

Storytelling and State Learning Standards

By Sue Black

The magic and power of storytelling: it's real and it's important. But in this era of "No Child Left Behind", administrators want to know that the storyteller they hire or the storytelling unit in the classroom will result in more than magic. The pressure is on to justify every expenditure and program in terms of student achievement. The focus is narrow and intense: How will *this* improve the test scores?

Storytelling is an important component of a literacy-rich environment; storytellers have the unique opportunity to use their art to contribute to student achievement. Each US state has developed its own set of curriculum standards. Go to your state's Department of Education website to get specific standards for each age group and subject. The list below includes many of the language arts and drama learning standards listed by individual states for K-8. Use it as a jumping-off point, to discuss the benefits of storytelling with colleagues or administrators, or as a way to look at the many educational attributes of storytelling.

Through storytelling, students will:

- Improve listening comprehension and vocabulary
- Listen for the purpose of communicating that information to others
- Improve visualization skills
- Identify patterns and relationships within stories
- Improve awareness of story structure including main idea, sequencing, transitions, beginning, middle, and end
- Identify, compare, contrast and analyze common themes
- Compare elements of stories from different regions and different times
- Compare and contrast different versions of the same story
- Compare points of view in a variety of works
- Discuss and respond to a variety of literature
- Connect stories with things that happen in their world
- Learn about the relationship between people and their environment
- Make predictions in stories and draw conclusions
- Learn how characters deal with conflict, solve problems, and relate to real-life situations
- Compare and contrast the languages, arts, and customs of different cultures
- Observe good speaking skills
- Practice effective listening skills
- Demonstrate the ability to listen for different purposes
- Analyze the ways the mind, body, and voice are used to communicate character, setting, and emotions

The power and the magic of storytelling connect the past with the present and the future. Storytelling creates community; it is a means for passing on the values and morals of cultures. And storytelling is a vital, educational tool for helping all students succeed.