



SMALL GROUPS WITH ENORMOUS BENEFITS

NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR YOUR
EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS

Small Groups (3-5 children) allow children to follow their interests, make decisions that influence their play, and use their language in meaningful situations. They are able to identify and solve problems, collaborate with others, and think creatively as they have conversations with others.

Additional ideas for centers and choice time can be found in *The Complete Learning Center Book (Revised)* available on the website below.

STORYTELLING CENTER



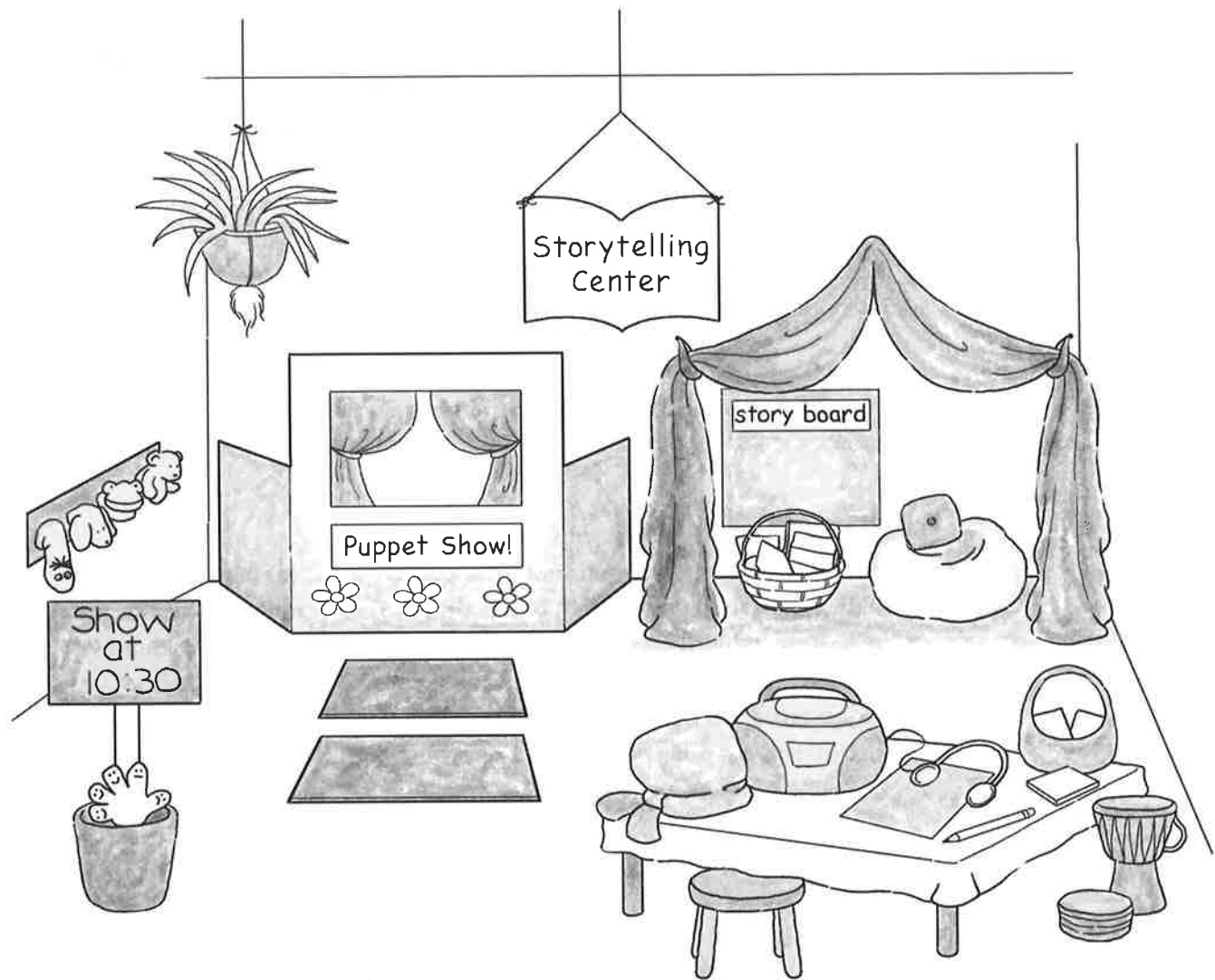
This storytelling center builds on the "power of the story" as children listen, participate, and retell the story content.



