic Narratives” with a beginning, middle and end; a story with a problem that is resolved	“One night my brother and I heard a knock. We thought it was something getting knocked down. So we grabbed hockey sticks, and my brother said, ‘If you see anyone, stab it with this hockey stick.’ We went downstairs to see what the knock was. We looked in the living room. In the family room. We looked in the kitchen. We looked downstairs. It was just my cat. The end.”
7 and up	Over time, children’s ideas, use of language, and vocabulary in stories become more complex, as they continue to emulate and integrate, ever more smoothly, the language of print.	

These characterizations do not constitute hard and fast rules, as children’s narrative abilities develop at different rates, and older children may tell stories reminiscent of an early stage of development.

Children may also choose to tell poetic stories, developing a mood rather than describing an event (“Sometimes when you catch wind, snow comes down. I caught the wind and then it flew out of my hands.”). Children’s cultural backgrounds influence how they tell stories. (see McCabe, A. (1997). Cultural background and storytelling: A review and implications for schooling. *The Elementary School Journal*, 97 (5), 453-473)