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This Is Not a Fable: Using Storytelling in a College Classroom to Enhance Student Learning

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USING STORY TELLING IN THE CLASSROOM TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING
“No doubt about it, the best speakers are good storytellers. The best writers are good storytellers. The best leaders are good storytellers. The best teachers and trainers and coaches are good storytellers”.

Diann Moorman, Ph.D. University of Georgia
I come from a long line of tall-tale-tellers….

“Children's and Household Tales” is a collection of German fairy tales first published in 1812 by the Grimm brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm. The collection is commonly known in English as Grimm’s Fairy Tales.

- Hanzel and Gretel
- Sleeping Beauty
- Cinderella
- Rapunzel
- Snow White

Grandpa, Grandma, Carol Lee and a dog named Damnit
That’s what storytellers do. We restore order with imagination. We instill hope again and again.

Walt Disney in "Saving Mr. Banks"
What Storytellers do……..

- Stories powerfully connect us to our students.
- When we share our own real-life stories or the stories of others (Stories to provide an example or offer some form of proof) our students feel that they get to know us as real people – people who have lives outside the Ivory Tower, people who have struggled with similar problems (both academic and personal) and who have figured out how to overcome them—or are working to overcome them.
As a learning tool, storytelling can encourage students to explore their own experiences and can heighten a student's ability to communicate thoughts and feelings in an eloquent manner.

No “special equipment—no clickers—no laptops—no Top Hat—nothing” beyond the imagination and the power of listening and speaking is needed to create lasting images.
“I know only one thing about the technologies that await us in the future: we will find ways to tell stories with them.”

Jason Ohler
Video games are more capable than any other medium of immersing the audience. We can build worlds that could never exist in reality, interact with them, and become a part of them in a way that other mediums could wish to surpass (Dexomega, 2014).
Storytelling Transcends Majors

EINSTEIN

“If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.”

The universe is not made of atoms.

It’s made of TINY STORIES.
Storytelling is our past

Come then, and let us pass a leisure hour in storytelling, and our story shall be the education of our heroes.

Plato
TED Talks have carried that practice forward and their world-class speakers are expected to speak in simple narratives, using stories and powerful imagery to convey their message.
Storytelling is research based….

- Neuroscience is discovering that the brain is wired to organize, retain and access information through storytelling and that every relationship experience and object is recorded in the mind as a story. (Caine, et al., 2005)

- Brain based learning theory is built upon the structure of how the brain receives and interprets information (Dwyer, 1998)
According to the authors of Brain/Mind Learning Principles in Action (Caine, R., Caine, G., McClintic, C., & Klimic, C., 2005), educators must employ three elements of brain-based learning in order for effective learning to take place:

1) **Relaxed Alertness:** An atmosphere of low threat and one that creates a sense of community contribute to a state of relaxed alertness and learning.
Maybe a little too relaxed 😊
Relaxed and Alert: Campfire stories (and smores)
2) **Planned Immersion:** The creation of an environment where students are exposed to or engaged in “experiences” relative to the objectives of the course or particular lesson.

There are 2 ways to share knowledge:
- You can **push** information out
- You can **pull** them in with a story.
Lesson: FRAUD!!

Two Truths and One Lie!

- I have a black belt in Tae Kwon Do
- I have six sisters and two brothers
- I have two degrees from ISU
3) **Active Processing:** Utilization of learning methods that encourage the students to *reflect and integrate* the information in a manner that is *personally meaningful* (p.233).
Lesson:
Externalities (when a purchase you make is bad for those around you)

...smoking bad for the person and also = 2\textsuperscript{nd} hand smoke.

RIP: Father, Mother, Brother Dean...and all my other relatives
» Create an “inciting incident”
   » This stirs curiosity—we are hard wired to be curious animals

» Be the main character
   » The closer to you the story hits; the more likely the students will recall it

» Tell stories about stuff you like
   » Tie it to the course content…I like peppermint ice cream so it is a theme 😊

» Pacing is key
   » Pause....................... for emphasis!
Evoke VAK
- Stimulate visual, auditory, kinesthetic; when the mind starts to imagine all these parts of the brain light up!

Like Chubby Checker....give ‘em a twist.......
- The unexpected or a cliff hanger........HOLD THEM OVER UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS PERIOD!! (they haaaaatttttteeeeee this!!!)

Avoid the “moral of the story” types of endings........
- Let the story resonate with each individual; don’t tell them what they should take away from the story.
EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS FOR ME

FHCE 3100 NO STORIES
- Same course
- 295 Undergraduate Students
- Fall 2013
- Miller Learning Center
- Me
- 61% Males
- 16% are my majors

FHCE 3100 STORIES
- Same course
- 287 Undergraduate Students
- Fall 2013
- Miller Learning Center
- Me
- 57% Males
- 14% are my majors
EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS FOR ME

FHCE 3100 NO STORIES

- Exam answer correct:
  - Consumer Sovereignty: 53%
    - Determine what makes it or not in market place
  - Kvetcher: 29%
    - Person who complains for you
  - Giffen Good: 31%
    - Price increases, buy more
  - Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility: 37%
    - Each unit equal less satisfaction

FHCE 3100 STORIES

- Exam answer correct:
  - Consumer Sovereignty: 95%
  - Peppermint ice cream
  - Kvetcher: 84%
    - Crazy baby sister
  - Giffen Good: 89%
    - Wino buys more Boone’s Farm
  - Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility 86%
    - 1, 2, 3 bowls of peppermint ice cream

Diann Moorman, Ph.D. University of Georgia
Crosstab Results (stories by correct answer)
WHO KNEW?
I truly just thought I was giving them and myself a break from LEARNING by telling stories!!!

1.5 years later: concept retention?
SPRING 15…..FHCE 5100 class: on-line quiz tool consumer econ assessment.

- Consumer Sovereignty: 67%
  - Peppermint ice cream
- Kvetcher: 54%
  - Crazy baby sister
- Giffen Good: 52%
  - Wino buys more Boone’s Farm
- Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility: 71%
  - 1, 2, 3 bowls of peppermint ice cream
Grandma Miller:
You throw enough cooked spaghetti at the walls and some of it has to stick 😊
Dr. Moorman is great! She explains everything and is very helpful when asked questions. She includes real life applications, so I felt like I really took something away from the class, not just enough info to pass the tests. *She's funny and tries to engage students with stories.*

Confession, yes I read the comments!
My Poor Husband 😞

- Professor Moorman is a great professor. She makes the material interesting and relates it to students' lives. She tells funny stories about her family (related to the material) to keep people interested.

- 3/5/2010
I guess... if it's not broke—don't fix it!

We must teach the way students learn.

—Pedro Noguera, Professor of Education, NYU