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Summary

Telling stories is an important tradition in many cultures. Stories are a way for young children to learn about the world of their ancestors. Stories capture the interest of young children, because the listening material is both entertaining and enlightening. Stories that are told allow children to be both the audience and participant. After hearing stories, young children like to repeat them for others. In this retelling process, they begin to understand how stories work and use these elements in their oral telling. These experiences provide a strong oral foundation for emerging literacy. The Storytelling Center establishes a special place in the classroom where teacher, children, or guests can enjoy telling stories.

Include many different recordings, props, and books in the Storytelling Center to inspire storytellers. In this center, young children listen to others and build the confidence to begin retelling stories. Later, they may create their own stories. Tell a story in this center as the exciting happening that will lead to the opening of the Storytelling Center.

Introducing the Center

The fall of the year is a great time to set up the Storytelling Center. During this time, many communities, schools, and libraries have a storytelling festival that children can attend. Because some will not have this opportunity, invite a storyteller to share a story with the

group during circle or group time or in the new Storytelling Center. Learn a folktale or story that you can share with the group without using a book. This experience with a teller demonstrates how stories people tell are different from stories they read in books. For many of the children, this will be their first storytelling experience.

Learning Objectives for Children in the Storytelling Center

1. To have the opportunity to hear stories told by the teacher, guests, and peers.
2. To experience stories told in many ways.
3. To expand their oral language as they listen, participate, and tell stories.
4. To begin to understand the form, characters, and moral of stories.
5. To enjoy and expand their interest in literature.

Time Frame for the Storytelling Center

This center can inspire “budding storytellers” for many weeks. It functions most effectively after it has been in operation several days, giving children the time to examine the contents and move on to becoming storytellers. Set up the Storytelling Center several times during the year.



Note: The attached CD contains a sample letter to send to families, introducing them to the Storytelling Center.



