

Citation: Wessel Powell, C., Kargin, T., & Wohlwend, K. E. (2016). Enriching and assessing young children's multimodal storytelling. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(2), 167–178.
doi:doi:10.1002/trtr.1491

Enriching and Assessing Young Children's Multimodal Storytelling

Christy Wessel Powell, Tolga Kargin, and Karen Wohlwend

Teaser Text

Want to breathe life into classroom storytelling? This article describes two teachers' expansion of writing workshop through dramatic storytelling, including a performance checklist for assessing children's written and dramatic expression.

Pause and Ponder

1. What would happen if you infused multimodal storytelling (like play, drama, or filmmaking) into writing time? As a teacher, what dramatic performance elements do you already use in your writing instruction?
2. How are your young students *already* doing multimodal storytelling off-the-page? Are there ways to recognize those abilities and efforts in school?
3. How could your current literacy curriculum be modified or supplemented to include opportunities for children to produce plays or films in groups?
4. What possible mini lessons would support your students in conveying meaning through multiple modes like *sound*, *image* and *movement*? What texts would work best as exciting and helpful exemplars? What other tools or resources would you need to gather or research?
5. How would this teaching address (or enhance) literacy standards?

Abstract

This article provides primary teachers with assessment tools and curricular examples to expand writing workshop by adding a multimodal storytelling unit on drama and filmmaking, allowing students to create engaging off-the-page stories through films and play performances that enrich writing. Too often children’s literacy abilities are assessed solely based on what they can write on paper, overlooking the rich ways they convey meaning through multiple communication modes like sound effects, gesture, movement, images, and language in their storytelling. This research recognizes play as an important literacy, and argues that a multimodal emphasis in teaching and assessment more closely match the ways children learn and make meaning in their everyday lives. This study is a part of a larger ongoing multiyear, multisite study of literacy playshops in early childhood classrooms and teacher education.

Literacy in Transition

Today’s children interact with their favorite stories across multiple media platforms: reading picture books, watching movies, playing video games, making videos, and sharing on social media. These complex interactions have changed young children’s understanding of text. Our understanding of the term *literacy* is in transition. Historically, literacy means to give and get meaning from printed text. However, recent action-oriented sociocultural research emphasizes multimodality (Kress, 2011), the ways we make meaning through sensory modes like image, gaze, talk, movement, sound and sound effects. Researchers now see that when children play, they use their whole bodies to tell stories with intellectual depth, or “muchness” (Thiel, 2015, p. 38), that engages everyone in literacy learning (Wohlwend, 2011). Young children’s storytelling performances can help develop their process writing (Lenters & Winters,

2013). We also know classroom talk still plays a role as children make multimodal texts in classrooms (Pahl, 2009). Multimodal storytelling, then, acknowledges and leverages the playful ways children create meaningful stories through their voices, actions, images they draw, and props they construct as well as printed words they may compose on a page.

Enriching Literacy Instruction with Multimodal Storytelling

When children do literacy, they may not only write, but also act out or show their stories in many other ways besides on paper. We believe these multimodal stories should be recognized and honored by teachers, so that off-the-page storytelling is acknowledged alongside written stories in school. While children extensively use multiple modes in their dramatic storytelling, few assessment tools account for embodied multimodality (Branscombe, 2015) and through our research we saw an opportunity to develop one for classroom use.

In this article, we analyze a month-long storytelling unit designed by teachers, centered on encouraging children to intentionally use multiples modes of communication to make their stories more engaging. Informed by a curriculum model we call *literacy playshop* (Wohlwend, Buchholz, Wessel-Powell, Coggin, & Husbye, 2013), two teachers planned and taught a one-month multimodal storytelling unit in their multiage K-1 classroom in an inquiry-based charter school.

Multimodal storytelling includes *writing craft* practices from writing workshop and *dramatic performance* practices from literacy playshop. Teachers taught writing craft practices such as writing play scripts with logical organization (e.g., problem/solution) or developing strong characters. They also helped children consider modes (e.g. gaze, posture, gesture and speech) in storytelling by performing plays, making films, or manipulating puppets in dramatic performance practices. After each play performance, the teachers and classmates gave feedback

to the performing group by applying a checklist prepared by teachers. This classroom feedback process inspired an expanded assessment tool for multimodal storytelling that we share in this article.

