

Let Me Tell You a Story...

Carrie Melsom



Jason you've had trouble settling for nap recently so we gave you prep work to help you with the

transition. Today I saw you work so hard to get your mat ready. You gathered your sheet, blanket and cuddle bunny in both arms and worked to navigate between the mats on the floor. You almost lost your balance but recovered and carried on without dropping anything. You looked so focused and purposeful as you made your way to your spot—smiling broadly when you made it. You took a bit of a breather before getting up for step two; putting the sheet on. This is where your persistence and problem solving abilities were really tested...

Over the past decade there has been a growing interest in the use of learning stories as a way to record and share the learning dispositions and achievements of young children. The interest in this form of narrative assessment and documentation was sparked by Margaret Carr (2001) and has been picked up and bounced around the globe at conferences and on the web. Today you can find websites such as Tom Drummond's on writing learning stories at <http://earlylearningstories.info> and insight into how learning stories are used in New

Zealand's early childhood curriculum at www.educate.ece.govt.nz.

Margie Carter who was in Halifax in June 2011 to present at the provincial conference has an article on the power of learning stories to strengthen teaching practices available on her Harvest Resources website, ecetrainers.com

At the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education

we began to explore the potential of learning stories with our students in 2009

"The writing conventions for learning stories call forth the teacher's curiosity, voice, and identity as a passionate educator."

Margie Carter (2010)

when we redesigned the child portfolio assignment that every student completes as part of their Child Growth and Development course. NSCECE students now write learning stories

based on their observations

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A Message from the Director

Dear ECE Colleagues,

Here we are at the end of another busy semester at the College. This September we welcomed another large class into the first year of the full-time program while welcoming back the largest second year class in our forty year history. We could have over forty graduates in May! We have a record number of students enrolled in the evening classes, in fact we have classes running Monday through Thursday night.

We have occupied the new space on Quinpool Road for over a year and are finally feeling as if it is home. It is hard to believe that the full-time students do not even know Brunswick St. This new location has made it possible to offer many more professional development workshops on evenings, weekends, and during the summer. With the completion of the elevator we are now totally accessible.

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Inside this issue:

- A Learning Story
- In the Resource Centre
- The Guided Workplace Experience

A publication informing the early childhood education community of events, services and professional development opportunities offered by the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education

Please circulate and post this newsletter!

**E-mail: info@nscece.ca
to be added to our e-mail list or
visit our website at
www.nscece.ca**

Let Me Tell You A Story...

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of a child or children in at least one course per term.

At the College we are excited about how learning stories invite our students and teachers to look closely at children and use their knowledge of the child and child development to share what they see in a family- and child-friendly way. Our students are excited by what they discover and are able to share. A learning story is much more powerful and meaningful than, "She identifies red, yellow and blue."

Learning stories invite families and children to comment on and revisit a particular moment that excited some curiosity or seemed significant in a child's learning process. The addition of a photo or series of photos engages the family and offers the child an opportunity to remember and re-

flect on learning and in effect, read or retell the story for him or herself.

Learning stories highlight the benefits of interest and play-based early childhood curriculums and reflect our understanding of the holistic way in which young children learn and grow. The idea that teachers can support learning by paying attention and responding to children's strengths and interests underlies this approach to assessing children. The focus of the learning story is on "what children can do rather than what they can't do." (Hatherly & Sands, 2002)

In the article, *So What is Different About Learning Stories?* Hatherly & Sands note the additional potential of learning stories to make teaching and practice visible and to "provide (families) a more accessible window into that mystifying part of the

day that occurs between leaving and collecting their child..." They go on to say, "For the first time, the connection between the child's learning opportunity and what the teacher does to support the child is visible." (2002)

The explicit invitation to families to comment and share their perceptions about their child as part of the learning story format adds another layer of interaction, perspective and richness to the story.

Learning stories have a particular structure that is different than other forms of documentation. You can learn more about writing learning stories at a workshop being offered on Tuesday, March 20. Check our winter workshop schedule for details.

Message Continued

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Many of our staff and faculty attended the annual conference in June and have become totally committed to the addition of learning stories as part of the College program of studies as well as in the classrooms at our three Lab Schools. As you read this newsletter you will learn more about this exciting and reflective way of viewing and documenting children's learning.

Another improvement this fall was the launch of our redesigned website. To quote Justin MacKenzie, College Marketing/Recruiting, "the new website is colourful and current." Please check it out.

Finally I would like to update you on the Korea Project which I told you about in the August newsletter. We currently have nine students from Korea enrolled in three courses in the ECE program. They will also be completing a practicum experience in the New Year. Thank you to the child care centres who will be mentoring these learners next semester.

I wish all of you a happy and healthy holiday season and look forward to seeing you in 2012.

Jane Cawley, Executive Director, NSCECE
www.nscece.ca

Boys Versus Girls: A Conversation Begins

This is a segment of Halifax teacher Cheryl Miller's first learning story. She says it sparked amazing conversations with the children's families and increased their curiosity about the classroom and program in general. "One family were very keen on answering questions I had posed in the story. A trust has been established through this tool that I am excited to build on."

What Happened

I noticed Ben and Amy examining the caterpillar container. They were deep in conversation: Amy said: "I know those are the girl caterpillars." Ben agreed, "And those are the boy caterpillars." I was curious and asked "how do you know which ones are boys and which ones are girls?"



Amy pointed to two caterpillars that were curled up on themselves—These were the girls. Then Ben said "The boys are here" and pointed to three caterpillars that were hanging straight down from the top.

I was intrigued and tried to get more information. I was ready for a conversation about gender maybe? Maybe why girls were curled up? But no, both of the children just wandered off.

