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| **Storytelling and Story Acting** |
| GOALS | * Children’s voices are recognized and stories are honored.
* Children develop skills in language and literacy, including vocabulary and conventions of language.
* Children have opportunities for creativity, communication, and social and emotional development.
* Children understand that storytelling is one way families and communities around the world share and pass on knowledge and see themselves as part of that tradition.
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In Storytelling and Story Acting (ST/SA), children hear, tell, and act out their own stories. Sometimes suggested but unconstrained by the topic of study, children’s stories come to life with the fullness of their identities, experiences, imaginations, and emotions. While many of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* for English Language Arts and Literacy are present in the practice, at the heart of ST/SA is listening—adults listening to children, children listening to their classmates, and children listening to adults—in service of better understanding each other and getting inside of each other’s stories.

*ST/SA promotes language activation and literacy skills.*

Children develop narrative structure and familiarity with conventions; include, play with, 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. In telling stories, adults offer models of narrative and rich vocabulary on which children can build.

*ST/SA fosters imagination and creativity.*

Children tell their own stories, invented or remembered, and tell them in their own way. As they act out stories, they draw on uninhibited physical knowledge and emotion to embody characters and actions. Even familiar stories children choose to retell become their own as they add details, assign feelings, and use gestures and facial expressions in the telling. In a story, children can be any character of any identity, as well as imaginary creatures, setting elements such as trees or clouds, or even inanimate objects such as gates or balloons.

*ST/SA fosters social and emotional development.*

Story acting enlivens demands and opportunities of collaboration. Children work playfully and responsively together to develop characters, cohesive story lines, and resolutions. To do this—and to wait their turns and share ideas, for example—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.

The ST/SA routine plays out in fluid, overlapping stages: adults telling stories, collecting children’s stories, and acting out stories.

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| **Ideas for adult storytelling*** Start with personal stories, which may include stories from your childhood.
* Tell some short stories, 1-minute-stories, as all stories do not need to be long and complex.
* Connect stories to the children, including them as the protagonists.
* Repeat familiar stories. Children love hearing stories they enjoy multiple times; repetition helps children understand stories and practice vocabulary*.*
 | **Guidelines for collecting stories*** Storytelling is always a choice.
* Sit next to the storyteller so they can see their oral language appear on the page (and participate as appropriate to their developing skills).
* Write down stories verbatim, capturing the child’s words exactly.
* Promote language development: *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?*
* Highlight new and effective vocabulary, and provide specific words for children as they request them.
* Maximize opportunities to support literacy skills, such as engaging children in letter-sound recognition and conventions of printed language.
* Read the story back to the storyteller. Ask if there is anything they would like to add or change. Ask for a title.
* Limit each story to one page. Lengthy stories take a long time to write down and can be very difficult to act out.
* Make sure each child has a predictable opportunity to tell and act out stories.
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| **Getting started with story acting*** Act out familiar stories.
* Read a story in full before acting it out.
* Invite children to show how they might act out a particular character or story element.
* Work with small groups of actors to generate ideas for how to act out a particular scenario.
* At each moment that a role is encountered in a story, turn to the next child in the circle: *Can you show how to be the \_\_\_\_\_?* Allow a child to pass.
* Act out full stories or specific scenes more than once with different actors.
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