Section 1

Story Talk 2

An oral storytelling kit.

STORY TALK 2 helps young learners tell clear, concise and interesting stories!

The original version of STORY TALK was first released by speech pathologists Elizabeth Love and Sue Reilly (*Love and Reilly*) in 2006. It was a popular resource used in general classroom programming by teachers and also by speech pathologists for language intervention. The primary goal of STORY TALK was to assist children in developing their **oral storytelling skills (skills of oral narrative production).** It did this by providing systematic and structured steps that addressed each element of the storytelling process.

STORY TALK 2 is the same, only better. Its updates include a new and wonderful array of story-stimulating images, recent links to research and more user-friendly content.

STORY TALK 2 equips young learners with the **oral storytelling skills** that are **the foundation to successful written storytelling and self expression.**

STORY TALK 2 provides targeted guidance in how a story is created and provides ample structured oral practice. This is particularly important for students who have had limited opportunities to develop their storytelling through regular supported verbal interactions, through limited experience or in the presence of impaired language or cognition.

Some Features of good storytelling

- A clear plot that follows a predictable progression
- Early identification of characters and setting
- Rich vocabulary that creates vivid images
- Use of dialogue and emphasis to create dramatic appeal
- Engagement with the listener's interests, emotions and imagination

Contents of this Kit

Physical Resources

Magnetic Frames & Shapes

The 13 **magnetic frames and shapes** represent essential elements in a story. Stick them to a magnetic white-board and use them to model or identify the structure of a story as it is told or read. The frames can also be used in combination with the images provided in this kit, with free hand drawings or with objects.
Initially, the magnets are used incidentally alongside a teacher's storytelling - and then they are used more explicitly, as each component of a story is explored.

Symbols Used

Character (oval frame)	Additional Characters (small circles)
Setting (rectangular frame)	Action Events (triangles)
Problem (zigzaggy shape)	Character Feelings (heart)
Ending (stop sign/octagon shape)	Character thoughts (thought bubble)

Within the resources of Section 3, there are also large templates for each of these shapes that may be used to create larger equivalents from red cardboard. These are sometimes more useful when teaching at the front of a classroom. (See Section 3, pages 81-87).

Story Star

This special soft toy star is given to the storyteller to hold whilst the audience listens to their story. It signals the special nature and importance of storytelling time to both the speaker and the listeners. When a group story is being created, the Story Star can be passed from one speaker to the next. It will indicate that a particular student has "the floor".

Character - Bendy

Bendy serves as a key character in the modelled storytelling sessions. Bendy is deliberately of no particular age, gender or ethnicity. After students become familiar with Bendy (through the modelled stories) teachers can then use Bendy to support children as they create their own stories.
Bendy can be combined with a choice of photograph for the story setting and perhaps also a prompt card for the problem in the story. In this way, countless stories can be created. The heart and thought bubble shapes can be used to remind the students to include Bendy's feelings and thoughts as a story evolves.

Digital Resources

Section 1: Introduction and Overview (this section): Theory of storytelling, links to research and the Australian curriculum.

Section 2: Activities and Instructions

The activity suggestions in Part 2 of this manual focus on ways to:

- *enrich vocabulary and descriptive language*
- *include key elements of story structure and cohesion*
- *stimulate imagination in storytelling*
- *explore the change in the feelings and thinking of the character /characters throughout the story*
- *plan and tell stories*

Section 3: Resources

The resources in Section 3 are referenced during the tasks and activities in Section 2.
You will find almost 100 pages of resources including:

- *Blackline masters*
- *Picture cards to print and cut up*
- *Images to display on a digital device*
- *Stories to read to students*
- *Reference cards*
- *Symbol templates*

About Storytelling

The development of storytelling

As a young child's language develops, an exciting stage of expressive language develops - storytelling. In fact, storytelling is the first developmental language form that requires a child to give an extended monologue (as opposed to being a *listener* or playing a *part* in a two-way verbal exchange).

Storytelling is promoted by *supportive verbal interactions* between the child (who is telling the story) and another person. *Supportive verbal interactions* are those in which the other (whether they be a caregiver, teacher or peer) listen, allow the speaker time to tell their story and, at times, pose guiding questions that support the clarity, cohesion and flow of the speaker's story. Storytelling is also promoted by *listening to lots of stories* by others (whether these be retellings of events or stories read from books). The structure, the flow and what needs to be included in a story gradually begins to feel "natural" for the child.

A child's ability to 'tell a story' reflects their growing life experiences but also their level of language and cognitive development. Children learn to use their language and thinking to monitor, recall and reflect on their experiences. They also begin to reason and predict future events.

The emergence of "Story Grammar"

Stein and Glenn (1979) originally described the levels of **"Story Grammar"** and linked it to stoytelling (narrative) development in preschool through to late primary school level. More recent studies support this original research. Research by Khan et al. (2016) found that as children grow, their stories increasingly include essential components such as initiating events, goals, attempts, and outcomes, aligning with the story grammar model.
The development of stories usually follows the progression below:

1. **Isolated description** - unrelated words and statements.
2. **Descriptive sequence** – statements relate to a character, object or event but there is no plot or time sequence.
3. **Action sequence** – a series of actions across time are described but these may not be causally related or show a relationship between characters.
4. **Reactive sequence** – actions or events are causally related but there is no evidence of a central plan or the character's attempts to achieve a goal.
5. **Abbreviated episode** – the story describes goals and intentions of characters but their planning or thinking (cognitive verbs) must be inferred. There are some elements of story grammar.
6. **Complete episode or story** – goals and intentions of characters are clear, and there is evidence of planning. The story follows the typical structure - initiating event, internal response, attempts, consequences, resolution and conclusion or ending.

