Great Oracy Exhibition 2025

The Storytelling Experiment: What happened when we put Oracy first?



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Welcome and Context:



The impact of Oracy



Oracy narrows gaps, enabling disadvantaged students to fulfill their potential

+6 months

Additional progress that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds can make through oral language interventions.



Oracy promotes social equity, leading to a fairer society where everyone, regardless of background, finds their voice for success in school and in life



Our Rationale:

To what extent does a six-week oral storytelling intervention improve written narrative outcomes among Year 3 students in a high – deprivation setting?





Storytelling: The intervention

| Week 1 – Basic Storytelling Connectors (Replacing "and then") Focus: Replacing repetitive sequencing with basic storytelling structure. | One day Suddenly After that In the end Without warning Out of nowhere Just at that moment To everyone's surprise Before long Not long after Meanwhile A little while later | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Week 2 – Suspense & Surprise (Building engagement early) Focus: Creating excitement and unexpected turns in the story | | | |
| Week 3 – Time & Sequence Variety (Broadening story flow) Focus: Helping children structure events more smoothly. | | | |
| Week 4 – Cause & Effect Connections (Building logical storytelling) Focus: Making sure actions have consequences in their stories. | Because of this As a result That's why Luckily / Unluckily | | |
| Week 5 – Adding Drama & Emotions (Deepening character reactions) Focus: Encouraging characters' emotions and reactions to situations | Just when they thought it was over To their horror With a heavy heart Much to their delight | | |
| Week 6 – Refining with Foreshadowing & Reflection (Advanced techniques) Focus: Encouraging foreshadowing, reflection, and more sophisticated storytelling. | If only they had known Little did they realise Against all odds From that day on | | |









Storytelling: The intervention

Tools we used:











Interactive story dice

- Shakers
- Sentence stems
- Boxing Clever Framework

www.davebirss.com/storydice







www.davebirss.com/storydice

Sentence Starters:

- Just at that moment,
- A little while later,
- With a heavy heart,



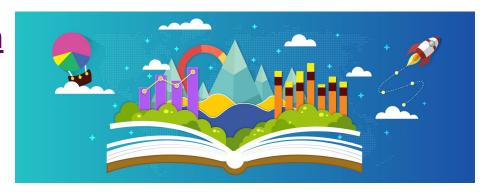
Start a story
Build a story





Storytelling: The intervention

Our Data Collection:



Quantitative: No More Marking, teacher assessments

Qualitative: Filmed case studies, student voice



Storytelling: Key Findings

- Focus group showed
 accelerated NMM position
 gain: +6 places in ranking
- Storytelling score increase: +22 points

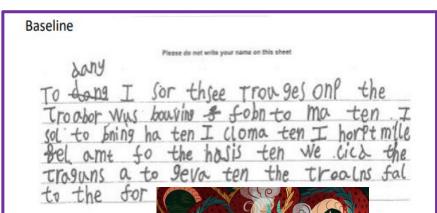
| Criteria | Exceeds Expectations (5 points) | Secure (4 points) | Meets Expectations (3 points) | Working Towards Expectations (2 points) | Below Expectations (1 point) |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Story Structure | Includes all essential story elements: clear beginning, middle, and end; conflict resolution; logical sequence. Example: "Once upon a time, in a bright village, a dragon stole the princess. The knight set off on an adventure to rescue her and, ofter many challenges, saved her." | Includes most story elements, with minor gaps in structure or flow. Example: "A boy went to the forest. He found a treasure, but then it was dark and scary, and the story ends there." | Includes most story elements but may have some unclear sequences or resolutions. Example: "In a small town, a girl found a magic stone. She used it to fly but lost it in a storm." | Few elements are present; the sequence is confusing and lacks coherence. Example: "The girl walked. Then there was a tree. It was big. The girl got lost." | No attempt to use a story structure. |
| Character Development | Characters are well-developed with distinct traits and motivations; demonstrate growth throughout the story. Example: "Liam was a shy boy who learned to be brave when he faced the dragon. By the end, he stood tall, ready to protect his friends." | Characters have clear traits and motivations, but some may not show significant growth. Example: "Mia was kind and always helped her friends, especially when they needed support during the big game." | Some character traits are present but may be underdeveloped or inconsistent. Example: "The pirate was fierce and loved treasure. He was always looking for new gold." | Little to no character development; characters are vague and indistinguishable. Example: "There was a cat. It ran." | No character development present. |
| Setting Descriptions | Vivid and immersive settings with strong adjectives and sensory details that enhance the story. Example: "The enchanted forest was filled with towering trees, their leaves shimmering in the golden sunlight, while a gentle breeze carried the scent of blooming flowers." | Descriptions provide a general sense of the setting with some strong adjectives, but may lack sensory details. Example: "The dark forest was filled with tall trees, and the air was chilly. It felt like something was watching." | Limited descriptions; settings are mentioned but lack detail or engagement. Example: "The old house creaked at night. There were dusty rooms with lots of furniture." | Very minimal use of descriptive language; settings are unclear. Example: "It was a place. Things happened." | No setting description present. |
| Language Choices | Uses a rich vocabulary, including figurative language, to enhance the story and create vivid imagery. Example: "The sun dipped below the horizon like a giant orange balloon, costing a warm glow across the land." | Adequate vocabulary is used with some variety; some figurative language is present. Example: "The dog barked loudly, and it was very big, making everyone turn to look." | Limited vocabulary; repetitive language detracts from the story. Example: "The girl was sad. She cried and cried because she lost her toy." | Very little vocabulary; writing lacks interest and clarity. Example: "The thing was bad. It was not good." | No language choice considered. |
| Overall Coherence | The story flows well with clear connections between ideas; engages the reader from start to finish. Example: "First, the hero found a map. Next, he followed it to a cave. Inside, he discovered a treasure, and at the end, he shared it with his friends." | Mostly coherent, with some connections that keep the reader engaged, though there may be abrupt transitions. Example: "The boy was hoppy. He played outside. Later, he went home for dinner." | Some coherence, but several jumps in ideas make it less engaging. Example: "The girl ran to the park. She saw a cat. Then, she got ice cream." | Lacks coherence; difficult for the reader to follow the story. Example: "There was a park. Then a car. The car went fast." | The story is disjointed or unclear. |

