



Fact Sheet

Interactive Storytelling for Deafblind Children

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Storytelling is a vital component of the human experience, but how can we do storytelling with people who have sensory losses and additional disabilities? Should we bother? Yes! Jean Ware states that in choosing activities for people with

profound and multiple disabilities the aim should be in enabling the child to participate in those experiences which are uniquely human. Storytelling is one of these experiences. Storytelling can be legends, myths, folktales, fairy stories, poems, novels, films, or play. When using any of these, the principle is the same: everyone everywhere enjoys stories.

Keith Parks is an advisory teacher for Sense (the National Deafblind and Rubella Association of the United Kingdom) in Greenwich and Lewisham (South London). Part of his work is to support children/youth from birth through 19 years of age and have a wide range of sensory loss, including deafblindness, and may have cognitive or physical disabilities. He began to adapt stories and problems for interactive storytelling for two reasons:

1. Classroom teachers were asking for activities that could be used with their whole group
2. Wondering if it was possible, at a time where individual education programming is based upon meeting the different needs of each person, to develop group activities based upon what we all have in common: being human.

Although children/youth who are deafblind and have cognitive disabilities may not be able to understand the actual words of the story, they can still participate and be

involved. Interactive storytelling is one way to involve them in group activities. One way to make interactive storytelling give a powerful impact is to use stamping and clapping or musical instruments to accentuate the vibro-acoustic element of the activity. The basis of interactive storytelling is to emphasize meaning by generating an emotional response to the story.

Keith Parks has adapted some common children's stories (Little Red Riding Hood, Three Little Pigs, etc.) to be used for interactive storytelling which welcomes the inclusion of children who are deafblind and have cognitive disabilities into classroom group activities. For these children/youth rhythm, repetitive patterns, and percussive methods are used to emphasize the meaning and feelings of each story. Participants who want to join in interactive storytelling can be children/youth, teachers, other staff members, parents, etc.

Here is an example of how to use the story Little Red Riding Hood for interactive storytelling.

Granny to Go

Storyline: Little Red Riding Hood has gone to see her Granny, but the Wolf has gotten there first.



Children and staff sit in a circle



Wolf is played by one of the children and prowls around inside of the circle



Wolf pretends to be Little Red Riding Hood



Rest of the group are Grannies



Wolf and Grannies all have dialogue





Dialogue is call-and-responses and are chanted as the rhythm is stamped on the floor or pounded on drums

Call

“I knock on the door.”

Response

(knock four times)

“She says ‘Who’s there?’”

“Who’s there, who’s there?”

“Red Riding Hood.”

“Red Riding Hood.”

“And I go IN.”



When the Wolf starts speaking the last line he/she points to a victim, approaches him/her, and gets him/her



All parts can be divided in to call-and-response parts so each child has a turn



Each line spoken has equal duration of four beats



The Granny to Go game was designed for Joe a four-year-old who is deafblind, though he has some useful vision. Joe does not verbally participate in the call-and-response. The verbal comprehension is not

important for him but the rhythm of communication with the context of the story is. Joe learns these important communication skills: awareness of others, anticipating his turn, developing an awareness of rhythm, and developing an anticipation of the end of each section of the story. Joe does take his turn being the Wolf and is supported when moving around the circle.



Keith Park’s idea of interactive storytelling not only is for school use but also can be done at home with the child/youth’s brothers/sisters. The family can sit down and take turns being the Wolf. What a great way to get your whole family involved with his/her learning!

If you would like to see more examples by Keith Park’s or to read the entire article on interactive storytelling you can go to www.tr.wou.edu/tr/dbp/pdf/may01.pdf. If you are not able to download the .pdf file, please call or e-mail Patty Dempsky at 800-236-4752 ext. 219, wideafblindedu@yahoo.com and have her e-mail or mail you a copy of Deaf-Blind Perspectives.



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