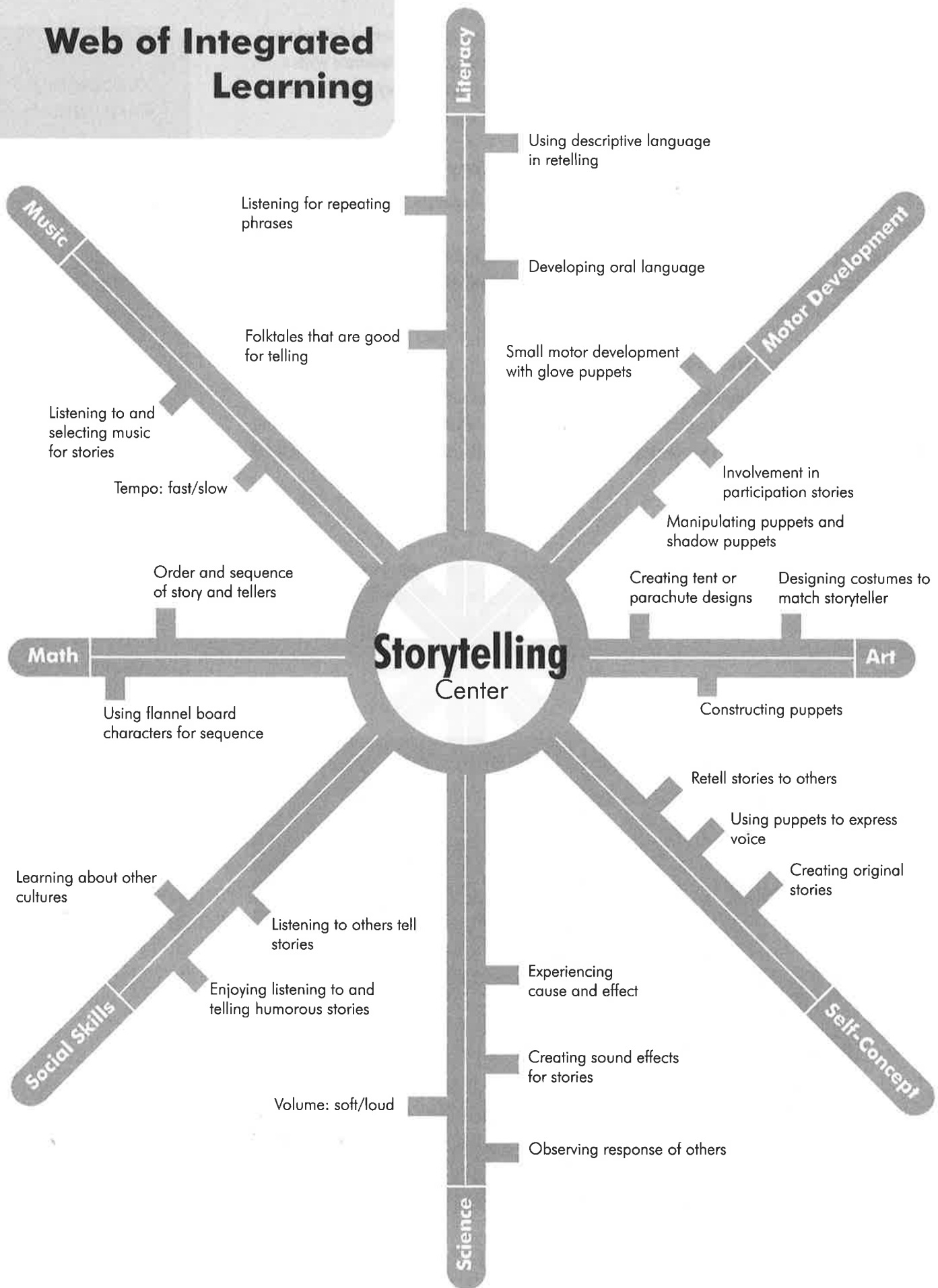
Stories capture the interest of young children.

Vocabulary Enrichment

ancestor
audience
beginning
character
dialog
dynamics: loud/soft
emphasize
ending
folktale
hand motion
listener
location
long ago
pattern
pretend
puppeteer
repeating phrase
retell
sequence
shadow puppet
sound effect
storyteller
tempo: slow/fast
voices



Web of Integrated Learning



Family- or Teacher-Collected Props for the Storytelling Center

- tent or parachute
- CD or tape player
- wigs
- hats
- earphones
- recordings of stories
- dress-up clothes:
 - hats
 - pieces of bright colored fabric
 - scarves
 - shawls
 - unusual clothing items



Puppets help these children tell their stories.



Child-Created Props for the Storytelling Center

Glove Puppets

MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

cotton gardening gloves
markers
trim materials and glue (for decorating, if desired)

- Cotton gloves are a very inexpensive way to create puppets.
- Use one glove to create five finger puppets a child can manipulate.
- The children can draw a face on each finger with a marker.
- Some children may want to add pompoms and decoration.
- Use the glove to tell the story of the Five Little Monkeys or let the child tell her own version of a familiar story using this glove puppet.