The Storytelling Experiment: What happened when we put Oracy first? Storytelling: Key Findings

- PP pupils gained 3.8 NMM positions vs 0.6 for non-PP
- SEND pupils showed 7.8% storytelling growth Vs non-SEND 6.3%
- Richer character development and improved cohesion
- Confidence and Engagement increased storytelling length and complexity
- Improved body language and willingness to take creative risks



Storytelling: Examples





Final

The evil dragon is a Those three eVil dragons are Working in Ningbo. They live in a dark cave. These three evil dragons are very happy one day and want to celbrate. They wert to a large Vilage Andalised house An orange dragon is Killing people everywhere A dryagon, with blus eyelfows is looking for prey They are not so lucky sometimes, because today when the to look for Prey, they sound a Knight who said you can't kill anymore The knight mounted his sword and stabled at the dregon the three evil bragons of the dragon quickly distovered that the Knight's great health care hed the wings. The Knight took up his shield and blocked the pawn Even if he forced Bing Rong, to bein in a hunrry, he summoned two junior brothers, one of whom was ax fire type and a younger brother such who was an earth type, and they used their ultimate move together But those two younger protthers were too weakk, and the eldest brother had alrady become a lens of strength, and in the end, they had already been killed by that Kill Knight.

Storytelling: Examples

Baseline:

They was 3 dragrans one of them shoot fird owt of his mough and the shidorl soud him. The 3 dragrans was scery but he tide was not scery and finly he cild the 3 dragrans but it was not hard and finly he cross the dagras brig and soud his friend and family.



Final:

One day they was a pawerful knight he lived in a salim beautiful castle then the balcany and sees his friends house burning down down down. A wickly he gets in his pretty fancy cot and goes to his friends house. Suddenly, a whree headed scely dragan is breathing the and was buring the house. If there a kind mum heles. If there he came book to his castle the trad he riveleds happy every after.



Storytelling: Implications

What worked:

- Structured oral rehearsal builds narrative fluency
- Play based tools foster engagement and creativity
- Prioritising story-telling through an element of risk-taking and trust
- On-going impact



The Storytelling Experiment: What happened when we put Oracy first? Storytelling: Vision

- Vertical scaling across all year groups
- A school wide storytelling curriculum

Year 3 – Establish story structures

Year 4 – Tangled tales

Year 5 – Dual Perspective

Year 6 - Flashbacks





beroes and villains
making the story flow
story shaker
hat we can make up our own stories
writing
oracy activities

Word cloud generated from pupil questionnaires, with word size reflecting frequency of use in response. This breakdown shows that children valued interactive tools like the Story Shaker, creative writing and structured techniques such as Boxing Clever. They also valued performance and the freedom to create.

boxing clever

