

## **Storytelling and Story Acting: Impact on Children's Narrative Skills and Teacher Contributions**

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### **Abstract**

In this study, we offered professional development for kindergarten teachers on storytelling and story acting (ST/SA): joint practices whereby individual children tell a story to their teacher or another adult; the adult scribes the story and later reads it aloud to the class; and the storyteller acts out the story with peers. Popularized by Paley (1990), ST/SA has continued to be implemented in the UK (Lee, 2022; MakeBelieve Arts, 2015); the US (Mardell et al., 2013), Canada (Zepeda, 2014), and other locations (Davis, 2020). In addition to being a good fit with child-centered, play-focused, and inclusive education, ST/SA has been shown to benefit children's language, narrative, and social-emotional skills (e.g., Nicolopoulou et al., 2015) and foster collaboration in early childhood classrooms (Cremin et al., 2016).

In our study, seven teachers engaged children in ST/SA for 12-14 weeks, following professional development. Pretests of children's narrative skills, name writing, and letter knowledge were administered. While due to the COVID-19 pandemic, posttest measures could only be collected for one class, this group ( $n = 15$ ) improved significantly and more than a control group ( $n = 14$ ) on story comprehension. Both groups improved significantly on story production (telling a story based on picture series) and name writing. Neither group improved significantly on generating a personal story or on letter knowledge (recognition and naming tasks). In addition to the observed changes, teachers of all seven classes reported benefits of ST/SA for other aspects of child development (e.g., self-concept and social competence).

We also explored teacher-child interactions during ST/SA for the seven teachers receiving professional development. We found that teachers scribed children's words faithfully during storytelling, added vocabulary and recast grammatical errors to enhance clarity while reading stories aloud, made suggestions for acting out roles, clarified ideas and roles during acting, and praised children for their storytelling and acting prowess. The findings contribute to the literature on the impact of ST/SA on children. They also suggest directions for future research, including a closer examination of teacher scaffolding during ST/SA and its relationship to child outcomes.