Puppet Stage

MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

blanket or sheet
clothesline
large appliance box
paint and brushes (if available)

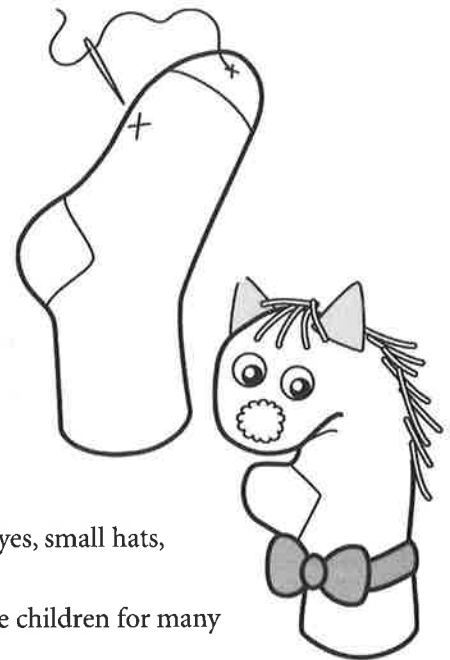
- Construct a very simple puppet stage by placing a blanket or sheet over a low piece of clothesline.
- Make a more elaborate stage out of appliance boxes, painted for additional effect.
- Use either stage in the Storytelling Center.

Sock Puppets

MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

glue
scraps of fabric, yarn, feathers, and so on
socks

- Make a puppet with a moving mouth.
- Each child places the sock over her hand with the heel over her thumb.
- With the other hand, she pushes the toe into her cupped hand.
- Create the top of the puppet's head by stitching the top of the toe to the middle of the sock, between the toe and the heel.
- Glue or tack the mouth in place, so the puppet's mouth will move during the telling.
- Decorate with scraps of fabric, yarn, strips of trim, movable eyes, small hats, feathers, or flowers to create any puppet character.
- These simple puppets are very versatile and can be used by the children for many different stories.



heavy yarn
hole punch
large sheet of paper
markers

- The children can have a storytelling festival.
- Children can design a chart to schedule the order of the storytellers.
- Children can also make a flyer to hang in the Center or around the classroom announcing the festival.
- Children can make other posters or advertisements to post in the center as desired.

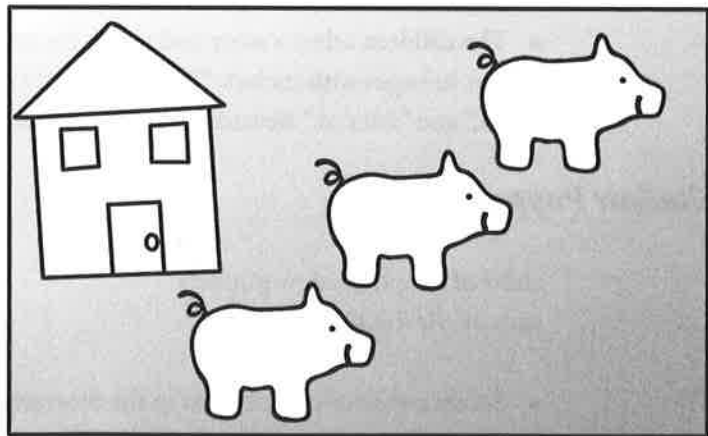
Activities for the Storytelling Center

Child-Size Flannel Boards

ART

construction paper
glue
pieces of flannel or felt
recorded stories
sandpaper
child-safe scissors
small, shallow boxes or individual pizza boxes

- Make individual flannel boards for children by using a small shallow box, such as a lingerie box.
- Cut several pieces of flannel in different colors and place them in the Storytelling Center.
- Each child selects and glues a flannel piece inside the top of her box.
- The children make characters from construction paper.
- When the children complete their characters, they can cut out the characters and glue small pieces of sandpaper on the backs of their characters so they will adhere to the flannel.
- Play recorded stories or encourage the children to tell stories using the flannel board characters.
- This small portable board can be taken home for the children to share their stories with their families.



recording of simple jokes

- Young children enjoy listening to and telling jokes; you can create a humorous recording of simple jokes children will enjoy in the Storytelling Center.
- Label the recording with smiling faces.
- After the children have had a good laugh, they may want to add one of their favorite jokes to the recording.