But what IS the Story Grammar model?

- Story Grammar is the structure often used when organizing narratives. The components within this structure are outlined in the national and state curriculums. (see Links to Curriculum within this document).

- Most adults are familiar with this structure even if they are not conscious of its use. It is what makes a story flow in an expected manner, incorporating the parts it needs to include. For example, a simple story often revolves around a central character and a particular setting. It usually includes an initiating event or problem to which the character responds (internal response) and engages in a series of events over time, to attempt to solve the problem (resolution).

- Certain linguistic forms are likely to be featured in stories. Stories are often told in the past tense. Connectors of time show the sequence of events (and then, soon, finally), and other connectors reflect causality showing the relationships between ideas and actions (so, since, but, because). Cognitive verbs (think, decide, forget) provide insight into the motivation behind a character's behaviour. Linguistic verbs provide details of how things were said and the emotion behind them (yell, exclaim, whisper). In addition, good stories flow in such a way that the listener can follow who the characters are and how the plot unfolds. This is often referred to as cohesion and is marked by the use of referents such as personal pronouns (he, they, her, me).

The teacher as the storyteller

The teacher should join in oral storytelling sessions with enthusiasm and passion. Students benefit enormously from observing an adult tell a story.

We encourage the adult to use gesture, changes in intonation, volume and tempo, to highlight the different characters and events in the story, making the sessions highly enjoyable and memorable.

Stories shared by the teacher might be from a book or recounts of something that happened in their lives.

Why are oral stories important?

- Oral storytelling can help children relive and reflect on experiences, learn about the wider world, anticipate events and reactions and imagine the roles that others may play in events.

- Stories play an important social and cultural role, enabling us to reflect on ideas and values, interpret events and emotions, and formulate alternative solutions or responses to problems - all without having to leave our home or school classroom.

- Regular storytelling experience increases a child's vocabulary. Research shows a strong relationship between oral language development and subsequent literacy development (both reading and writing).

- Oral storytelling is an essential pre-cursor to written storytelling. Too often children are expected to *write a story* without guidance and without adequate opportunity to tell their own stories orally.

- Oral storytelling prepares children for the more formal uses of language needed for understanding classroom instruction, learning to read and comprehending what is read. It therefore forms a bridge from conversation to literate language development.

- Children's development of personal stories (personal narratives) are linked closely not only to academic success, but also to social-emotional development, and self-regulation.

- Oral storytelling is in some ways reflects a performance. Students must be mindful of presentation but also have a sense of audience - the background information needed to allow the listener to follow and understand.

No two stories are the same

Storytelling is the probably the oldest form of education. People from all around the world tell stories to pass down beliefs, traditions and as a record of history. It is important to note, however, that different cultural groups differ not only in the degree to which children are expected to *tell* stories but also in the actual style, internal organisation and focus of how a story flows. (*For a more detailed discussion see Westby (1994).)* **Teachers are reminded to understand, to acknowledge and to value these differences in storytelling.**

Current Focus in Schools - Storytelling

The following types of **Topic Centred Stories** are those which are the focus of the current education system in Australia. Skill in the production and understanding of this type of story has been shown to be closely related to academic success.

Topic Centred stories may be:

Personal stories: Many stories grow from our life experiences – these narratives are repeated, shaped and refined with each retelling. For example, a family story about the time Mum lost her his car keys at the beach may change over time from the first time the story is shared.

Retellings: Children may retell a personal event, a familiar bedtime story or a story read in class. Story retellings are likely to vary greatly in length, complexity and use of language from the stories that child creates from their own imagination.

Traditional Stories: These are stories such as folk tales, fairy stories, myths and legends that children have heard many times. For example, *The Three Little Pigs.* Children become familiar with the characters and the plot and are often confident to relate the next episode or join in with the dialogue.

Imaginative Stories: In these stories children must rely on their own imagination and 'sense of story' to create an original narrative. They must select and describe the character(s) and setting and organize the sequence and theme of the unfolding plot independently. Popular imaginative stories include tall tales, trickster, hero and scary stories.

Links to the Australian Curriculum

Story Talk 2 supports teachers in developing oral storytelling skills that are essential to both language and literacy success. The resource aligns strongly with the goals and content of the Australian Curriculum: English, particularly in the early years of schooling.

This kit provides rich opportunities for children to practise oral narrative skills in ways that directly support the following areas:

Language Strand

- Children explore how stories are structured by identifying characters, settings, and major events.
- They learn to use time and causal connectives (e.g. “then,” “so,” “because”) to organise and link ideas logically.
- Links to outcomes such as: ACELA1463 – Understand how texts are made cohesive through linking devices.

Literature Strand

- Through listening to and creating their own stories, children build awareness of how narratives reflect personal experiences, emotions, and cultural traditions.
- They experiment with storytelling techniques such as character voice, plot twists, and imaginative ideas.
- Links to outcomes such as: ACELT1607 – Create events and characters using different media that develop key story elements.

Literacy Strand

- Storytelling tasks help students express their thoughts clearly, organise ideas in sequence, and consider the needs of a listener or reader.
- These experiences build the foundation for confident spoken and written communication.
- Links to outcomes such as: ACELY1661 – Create short texts to explore, record and report ideas and events using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge and ACELY1682 – Plan, draft and publish imaginative texts, demonstrating increasing control over text structures and language features.

General Capabilities

- Supports development in Literacy and Critical and Creative Thinking, helping students make meaning, generate ideas, and reflect on character emotions and motivations.

Ref: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (n.d.). Australian Curriculum: English Foundation to Year 6. Retrieved from https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/english/f-6

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