Expanding Writing Assessment

The teachers regularly created and taught their own inquiry units through a primary writing workshop (Calkins 2003; Graves, 1983; Ray, 2004). Writing workshops offer thoughtful, detailed ways to assess children's print-based approximations of writing through developmentally appropriate processes (Ray & Glover, 2008), rubrics, and checklists that inform instruction. Assessment in writing workshop classrooms is often largely student-centered and performance-based (Jacobs, 2013); for example, young writers may talk through the meaning of their work as a form of assessment (Siegel, 2012). But in some classrooms, existing writing standards need to be enhanced to be equitable (Bearne, Ellis, Graham, Hulme, Meiner, & Wolstencroft, 2005; Dyson, 2008). For instance, kindergarten literacy school readiness screening is often too narrow to capture the strengths of all students (Yoon, 2015). Research is needed to understand the impact of literacy teaching in early childhood classrooms that intentionally accounts for children's multimodal storytelling strengths in assessment.

Our work is informed by the growing research on early childhood multimodal writing (Burnett, Davies, Merchant, & Rowsell, 2014; Rowe, 2012). Here we consider how teachers familiar with writing workshop routines might modify or expand instruction and assessment to include children's multimodal storytelling. The research in this article looks closely at teachers' instruction and assessment of children's storytelling in a K-1 teacher-designed literacy playshop, offering possible strategies for literacy teachers to take up in their own classrooms in a rigorous yet age-appropriate way.

The next section examines how the teachers in this study taught children to effectively use writing craft practices that align neatly with literacy standards, as well as dramatic performance practices not yet included in typical literacy standards. With the goal of developing a multimodal assessment checklist, we analyzed video of children's plays for the non-written and often overlooked elements in young children's multimodal storytelling. Analysis of children's final performances revealed children used *print* and *talk* as modes while developing the structure of stories and writing story scripts, *image* as a mode while creating story characters and backdrop images, *sound and vocalization* as a mode while singing or changing intonation and volume for different characters, *gaze* as a mode while zooming in and out of story backdrops they created, and *movement* as a mode while using posture and gesture to perform different characters or move puppets, props or their own bodies across a stage.

The Transition from Writing Workshop to Literacy Playshop

This project is part of a five-year study of teacher-designed media literacy curriculum in four early childhood classrooms. Each project began with a year of practitioner inquiry group sessions to study issues around popular media and digital literacies, to learn filmmaking techniques, and to develop age-appropriate media literacy curriculum for young children. Karen Wohlwend, third author, and Christy Wessel Powell, first author, both former early childhood teachers, led these sessions. The teachers from the focus classroom in this study have the longest ongoing relationship with our research team. The lead teacher Ms. Brown (all names are pseudonyms), who participated in the first inquiry group, independently developed several versions of literacy playshop units for her classroom. Over the last four years, she often invited researchers Wohlwend and Wessel Powell to come in and document these units and researcher Tolga Kargin, second author, helped analyze the resulting video data.

The Classroom Context

The research took place at an inquiry-based charter school in a Midwestern university town. Public records show the school reflects the limited racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the largely rural state: 88% White, 11% Multiracial, 9% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 1% Asian students; few students are identified as multilingual. The school serves grades K-8 in multiage classrooms (e.g. K/1, 2/3, etc.) with two classroom teachers. Ms. Brown and Ms. Green teach the K-1 class. Classrooms are large, with primary grades regularly accommodating more than 40 students per class. At the time when video data were collected in the focal K-1 classroom, the class had 46 kindergarten and first grade children, ages 5-7, 20 boys and 26 girls.

The Teacher-Developed Literacy Playshop Curriculum

Ms. Brown, a skilled reading and writing workshop teacher, developed the end-of-the-year playshop unit, co-teaching with Ms. Green. The teachers used the folktales & fairy tales reading workshop unit taught the month before as a basis to begin talking with their students about how to bring strong characters to life during their writing workshop time. This month-long playshop unit on storytelling focused on enhancing children's stories through mini lessons on dramatic elements and filmmaking, culminating in student-produced plays and films. During the unit, small groups of young playwrights created and animated puppets named *Mr. Bee*, *Cloudy*, *Amy the Naked Mole*, *the Wicked Witch*, and *Mr. Worm* and other folktale-like characters.

As a guide to help children self-assess, teachers developed a checklist for students to consider in their story planning and rehearsals. Using the checklist and peer feedback, the small groups of students refined their stories for the final performance during the last week of the unit. Performance genres included live action (i.e. playing the story out in front of an audience as the class sat around the share circle watching), puppet shows behind the cardboard puppet theater,

and movies filmed on a tabletop film stage in the hallway. The final productions served as documentation of literacy learning for teachers and video data sources for researchers, but for students, final productions were achievements to proudly take home to share. Groups' final production videos were burned to DVD as keepsakes of their project and work in the classroom that year.

