Learning Stories: A strengths-based assessment that connects preschool teachers and families

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ACTIVITY: Reflect on the Power of Words

Record your reactions to the next two stories:
- Feelings
- Thoughts
- Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story 1</th>
<th>Story 2</th>
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**The Power of Words**
Close your eyes and listen to this story...

**Story 1: Traditional Portfolios**

Now in column 1, write:
1) your feelings when listening to the story
2) your thoughts that came to your mind including what you think of this child.
3) words/phrases that struck you

**Story 2: Learning Story**

Now in column 1, write:
1) your feelings when listening to the story
2) your thoughts that came to your mind including what you think of this child.
3) words/phrases that struck you

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The Power of Words
Let’s Build A Tower!

Now, close your eyes AGAIN and listen to this story...

Story 1:
Traditional Portfolios

Now in column 1, write:
1) your feelings when listening to the story
2) your thoughts that came to your mind including what you think of this child.
3) words/phrases that struck you

Story 2: Learning Story

Now in column 1, write:
1) your feelings when listening to the story
2) your thoughts that came to your mind including what you think of this child.
3) words/phrases that struck you
Reflect: how do words have power?

Compare your reactions to the two stories.

Why do you think your reactions may have been different?

Agenda
Introduction to Learning Stories
Writing Learning Stories
Key Takeaways: Lessons Learned

Google Drive
Shared Folder

To access all presentation documents:
https://tinyurl.com/TASH2018

One Special Education Preschool Center

- Urban Midwest Public School
- Award for Inclusion
- 8 classrooms (2 SDCs, 6 Inclusion)
- 16 teachers (6 Gen Ed, 10 Special Ed)

Professional Development: 3 years
- Year 1: Pilot (8 teachers)
- Year 2: School-wide PD & implementation
- Year 3: School-wide PD with 1:1 feedback

Research Study: 3 years
- Year 1: PLC Pilot group: 6 teachers
- Year 2: 9 teachers, 21 families
- Year 3: 1:1 Feedback notes
A preschool teacher “clicks” 18,396 in TSG during 1 school year (not including uploading documentation).

“the assessments don’t capture that real important part of pre-school which is growing socially, the initiative they take, the confidence that they build, helping and working with the other kids. That’s why I think these new learning stories are so important because the other assessments we do, the TSG, the REACH assessments and all that stuff, don’t capture that part of preschool. And so that’s why I love these learning stories so much. They capture that stuff that you can’t capture in any other assessment”

-preschool GenEd teacher

**Situated Learning Theory**
From deficit-based to strengths-based

“Rosie was very matter-of-fact about it, but it was clear she saw just how fun it could be when we listen and do what we are asked in the classroom. She must have felt a sense of pride and satisfaction because it didn’t stop there... Rosie went on throughout that morning following directives and the activities of the day without any hesitation or conflict.”

“Kim was then directed to the chart”

“Rosie sat back down in the circle, looked around, and seemed to feel incredibly proud of her chance to be a part of circle time. This connection with her friends seemed to carry throughout the morning as she joined in for ChiME, our music program with Ms. J and snack time. She seemed to be thinking, ‘wow this is so cool to be learning with my friends!’”

Ms. Josephine then pointed to the attendance chart while Kim inspected it. It seemed like Kim was thinking, “wow look at all my classmates!” After a moment, Ms. Josephine said, “place your picture here” while pointing to the 3 column for 3 year olds.

Stephie’s Story

How feedback changed my perspective about capturing a Learning Story
What is a Learning Story?

Pre-K Teachers describe a Learning Story

“I find it to be a really authentic, natural way to... observe a child, just seeing that light bulb go off, or just even when it’s gradual [development]” - preschool sped teacher

“You’re really capturing something in the moment. You’re capturing the child kind of directing their own learning, it’s not something that I’ve set up where I’m pulling them aside and saying, “How high can you count?” It’s them doing it on their own.” - preschool gen ed teacher

“It’s more of a snapshot of something really special to the individual child” - gen ed teacher

Approaches to Learning

Head Start Standards

Approaches to Learning
Approaches to Learning

- Creativity/Curiosity
- Communication/Connection
- Persistence/Focus
- Self-direction/Independence
- Cooperation/Communication/Connection
- Enjoyment/Engagement/Initiative
- Problem Solving

Cooperation/Communication/Connection

Building relationships with others, sharing in the enjoyment of activities, sharing ideas, and listening to others.

