

## **STORYTIME GUIDELINES**

*Trainer Notes: Attached are the Storytime Conductor Volunteer contract (very important as it outlines the training and volunteer expectations), the notes that we cover in the first training session and a copy of the Every Child Ready to Read presentation we use at the second session.*

*At the first session, we demonstrate book reading, flannelboard stories and songs/fingerplays. At the second session, each volunteer presents a story and a flannel or fingerplay. (We spend a good portion of time with the volunteers the first session helping them select materials to present from our storytime collection.)*

*After the first two sessions, we move into a regular storytime that is advertised to the public. A librarian usually conducts the first storytime and the rest of the storytimes (usually 3) are lead by teams of volunteers. The volunteers are asked to have all their paperwork cleared by the end of the training storytimes so that they can begin to volunteer at the library they choose.*

Welcome to storytime training.

### Introductions

We'll use this outline as our guide. I will demonstrate things as we go along, and we will also do finger rhymes and songs together.

### Why do we have preschool storytime?

#### Storytime:

- Helps children develop a lifetime love of books and reading
- Provides early language and literacy skills
- Extends reading experience with music and finger rhymes
- Helps build memory with repetition
- Introduces children to being part of a group and helps with school readiness
- Provides phonological awareness and listening skills
- Models reading aloud for parents
- Introduces children and parents to high quality books and library materials

### Storytime vs. storytelling

- Storytelling involves a performance with memorized stories in which a book is not used.
- Storytelling is also part of oral tradition.
- Storytime involves books that are read and is not a performance.

### Different types of storytimes:

- Lapsit: Babies up to about age 2
- Tiny tots: ages 2-3 (short attention span)
- Preschool: ages 3-5 (starting to understand story structure)

- Mother Goose on the Loose: ages 3 months to 5 years
- Every Child Ready to Read: an early literacy skill introduced at each storytime  
Family Storytime: all ages including adults

### Key elements of storytime:

Storytime lasts anywhere from 20-30 minutes. A preschool storytime for ages 3-5 usually lasts 30 minutes and a storytime for ages 2-3 lasts about 20-25 minutes.

In all of our storytimes the parents remain with the children, and storytime is seen as an opportunity for the parents to participate and interact with their children. Parents are the child's first and best teacher. Our job is to model storytime for them.

Registration is often required for storytime. This keeps the group from getting too big and doesn't overcrowd the room.

Nametags are a good way of learning the children's names over the weeks.

It is often beneficial to use a story time theme. If nothing else it provides focus for the storyteller. Various themes might be: Cats, dogs, or other animal related themes, such as the zoo; themes on "things that go", such as cars, planes, and trains; holiday or seasonal related themes, such as autumn harvest, or snow. Occasionally a theme of "old favorites" is useful when you don't want to incorporate a specific theme. There are great books you can use to help you with planning themes, which I will point out later to you.

### Selection of materials for storytime:

Select stories with large, clear, and simple illustrations that can be seen from a distance.

Illustrations that are very small or too intricate will not work well in storytime. Large board books or stories with short text work the best. Often one word or sentence per page in a book is enough for toddlers and slightly longer text for preschoolers. If the story is too long it may be difficult to hold the short attention span of toddlers and pre-schoolers.

In any story time you may be changing what you read and in what order you read it, based on the needs of the children that day or other factors that might arise. So although you may start out with some sort of structure, flexibility is necessary from time to time. That is why it is a good idea to have a few extra books and rhymes on hand.

The single most important factor in the selection of materials is to pick stories that you like. Your enthusiasm for the story will naturally show itself as you read.

### Types of stories:

- Concept books, such as ABC, counting, shapes, colors etc.
- Interactive type stories in which the children participate by repeating words or phrases (e.g. Very hungry caterpillar, or the Little Red Hen) It is good to use at least one interactive story per storytime.
- Books with very simple plots.
- Acting out stories using movement (e.g. Going on a Bear Hunt )
- Books with rhymes and lots of repetition
- Board books; pop up books
- Very large size picture books

### Songs, rhymes and finger plays

Songs in storytime are fun and build a foundation for appreciating the arts. Singing and listening to music can help boost attention and memory, as children learn listening skills from following directions in songs, e.g. put your finger in the air, tap your head etc.

Songs encourage imagination through pretending, e.g. ("I'm a little teapot") Repetition of sounds in songs helps to broaden vocabulary and builds memory.

Finger plays and rhymes can provide opportunity for active participation. They can aid in the development of coordination and dexterity. You can also use rhymes with puppets. Clapping rhymes are a fun way to engage the children.

### Flannel stories

Excellent for all ages but especially ages 2 and 3 when children rely heavily on visual skills and are less likely to sit still and just listen (demonstrate a flannel story).

### Using stories in different ways

There are different ways you can use a story without telling it word for word. You can also take a wordless picture book and invent your own story.

### Storytime technique:

Introduce yourself.

Ask the parents to remain close to their children throughout storytime. Ask that they envision a semi circle around the flannel board and yourself. If the child

comes within that semi circle, ask the parents to physically come up and get the child.

Begin storytime with the same rhyme or song each week. Children do well with structure and repetition, and this ritual will help them recognize that storytime is about to begin.

Have your selections in the order in which you wish to present them. Alternate picture books with puppets, songs, finger rhymes and flannel boards. This provides variety and a good way to keep the children involved. Read slowly and take your time. Share the longest story first, while their attention span is fresh. Use plenty of eye contact.

Include at least one fingerplay or rhyme between each story.

About half way through the story time, it is helpful to get the children to stand up and do some sort of game or movement, such as “I’m a little teapot”, or “Head and Shoulders”, or some longer movement such as marching to the drum, looby loo, hokey pokey, etc.

Involve the children in participation. For example, if there is a repeated chant or line in the story, ask them to help you repeat it each time.

Read with expression, and change your voice to fit the characters in the story. Don’t be afraid to act silly! You can also use puppets.

Point to characters or objects in the pictures as you read.

Talk to the children as you go along. You might ask, “What do you think will happen next?” or “What did you like best about that story?” If a child interrupts your storytime, respond positively to it but then draw attention back to the book. (e.g. “let’s see what happens next”).

If a child is unhappy, crying, or upset for whatever reason, ask the parent to take the child briefly out of the room, and encourage them to return to storytime once the child has settled down.

If the children seem restless or disinterested, you can shorten a story or simply stop and move on to the next fingerplay or song. It is not unusual to end the story time five minutes early if it seems as though the children have had enough. Even if the story time is going well, it is better to end leaving the children eager for more than to attempt one more story or going over the allotted time.

Finish storytime with the same closing rhyme or song. This will signal that storytime is ending.

You may give out a coloring page or a hand stamp after storytime is over.

Over time, you may want to create your own list of favorite stories.

Above all, always be prepared!! Make sure you familiarize yourself with your storytime selections for the day. Read the stories privately to yourself, or practice them with a child or grandchild at home before storytime.

Time for questions or comments.

### Conclusion

Don't be discouraged or blame yourself if a storytime does not go well. Sometimes things happen that are beyond your control. Give yourself time to learn the techniques that work best for you. When you head a storytime, you are giving children a valuable gift. You are helping them develop a love of books and a lifetime of reading, and creating a literacy experience beneficial to their development.

Sharing books with children helps them learn listening and speaking skills. Books and reading are fun! You are truly making a difference in children's lives!

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