What It Means

Why did Amy determine that the rolled up caterpillars were girls? I hypothesized that she may have seen ultra sound photos of the baby in mommy's stomach. Was the foetus curled up?

Were there conversations at home about the sex of Amy's future sibling? Is she hoping that her future sibling will be a girl? How or why did she link these ideas together?

Did Ben label the straight caterpillars as boys because they

looked different from Amy's girls? What could have been his motivation?

Opportunities and Possibilities

... And the story continues ...

In the Resource Centre



The Resource Centre has many new literacy learning materials and books available to support you in your work. Here is a small sampling. You can look for membership information and an updated inventory list at www.nscece.ca



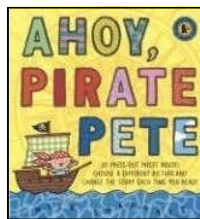
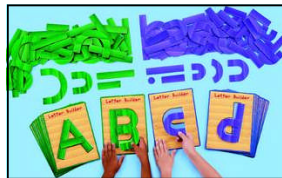
Search and Find Alphabet Bags (L 452)

A set of I spy bags that contain small objects that relate to the

letter printed on the on the bag.

Letter Builders (L 454)

Tactile letter building puzzles that allow children to work with lines and curves to construct the illustrated letters.

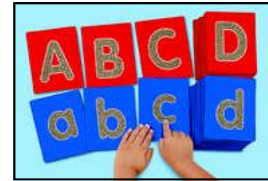


Ahoy Pirate Pete (SK 041)

Thirty picture pieces allow children to create their own stories about Pirate Pete and his sailing adventure. Children can change the story by changing the pictures they choose. Each picture is labeled and becomes part of the text of the story. Also available *Once Upon a Time* (SK 040)

Wooden Alphabet Stamps (L 451)

The alphabet stamp set allows children to print letters, words and messages. They can explore upper and lower case letters, punctuation marks and mirror images of letters.



Tactile Letters (L 453)

The tactile letter set allows children a sensory experience with the shape of a letter as they run their fingers over its rough surface. These letters can also help in the development of a muscle memory of how to form the letter.

Word Building Puzzles (P 746) and (P 747)

Three and four letter puzzle sets featuring familiar words in a self correcting format.



Twist & Turn Word Builders (L 443)

Create new three letter words with a twist and a turn.

WRITING LEARNING STORIES

1. Begin with your interest in the child's initiative.
2. What happened? Describe what the child says or does.
3. What does it mean? Why is it significant?
4. Opportunities and possibilities.
5. Invite the family to respond.
6. Give your story a title.

Based on a handout from Harvest Resources June 2011 (Drummond, Carter, Curtis)

Related Materials in the Resource Centre

- From Lullabies to Literature: Stories in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers (372.6 STO)
- Children, Language & Literacy: Diverse Learners in Diverse Times (372.4 GE)
- I Laen to Raed and Wrt the wa I Laen to Tak (372.4 BA)
- Literacy and the Youngest Learner (472.4 BEN)
- Writing in Preschool (372.4 SC)
- Weaving the Literacy Web (372.4 VE)
- Beginning Literacy With Language (372.4 DI)

Resource Centre services are offered with support from the Department of Community Services, Early Childhood Education Training Initiative.



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At the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education, we provide an opportunity for students to study and gain experience in Early Childhood Education through a diverse range of courses and practical settings.

We are proud to lay a foundation for the personal and professional growth and development of our students. It is our hope and goal that NSCECE graduates continue to learn, practice and reflect throughout their years in early childhood education.



Join the crowd—become a member today!

Take advantage of the many services provided with a NSCECE Resource Centre membership

Resources for the early childhood community



To download an Information Brochure or Membership Form visit www.nscece.ca

E-mail: resourcecentre@nscece.ca

Tel: (902) 423-7114 ext. 227



Guided Workplace Experience & Level One Training

With the new training level classifications coming into effect this spring NSCECE is getting lots of questions about how we support Level One training.

We began offering the three courses required for the Level One Classification in spring 2010.

Our upcoming evening courses include courses that are required for Level One:

Winter 2012—Child Growth & Development
Spring 2012—Behaviour Guidance
Summer 2012—Introduction to Curriculum

Participants for Level One Classification are required to provide proof of completion of two Guided Workplace Experiences that provide opportunities to link course work with practice.

NSCECE will begin delivery of the Guided Workplace Experience in January 2012. There are a limited number of spaces available. Applications can be downloaded from our website www.nscece.ca

Guided Workplace Experience 1
January 16 to March 9, 2012
Introductory Seminar January 14 (mandatory)

Guided Workplace Experience 2
April 16 to June 8, 2012
Introductory Seminar April 14 (mandatory)

You may be wondering...

What is meant by a Guided Workplace Experience?

It is a 250 hour (for each GWE) supported work experience that takes place in the child care centre where you work. You must complete two GW experiences to obtain a Level One Classification.

Do I continue to be a paid employee while participating in the Guided Workplace Experience 1 & 2?

Yes you are paid by your employer and continue to count in ratio.

Can I be reimbursed for the cost of the Guided Workplace Experience 1 & 2?

Yes you can apply for reimbursement

through the Continuing Education Program offered by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, www.gov.ns.ca/coms

Who is required to take the Guided Workplace Experience 1 & 2?

Anyone applying to the Department of Community Services for Level One Classification must complete two Guided Workplace Experiences.

Who will serve as my mentor while I participate in the Guided Workplace Experience 1 & 2?

You will be supported by an early childhood staff member from your workplace. This person will agree to provide support to GWE participants during their workplace experience. Centre staff will observe and provide guidance to participants. Their responsibilities include maintaining contact with the NSCECE supervisors to provide feedback and inform the evaluation process. NSCECE staff will oversee the process and support the participant throughout the guided workplace term.