Documenting a Multimodal Storytelling Unit

At the teachers' invitation, Wessel Powell recorded all teaching and student work time over the course of four weeks, from planning to final performance. In addition to chatting informally with teachers daily, Wessel Powell was invited into the teaching process as another pair of eyes and ears around the classroom. This meant she shared insights about certain groups, could help select whom to highlight as exemplary or interesting during daily mid-workshop teaching points or sharing times, and help think through possible directions for future mini lessons based on student work. In other words, while the teachers handled the pedagogical decisions themselves, there was a spirit of openness and collaboration in the data collection process that informed classroom day-to-day decisions.

Using methods of video analysis, we analyzed storytelling groups (i.e., small groups of children collaborating on a story) to see how teachers' instruction and children's writing and drama incorporated multimodal elements. After the unit was completed, two teams of researchers coded the classroom videos for evidence of writing craft elements and dramatic performance or filmmaking elements taught by the teachers, and how these elements were taken up by the students and used in their character making, script writing and storytelling performances. Codes were compared and discussed until consensus was reached.

Using these codes, we next expanded the checklist (see Table 1) by adding multimodal assessment descriptors to the teachers' original form, which focused on writing craft only and did not reflect all their teaching about multimodality. We added details to the descriptors in all areas to fully reflect the richness of the teachers' instruction in dramatic performance as well as writing craft. Beginning with teachers' mini lesson topics, we cross-referenced descriptors with multimodality theories and practices most prominent in the research literature (e.g., Norris, 2004). Finally, we shared the expanded checklist with the classroom teachers, who confirmed it would be helpful for teaching the next time around, especially if they made a student version with photos for children to reference (see samples in Table 2).

We conclude the article by using the expanded checklist to analyze one example of children's storytelling, the *Wicked Witch Girls*' play, to illustrate how this tool might be used to teach and assess multimodal storytelling in the context of a literacy playshop unit.

Teaching Multimodal Storytelling

On Mondays through Thursdays during the unit, Ms. Brown and Ms. Green took turns delivering one mini lesson per day on storytelling elements or "tools" (such as developing a character, writing a script, using art supplies to construct props and settings, or "casting a spell on the audience" with sight and sound). Sometimes, mini lessons illustrated tools through exemplary models of films (like Pixar Shorts); other stories came from texts in the previous folktale unit (like a formatted script for a play-version of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*). Tools were recorded on the "Storytelling Toolbox" board for students to reference as inspiration (See Fig. 1 and this link to the complete storytelling unit: <http://bit.ly/1JSeBHy>). After mini lessons, students were given about 30 minutes to work on their own projects before gathering again on the carpet to share. Each Friday a storyteller (and fellow early childhood educator) modeled oral

storytelling techniques. Building on the previous month's folktale unit on "unforgettable characters", the storyteller told classic European folktales like *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *The Three Little Pigs* and *Jack and the Beanstalk* using silly voices, sound effects, and gestures. The children were mesmerized by her.

The first mini lesson began with an enactment:

On Day One, Ms. Brown hobbles into the room, pretending to be an elderly woman. A child holds her elbow so she can walk to her chair and sit. In a creaky voice, she explains she's a grandmother, 89 years old, with five grandchildren and two great grandchildren...she continues in character for a few minutes, then straightens up and "becomes herself" again. She tells the children she was playing a character—she knows they've thought a lot about characters and how to show on the outside what they are thinking and feeling on the inside (like they did in the latest writing workshop unit on fiction writing). Today they're going to make characters. They might act, make puppets, or think of other ways to bring their characters to life. Later they will write scripts for their characters to act out...and eventually...(lean in because you will want to hear this)...make a movie. At this, the children burst into excited chatter.

Ms. Brown describes the routine: they'll have materials to work with (cardstock—begin with one sheet, popsicle sticks, because sometimes people like to hold a puppet with a stick on the back, and paper bags) and a place to keep the materials together and safe: in their "storytelling envelope" (a manila envelope with each child's name on the front where they can store scraps/materials, and keep it all together in book boxes).

Over the next days, children focused on making (or pretending to be) characters, constructing props, and playing with other friends' characters in play groups. Teachers told children to meet as co-storytellers and assisted children who needed support to collaborate (such as a few children on the autism spectrum).

Through mini lessons, teachers also prompted children to begin thinking about scenery, story shapes, and other storytelling tools that experts use. Often exemplars such as Pixar Shorts

or the guest storyteller were showcased and revisited for kids to dissect together in guided engagements.