Liam, A Natural Born Leader
Source: Our Examples

Writing a Learning Story
Learning Story Components

- The Story: Using a story format, tells the story about the child's approach to learning. The story includes characters, setting, emotions, and beginning/middle/end, while connecting jokes.

- What It Means: Written to the student, connects the learning that occurred to developmental milestones and understandings of child development, including the use of jokes when applicable.

- Opportunities and Possibilities: Consider next steps for expanding on the learning, including ways to challenge the student, generative to other situations in the classroom or at home, or involve peers.

- Family Feedback: Invites families to read the story together at home and share their thoughts on the learning moment including their emotional reactions, experience reading it together, and thoughts.

Formative Assessment

The Assessment Cycle (Dichtelmiller, 2011)

Examples of Titles

- Josie's Drip
- Jolene Brushes Paint
- Sascha and the Mirror
- Joy with the Marble Run
- Henry's Bus
- Stuffed Animals & Fragile People Play
The Story

The Story Components:
- The Story
- What It Means
- Opportunities and Possibilities
- Family Feedback

The Story: What Happened

Past Tense
Include yourself & others
Interpretations

Creative storytelling
- Setting
- Context
- Characters
- Sequence
- Moods
- Body language
- Quotes, thoughts
- Details

Names
interpretations
Details: colors, “heavy”, onomatopoeia
Sequence: step-by-step

Visualize

Kamila added a whole handful of marbles, which was pretty heavy. The yellow ramp began to tip, so she supported it to keep it from falling. The marbles rolled down making that same sound as each hit the floor: splat, thud, thud, splat, thud, thud.
The power of descriptive language

“Sofia was sitting on the blue rug and humming quietly to herself when her friend Paul came and sat down, cross-legged, near her. Sofia smiled at Paul and then starting moving her hands in the motion of a music conductor, as if she was leading a music concert. Paul started humming along with Sofia and they started experimenting with different sounds, Sofia humming higher notes and Paul humming lower notes. The two hummed a beautiful melody together for another minute. Soon they stopped humming and laughed together about the new song they had just created.”

What it Means
Tip: Write TO the child

Connect the story to...

- An Approach to Learning
- Developmental milestones
- Developmentally appropriate practices
- Real world experiences

Henry’s Bus

Source: Tom Drummond Examples

Let’s Build A Tower!

What it means

Joseph today during center time I was looking for you and saw that you were at the block center building with Elise. Joseph it made me so happy to see you since time building a tower. You and Elise worked together taking turns, taking and laughing. You built the tower and that was wonderful. You cooperation and communication skills really shined in this moment as Joseph when you looked up at me and then next time you felt how exciting it is to take turns and laugh with a friend.

Opportunities and possibilities

Joseph together we will continue to build on play experiences with your friends in the classroom using different types of blocks and materials to build a variety of different towers. Maybe next time you will build a castle with Magna Tiles or we can use the wooden blocks to build ramps to see how fast the ball can go.

Opportunities and Possibilities

Learning Story Components

- The Story
- What It Means
- Opportunities and Possibilities
- Family Feedback
Opportunities & Possibilities

Describe what we can provide next and give voice to what we think the future may hold. How will you extend or support the student’s interest? How can the family?

Tips:

- Use resources (e.g., TSG Development report)
- Provide specific examples to support your recommendations
- Consider changes to the environment, materials, and activities
- Begin with opening connecting to previous What it Means section
- End with a positive

Family Feedback

Families read the story at home and share their thoughts on the learning moment

Josie Drips Down a Hill
Source: Tom Drummond Examples

Opportunities and Possibilities

Josie seems to have a disposition to wonder and be intrigued with the physical properties of paint that is worth exploring in greater detail. We can bring out the easels tomorrow with thick paint and water that she can mix. Eye droppers may help, too.

We will want to show these drip lines to the other children, for it may spark their interest, too. Then a group of children might have some ideas of what to try next.
Parent Input

- strengthened team approach
- celebrated successes
- updated families
- showed progress
- provided insight into the classroom
- educated on developmentally appropriate practices

Key Takeaways:

lessons learned by SpEd PreK Teachers

Creativity is intelligence having fun.

Albert Einstein
Final Thoughts?

Thank you!
Cindy Collado, cindy.collado@csus.edu
Have a great day!

The next person who says, "You’re a teacher! You just play all day!" will be locked into my classroom and the children will be given cupcakes.