Listening to Storytellers

various recordings by storytellers

- The children will enjoy hearing recordings of professional storytellers in the Storytelling Center.
- Children can select the recording they want to hear and listen to it individually or with several other children.
- Jackie Torrance’s *Classic Stories* is a good example of the many wonderful recordings available.

Participation Stories

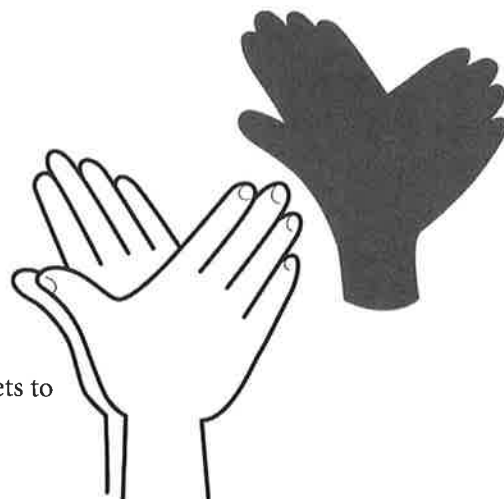
chart of stories
musical instruments
recordings of music

- List stories the children know that invite them to add sound effects or make hand motions on a chart in the Storytelling Center.
- The children select a story and create the appropriate accompaniment for the telling. Stories to begin with include “The Little Red Hen,” “The Gingerbread Boy,” “The Three Billy Goats Gruff,” and “Fat Cat.” Be sure to include stories that the children enjoy and know.

Shadow Puppets

chart of simple shadow puppets
spot or clip-on light

- Set up a spot or clip-on light in the Storytelling Center to produce shadows on the wall.
- Display a chart of simple shadow puppets that the children can make with their hands.
- Allow the children to experiment with and discover how to make the shadow puppets.
- Later, encourage the children to use these puppets to tell or accompany stories.



box
foil or gold wrapping paper
glue
jewelry or sequins
story items: a beautiful rock, feather, old picture, and so on

- Cover a box with foil or gold wrapping paper and glue old jewelry or sequins on the top.
- Place interesting items that may stimulate a story inside the box. Items that could start a story include a beautiful rock, a feather, a glass marble, a flower, old lace, an old picture, a baby toy, or a silver coin.
- The children open the box, take out one item, and begin a story. They use the other items as needed during the story.

Story Pictures

picture album
scissors
unusual pictures from magazines

- Place unusual pictures in a picture album.
- The children look at the pictures and create a story to accompany the events they see happening in the pictures.

Adding Spark to the Storytelling Center

Invite a grandparent or senior citizen to be the guest storyteller in the center. Ask them to tell stories about what life was like for them when they were young children. Children find these stories fascinating and this often inspires the teller to tell “new” stories. This also provides a very positive way for young children to interact with older adults.



“Let me tell you a story.”



Reading/Writing Opportunities

- Books of folktales with many pictures stimulate children to tell stories.
- Children “write” or record their own stories. Keep these stories in the Storytelling Center for other children to enjoy.
- Wordless books can encourage children to tell stories.
- Children “reread” stories told to them.

Other Printed Materials

- Use flannel boards with books that contain a good story for telling but may have dated illustrations.
- Show the children festival programs or articles about storytellers.

Books for the Storytelling Center

- Christelow, E. 2006. *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*. New York: Clarion. *A counting book in which, one by one, the little monkeys jump on the bed only to fall off and bump their heads.*
- Duke, K. 1995. *Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One*. New York: Puffin. *Penelope and her Aunt Isabel make up an exciting bedtime story about the adventures of Prince Augustus and Lady Penelope.*
- Edgson, A. 2006. *Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Swindon, England: Child’s Play International. *A classic folk tale about three goats who outwit a big, ugly troll that lives under the bridge they must cross on their way up the mountain.*
- