

Story Dictation and Dramatization
Winnetka Public School Nursery / Junior Kindergarten
Winnetka, Illinois

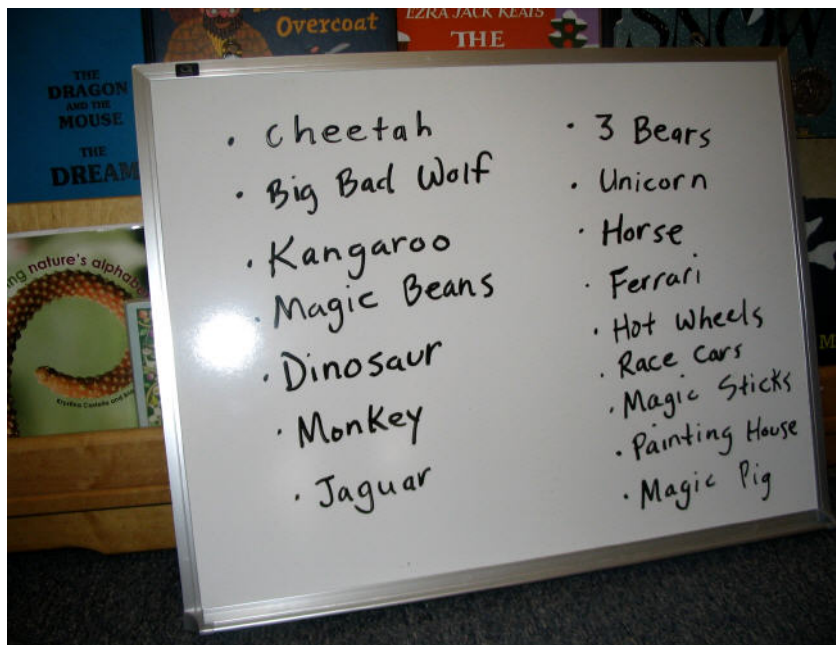
Provocation:

The dramatization of child-dictated stories was a common area of interest for every child in this three-hour class. This process was so popular that there were constant waiting lists for both the writing and performing of stories. The teachers reflected on how to better manage time for individual involvement and also how to utilize the children's shared enthusiasm in order to expand upon and extend their interests in storytelling and drama. We proposed that the children try writing collaboratively. It was no surprise that the children were eager to take this next step.

Process:

- Voting

During a group-time meeting, teachers and children discussed how to go about selecting topics. We arrived at the idea of working in three small groups of five to six children. The topics and groups would be selected by voting. Several topics were proposed, but the three that received the highest number of votes were, *The Three Bears*, *The Magic Pigs*, and *The Jaguars*.



- Small Group Meetings/Collaborative Dictation

Each group met separately in the Studio. Discussions revolved around picking characters and character names, deciding what characters would do, and voting on major plot outlines.

Sean – The elephant goes around smashing the whole city... No! The whole world! Everyone is running around and he keeps smashing all the buildings and the people.

Teacher – Can you tell me why he is smashing everything?

Sean – Because he is so big.

Clara – The parrot flies all the way to the top of the Hancock Building because she hears the elephant smashing and thinks it's a monster, so she's hiding up at the top of the building.

Carly – The cheetah hears the elephant too and tries to run because she thinks that the elephant is chasing her. She runs and runs and ends up back in the forest again.

Hope – My jaguar growls at the elephant and then makes friends with the cheetah and they play together.

John Peter – And when they show up at their homes, all of the homes broke because of the snowstorm, so they go back to the city again to build new homes!

Sean – No, the homes are broken because the elephant smashed them because he smashed the whole world.

Teacher – Does everyone like the idea that the homes are smashed when they get back? (yes) So did the snow break the homes, or the elephant?

John Peter – Both! Well, all of the animals have to build a hotel that can't get smashed so they'll be safe from the elephant.

Sean – But you're already smashed because I smashed the whole world!

Carly – But if we're smashed, then we can't do anything and the story would be over!

Michael – I don't want to be smashed!

Hope – Neither do I!

Clara – Hey, I have an idea. I think we need a set and costumes. I saw sets in Peter Pan and they were pretend things like grass that were really cardboard.

JP – Well how could we make all the buildings?

Michael – Blocks!

Sean – Well, we couldn't make a city with the blocks because we can't build that tall!

Teacher – Well, we'd have to use our imaginations. What are some materials we might use for our set or our costumes?

Carly – Markers for coloring.

JP – What do jaguars look like?

Carly – They have spots. I know the cheetah would be yellow with black spots and black spots like tears under its eyes.

Clara – What color is a parrot?

JP – They can be colorful.

Clara – I'm gonna be pink, orange, purple, blue, and green.

Upon concluding our stories, teachers read the dictations back to their groups and asked if there was anything the children would like to add. It was during one of these discussions that a very significant idea emerged



Hope – *Jaguars' spots aren't really circles.*

- Creating Backgrounds

Some children were interested in drawing or painting large backgrounds. The teachers suggested using the overhead projector so that the background could be easily changed. The children first tested their background scenery on paper, and then drew directly onto the transparency sheets.



Carly – *I'm making the animals in the forest.*

- Working on Invitations

When asked whom they would be performing for, the children decided that they wanted to put on the show for their families. We discussed the idea of making invitations for our event, asking what sorts of things we would want to include.

Clara said we would need stamps. Hope thought we could make signs to save seats for our guests. Annie suggested we say, “You are invited to the nursery school to see the show.” She then added that we should make a list of the people we want to invite. Everyone chimed in, proposing we invite *big brothers, little sisters, big sisters, little brothers, moms, and dads*. Sean asked if we could bring pets. After an extensive discussion about allergies, we decided pets should stay home.



Moms, Dads, Big Brothers, Little Sisters, Big Sisters, and Little Brothers: You are invited to Winnetka Public School Nursery to see: “The Three Bears,” “The Magic Pig,” and “The Jaguar Story”. Pets are not invited.

Culminating Event:

After three months of preparation, it was finally time to put on a show!



“By using stories and those fantastic methods that produce them, we help children to enter reality through the window instead of through the door. It is more fun. Therefore, it is more useful.”— Gianni Rodari