Pausing mid-workshop, teachers highlighted groups in the classroom who were trying innovative things with their stories. Play times were framed by serious goals: shaping a story by practicing it or playing it out again and again, solidifying the story's plans on a storyboard or in script form, and preparing to perform in front of the class during "share time", when each day a single group would receive peer feedback.

Teachers developed a brief checklist to informally assess storytelling groups' performance readiness (which helped children to stay focused while giving them a fluid timeline for finalizing their productions), and during class performances to guide peer feedback (see Fig. 2). During the last week of the unit, groups could decide whether they would present final productions as live performances, puppet shows, or films.

At the end of the school year, the classroom transformed into a museum space showcasing projects the teachers and children were proud of, including the storytelling unit. Parents and community members were welcome to view them during a school-wide open house (see Figs. 3 & 4). Children led visitors around the room, acting as docents by inviting questions and demonstrations of learning. For example, children could invite visitors to read scripts, play with puppets and backdrops, meet characters they created, or watch their final productions on a laptop. In this way, the *process* of storytelling—not just the final product film or play performance—was highlighted as valuable learning and celebrated by everyone.

When the mini lessons in this literacy playshop were analyzed, we saw teachers valued both writing craft practices and dramatic performance practices and taught both skillfully.

Writing workshop checklists often focus on elements of writing craft like strong characters, setting—place and time, problem, solution, dialogue, and narrator voice (see Fig. 2).

Looking closely at video of the teachers' instruction as well as their use of the checklist, we found they effectively mediated *writing craft* in this classroom through mini lessons on character, setting, story shapes, storyboarding and script writing (Table 1). They used exemplary storytelling models like children's books that illustrated story shapes clearly, scripts of folktales intended for young actors to read, and crafting materials for sets and character creation. They also showed the Pixar Shorts film *Knick Knack* (Lasseter, 1989) as a model story. They paused the movie at certain points and posed questions to the children about what was happening, how the wordless characters were feeling, and how the creators demonstrated that to drive a purposeful story arc. Through this process the class concluded a good story should introduce characters in the beginning, the problem and multiple attempts to solve the problem in the middle, and a solution at the end. They discussed how surprising endings always make a story more engaging. The film was also used to introduce children to the ways the setting changed during the film. Teachers also used share time to highlight children's innovative work for peers to notice. By using their writing craft checklist to decide who was ready to workshop their productions in front of the rest of the class, they upheld the expectation all groups would have coherent stories and print-based preparation.

Additionally, we saw teachers effectively mediate *dramatic performance* through concrete mini lessons on volume, voice, movement and perspective (Table 1). Besides detailed explanations and drawings in the Storytelling Toolbox (see Fig. 1), they modeled techniques through exemplars like the guest storyteller, short movies, and children's books to explain how multiple meaning-making modes can be used in play performances or films. The guest

storyteller, for example, provided a great model for children to see how to use volume and voice intonation for different characters, as well as body movements, posture, and gesture to perform the roles of each character. And *Knick Knack* showed children how to use facial expressions to express a character's feelings. Children's books with perspective shifts in the illustrations such as *Flotsam* by David Wiesner (2006), demonstrated how to use gaze (zoom-in/zoom-out and viewer perspective) in an effective storytelling performance on stage or screen.

Assessing Multimodal Storytelling

To demonstrate how the teachers' checklist assessed multimodal storytelling, we look closely at one group of players. Throughout the unit, a group of three girls (nicknamed the *Wicked Witch Girls* for their story's evil villain character) consistently met teachers' expectations for writing craft products and play performances: they were productive each day, leaning over carefully constructed stick puppets and paper backdrops, collaborating by debating and rehearsing storyline points, innovating ways to create special effects and cinematic camera shots, and co-writing a detailed and conventionally formatted script.

Their fairytale-like story featured three animals (two turtles and a naked mole-rat) who were lost in the woods, captured by the Wicked Witch, and about to be turned into stew, but end up outsmarting her, escaping, and cooking the witch in her own cauldron at the end. The girls were primarily led by one charismatic young playwright, who acted as the narrator in the playshop performance they presented to the class (*italics* refer to the dialogue and stage directions the performers read aloud from the script, and the regular font refers to the description of their actions):

Wicked Witch Girls' Performance

Narrator (S1): *One day there was a naked mole-rat and two turtles named Lulu and Lola. (S3 holds the two green paper cutout crayon-drawn turtles glued to popsicle sticks bobbing above a paper file folder propped on its side as the ‘backdrop’ of a wide-angle forest scene with a crayon-drawn path winding through it. S3 shakes the turtles and squeaks: Hi! Hi! S1 holds up a paper cutout four-legged mole-rat glued to a popsicle stick. S1 and S3 quickly duck their puppets behind the backdrop after the intro).*

Narrator (S1): *They also had an enemy named Wickedy.*

Wickedy (S2): (S2 holds up Wickedy, a witch puppet with a black paper cutout pointy hat, black arms and dress glued to a paper bag with a red crayon-drawn face, above the scenery backdrop. S2 simultaneously clutches the script, her eyes scanning the stage directions. Her gaze flickers to S1, asking for prompting. S1 leans in and whispers the line, which S2 delivers, leaning behind the paper bag witch and wiggling it side-to-side): *Hi.*

Narrator (S1): *One day, when Amy, the naked mole-rat, was not looking, Wickedy took Lulu and Lola into the deep woods and Amy said, “Where can they be?” And she was so so so sad. (S3 droops the popsicle turtles over the paper backdrop and makes them ‘weep’ with sadness).*

Amy (S1): *Lulu and Lola I miss seeing you! Where can you be? (S1 bobs the naked mole-rat puppet in time with her high-pitched words, then puts the puppet down and checks the script) (see Fig. 5).*

Narrator (S1): *This is what Wickedy is, she is busy brewing stew. While Wickedy was making the broth, she was really happy for her Irish two turtle stew. (All three girls change the setting by flipping the paper backdrop around, revealing a close-up cottage scene, and adding a cauldron prop.) While Amy was walking through the forest she was singing a little song to herself. “Lu, lu, lu...”*

Amy (S1): *Lu, lu, lu ... (gets up and skips around the room singing a little song as she ‘travels through the forest.’ S3 bobs the two turtle puppets in rhythm with the song).*

Narrator (S1): *Amy in the meantime had followed the witch, and she interrupted the witch from giving the stew goodies. Well, the turtles were handcuffed too (S3 connects the two turtle puppets and moves them up and down together as though handcuffed: Help! Help!); they had big gloves, they took the handcuffs off (S3 brushes the turtle puppets against one another to signify getting rid of handcuffs) and they got rescued from Amy, and chopped off the witch’s head! (S1 & S3 lunge the turtle and mole-rat puppets forward toward the witch puppet, in a quick motion to signify chopping off the witch's head). Hiii-yah! (S2 folds the witch puppet in half, so her head appears removed. All students are laughing).*

Narrator (S1): *The end.*

Clearly, the paper witch's gruesome ending was meant to be a humorous surprise, a twist that delighted the players' peer audience when they shared their draft for feedback. Since the performance highlighted work still in progress, but ready enough to share, it did not necessarily reflect all of the elements the girls had planned when they worked together over the course of the unit. However, it demonstrates the depth of work these K-1 students can produce and shows evidence of writing craft from several filmmaking lessons modeled by teachers.

A Tool for Assessing Multimodal Storytelling

When we looked closely at students' response to literacy playshop instruction as exemplified in the Wicked Witch performance and preparation (see Table 3), we saw children creating written texts around the genres of plays and film: scripts, story maps, settings, and characters. The children created characters with art materials, introduced their characters to friends, and talked about possible shared stories by considering their characters' particular features. Then, they came together in small groups and collaboratively wrote story scripts and created appropriate backdrops for the setting of their stories, like the continually changing backdrops in *Knick Knack*. Story language often permeated these creations (e.g. "one day..."), delivered through dialogue and narration. Many students attempted to integrate concepts from writing craft lessons such as varied story arcs, repetitive elements, or surprise endings modeled in *Knick Knack* and folktale retellings.

Students also responded by creating multimodal artifacts such as characters with unique postures, special voices, and ways of moving (for example, puppets with manipulable arms, legs and heads, or puppets who 'flew' on strings; see Table 3 for more examples). Storytelling teams worked collaboratively to create publically shared texts that engaged audiences and friends through songs, voices, and movement. The children's takeup of multimodal storytelling was also

seen in the feedback they provided to performing groups. In response to the *Wicked Witch Girls*' performance, a classmate said he loved their use of the stage when Amy traveled through the forest in the story by skipping around the room and singing a little song. His feedback recommended that the group keep this part when filming their performances. Another student suggested each character should have its own distinctive voice quality, just like oral storyteller who retold *Three Billy Goats Gruff* for the class.

Although children's plays were most comprehensible to peers when they used writing craft elements such as characters, dialogue, and a clear story sequence in the *Wicked Witch Girls*' script (Fig. 6), plays were most creative, entertaining, and engaging for peers when dramatic performance elements were also in place, such as the use of movement, music, and space in Amy's song and dance. Student groups took up the multimodal instruction offered by teachers to various degrees, but the greatest benefit was for the most emergent writers who did not have print literacies firmly in place yet could still effectively use drama to act out stories. These findings align with play-based literacy research with adolescents (Honeyford, 2015), suggesting that more children could be recognized as successful literacy users if an expanded multimodal checklist were considered for assessment purposes. Most important, it was not necessary for young students to write everything down before performing. When we recognize that children are already storytellers without capturing print versions of their stories on paper. In short, children who tell stories multimodally but have not yet mastered print literacies can get recognition for their storytelling strengths if we expand our assessment tools to include both.

Looking at literacy through a multimodal lens gives us a chance to see how different communication modes helped children tell more engaging and interesting stories. In this study, the teachers assessed writing craft practices with their checklist to support students' performance

readiness in a simplified way that aligned with past writing workshop practices. Analysis of the teachers' innovative instruction helped us modify their checklist even further to reflect their balanced teaching that included dramatic performance practices. The expanded checklist and literacy playshop sketched here are a first step toward developing multimodal assessment tools. We hope this example will inspire other teachers to consider ways to expand their own assessments to capture children's multimodal strengths in storying.

Take Action!

Consider teaching your own multimodal storytelling unit:

1. Set aside four weeks in your calendar during literacy block. Include a date for a 'film festival' or similar final celebration to share with families.
2. Gather materials for film/play production (cameras/recording devices, puppet stage, art materials and props necessary for creating setting and character, instruments for sound effects).
3. Sort through mentor texts. Consider books, film shorts, a guest oral storyteller, and videos of student productions.
4. Map out possible mini lessons on character, setting and story arcs, as well as voice, gesture, movement and special effects.
5. Begin to build an anchor chart or "Storyteller's Toolbox" (see Fig. 1) with each teaching point in categories, which will become a visual checklist for students as they work.
6. Use the teachers' unit skeleton map as a resource, found here: <http://bit.ly/1JSeBHy>
7. Use the blank assessment template (see Table 1) and kid-friendly checklist (see Table 2) for your students' final performances.

References

- Bearne, E., Ellis, S., Graham, L., Hulme, P., Meiner, J., & Wolstencroft, H. (2005). *More than words 2: Creating stories on page and screen*. London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.
- Branscombe, M. (2015). Showing, not telling. *The Reading Teacher*, (69)3, 321–329. doi:10.1002/trtr.1375.
- Burnett, C., Davies, J., Merchant, G., & Rowsell, J. (2014). *New literacies around the globe: Policy and pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Calkins, L. (2003). *Units of study for primary writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Dyson, A. H. (2008). Staying in the (curricular) lines: Practice constraints and possibilities in childhood writing. *Written Communication*, 25(1), 119-159. doi: 10.1177/0741088307309552
- Graves, D. (1983). *Writing: Teachers & children at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Honeyford, M. A. & Boyd, K. (2015). Learning through play: Portraits, Photoshop and visual literacy practices. *Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literacy*, 59(1), 63-73. doi: 10.1002/JAAL.428
- Jacobs, G. E. (2013). Designing assessments. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(8), 623-626. doi: 10.1002/JAAL.189
- Kress, G. (2011). Discourse analysis and education: A multimodal social semiotic approach. In R. Rogers (Eds.), *Introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp. 205-226). New York: Routledge.
- Lenters, K., & Winters, K. L. (2013). Fracturing writing spaces: Multimodal storytelling ignites process writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 67(3), 227-237. doi: 10.1002/TRTR.1210
- Norris, S. (2004). *Analyzing multimodal interaction: A methodological framework*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pahl, K. (2009). Interactions, intersections and improvisations: Studying the multimodal texts and classroom talk of six- to seven-year-olds. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 9(2), 188-210. doi: 10.1177/1468798409105586
- Ray, K. (2004). *About the authors: Writing workshop with our youngest writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ray, K., & Glover, M. (2008). *Already ready: Nurturing writers in preschool and kindergarten*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Rowe, D. W. (2012). *The affordances of multimodal interaction analysis for studying the beginnings of literacy*. Retrieved on April 26, 2015, from

<http://nctear2013.ehe.osu.edu/files/2013/01/rowe-2012-affordances -of-multimodal-interaction-analysis-cmp.pdf>

- Siegel, M. (2012). New times for multimodality? Confronting the accountability culture. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55, 671-681. doi: 10.1002/JAAL.00082
- Thiel, J. J. (2015). 'Bumble Bee's in trouble!' Embodied literacies during imaginative superhero play. *Language Arts* 93(1), 38-49. Retrieved from:
<http://www.ncte.org/journals/la/issues/v93-1>
- Wohlwend, K. E. (2011). *Playing their way into literacies: Reading, writing, and belonging in the early childhood classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wohlwend, K. E., Buchholz, B. A., Wessel-Powell, C., Coggin, L. S., & Husbye, N. E. (2013). *Literacy playshop: New literacies, popular media, and play in the early childhood classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Yoon, H. S. (2015). Assessing children in kindergarten: The narrowing of language, culture and identity in the testing era. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 15(3), 364-393. doi: 10.1177/1468798414548778

Literature Cited

- Lasseter, J. (1989). *Knick knack*. Emeryville, CA: Pixar Animation Studios.
- Wiesner, D. (2006). *Flotsam*. New York: Clarion Books.

More to Explore

- McKee, L. L., & Heydon, R. M. (2015). Orchestrating literacies: Print literacy learning opportunities within multimodal intergenerational ensembles. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 15(2), 227-255. doi: 10.1177/1468798414533562
- Rowell, J. (2013). *Working with multimodality: Rethinking literacy in a digital age*. London: Routledge.

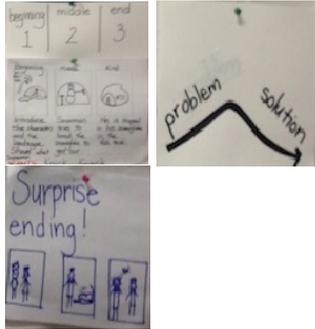
Table 1. Multimodal Storytelling Checklist for Classroom Use

Group: _____

Writing Craft	Evidence						Portfolio File?
Make characters	Modes:						
	<input type="checkbox"/> Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Gaze	<input type="checkbox"/> Print	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk	<input type="checkbox"/> Sound	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement	
Make story backdrops	Modes:						
	<input type="checkbox"/> Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Gaze	<input type="checkbox"/> Print	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk	<input type="checkbox"/> Sound	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement	
Write story in script format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include different characters & a narrator • Write collaborative story with other group members 	Modes:						
	<input type="checkbox"/> Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Gaze	<input type="checkbox"/> Print	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk	<input type="checkbox"/> Sound	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement	
Consider the story shape: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning/ middle/ end or other clear organization • Clear problem & solution • Surprise ending 	Modes:						
	<input type="checkbox"/> Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Gaze	<input type="checkbox"/> Print	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk	<input type="checkbox"/> Sound	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement	

Dramatic Performance	Evidence	Portfolio File?												
<p>Consider sound:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use different voices for characters & narrator • Change volume based on characters: loud, quiet & in between • Change volume to express different feelings 	<p>Modes:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="581 636 1234 743"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Image</td> <td>Gaze</td> <td>Print</td> <td>Talk</td> <td>Sound</td> <td>Movement</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement						
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement									
<p>Use movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use tools to create character movement • Use body to show action 	<p>Modes:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="581 1014 1234 1100"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Image</td> <td>Gaze</td> <td>Print</td> <td>Talk</td> <td>Sound</td> <td>Movement</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement						
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement									
<p>Show feelings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say & do things with characters to express feelings • Use facial expressions, posture & gesture to show characters' feelings 	<p>Modes:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="581 1381 1234 1476"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Image</td> <td>Gaze</td> <td>Print</td> <td>Talk</td> <td>Sound</td> <td>Movement</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement						
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement									
<p>Show perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom in & out 	<p>Modes:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="581 1728 1234 1810"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Image</td> <td>Gaze</td> <td>Print</td> <td>Talk</td> <td>Sound</td> <td>Movement</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement						
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement									

Table 2. Kid Friendly Checklist

Writing	How did we do?
<p>Make characters</p> 	
<p>Make story backdrops</p> 	
<p>Write a script</p> 	
<p>Give the story a shape</p> 	

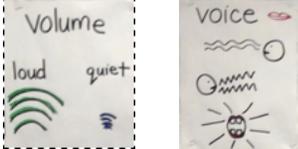
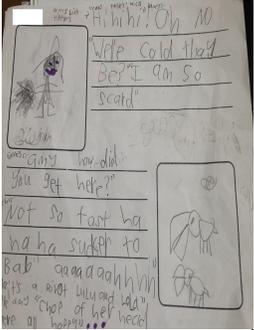
Performing	How did we do?
<p data-bbox="305 331 431 361">Use sound</p> 	
<p data-bbox="277 569 459 598">Use your body</p> 	
<p data-bbox="282 867 454 896">Show feelings</p> 	
<p data-bbox="258 1123 477 1152">Show perspective</p> 	

Table 3. Expanded Checklist Applied to Exemplary Storytelling Group

Group: Wickedy Witchy Girls

Writing Craft	Evidence	Portfolio File?												
<p>Make characters</p>	<p><i>Paper cut out puppets: naked mole-rat Amy turtles Lulu & Lola; antagonist witch Wickedy</i></p> <p>Modes:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="475 583 1256 682"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Image</td> <td>Gaze</td> <td>Print</td> <td>Talk</td> <td>Sound</td> <td>Movement</td> </tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement									
<p>Make story backdrops</p>	<p><i>2-sided file folder backdrop of (1) Witchy's cottage and (2) "zoomed out" enchanted forest. Doubles as a puppet theater when stood upright.</i></p> <p>Modes:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="475 888 1256 987"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Image</td> <td>Gaze</td> <td>Print</td> <td>Talk</td> <td>Sound</td> <td>Movement</td> </tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement									
<p>Write story in script format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include different characters & a narrator • Write collaborative story with other group members 	<p><i>Detailed script with narrator & characters' lines, scene changes & stage directions</i></p> <p><i>Group leader dictated the story's direction & recorded most of the script on paper.</i></p> <p>Modes:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="475 1266 1256 1432"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Image</td> <td>Gaze</td> <td>Print</td> <td>Talk</td> <td>Sound</td> <td>Movement</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement									
<p>Consider the story shape:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning/ middle/ end or other clear organization • Clear problem & solution • Surprise ending 	<p><i><u>B</u>: 2 turtles lost in the forest, mole-rat searches for them; meanwhile Wickedy prepares a broth for turtle stew!</i></p> <p><i><u>M</u>: Wickedy captures turtles in handcuffs but mole rat frees them</i></p> <p><i><u>E</u>: chops the witch's head off & ironically makes stew out of <u>her</u> (surprise!)</i></p> <p>Modes:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="475 1780 1256 1879"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Image</td> <td>Gaze</td> <td>Print</td> <td>Talk</td> <td>Sound</td> <td>Movement</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Image	Gaze	Print	Talk	Sound	Movement									

Dramatic Performance	Evidence						Portfolio File?
<p>Consider sound:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use different voices for characters & narrator • Change volume based on characters: loud, quiet & in between • Change volume to express different feelings 	<p><i>Group leader narrated, distinctly voicing the witch & other animals;</i> <i>Narrator spoke clearly, animals had small squeaky voices, witch's voice boomed;</i> <i>Animals sobbed quietly, cried "help!" loudly, chopped off witch's head loudly with a gleeful "hiii-yah!"</i></p> <p>Modes:</p>						<p><i>mp4 of performance</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Image <input type="checkbox"/> Gaze <input type="checkbox"/> Print <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Talk <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sound <input type="checkbox"/> Movement</p>							
<p>Use movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use tools to create character movement • Use body to show action 	<p><i>Witch puppet's removable head can be "chopped off" & paper bag mouth can talk;</i> <i>puppets bob on popsicle sticks</i></p> <p><i>Narrator skipped around the room to show a journey through the forest</i></p> <p>Modes:</p>						
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Image <input type="checkbox"/> Gaze <input type="checkbox"/> Print <input type="checkbox"/> Talk <input type="checkbox"/> Sound <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Movement</p>							
<p>Show feelings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say & do things with characters to express feelings • Use facial expressions, posture & gesture to show characters' feelings 	<p><i>Animals "cried" when sad; hopped up & down when happily rescued, whimpered & slumped in the corner when "captured";</i> <i>witch head chopped off with triumphant slicing gesture</i></p> <p>Modes:</p>						
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Image <input type="checkbox"/> Gaze <input type="checkbox"/> Print <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Talk <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sound <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Movement</p>							
<p>Show perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom in & out 	<p><i>Backdrop designed to show witch's cottage inside (zoomed in) & forest map (zoomed out) including mini witch puppet who travels on the map</i></p> <p>Modes:</p>						
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Image <input type="checkbox"/> Gaze <input type="checkbox"/> Print <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Talk <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sound <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Movement</p>							