

## STORYTELLING GUIDE: RESOURCE 13

# Small Steps for Educators: Using Storytelling in Schools

**Stories are powerful ways to build community in the classroom, encourage genuine connection, and help students get to know each other beyond what they are like in class.**

In English/Language Arts classes, it may make sense to have an entire unit on storytelling; in other classes, stories may work better as a routine or warm-up activity (especially when there is limited time). These ideas are intended to illustrate a few ways to imagine storytelling playing a greater role in everyday classroom activity and overall school culture.

### In Class...

- **Warm-ups.** Many storytelling activities can make quick 5–10 minute warm-ups, especially if you make the prompts into something that relates to the upcoming lesson.
- **Get-to-know-you routine.** Make a routine out of having 1–2 volunteers share their personal stories over the course of the entire term—these can be prepared ahead of time and can be delivered in person or as an audio recording.
- **Alternative to icebreakers.** In place of an icebreaker, try a simple storytelling exercise, like telling the story of an object in the room, or choosing topics out of a hat, or using an Apples to Apples game set for story topics.
- **Student leadership opportunity.** For any of the above, students can lead the activity, especially if it is a regular routine. Have a student choose the topic or select a warm-up from a list of possible story activities.
- **Connection to creative writing unit** (or other existing genre study related to stories). Oral storytelling is a nice accompaniment to teaching writing, especially with fictional stories. Have students tell personal stories inspired by something in a piece of literature.
- **Self-contained unit in a public speaking or leadership class.** When combined with final public speaking assignments like podcasts, keynotes, storytelling speeches, or monologues, you can build students' public speaking skills over time.

### In School...

- **Student story “keynotes” in assemblies and school functions.** Stories are a great way for students to be lead presenters in school-wide events, telling their unique experience and sharing something important about themselves.

- **Talent show or school exhibition.** Stories can be incredibly entertaining, especially when there's humor! Encourage more students to treat stories as an acceptable art form in a talent show or school event.
- **Student-led storytelling club.** Stories are an intuitive way to communicate and students can use stories as a way to express their identities, struggles, and cultural background.

### In High-Stakes Situations...

- **Job interview simulations and practice.** By creating a job interview simulation, students can practice the question “tell me about yourself” by telling their personal stories of strengths and educational/professional experience.
- **Student-led conferences with families.** In conferences, students can be leaders by starting meetings with a story of a specific moment and connecting it to broader themes, takeaways, and questions (these can also be audio recorded and played at the meeting). These examples can then be used to help the student facilitate the meeting.
- **Practice for Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.** For special education students and parents, it can be helpful to practice and rehearse how to tell self-advocacy stories about their experiences, what is working, and what should be changed.
- **Preparation for drafting personal statements for colleges.** When students are stuck with their personal statements, try telling stories out loud to a partner about college application prompts and then audio record them as inspiration for written drafts.

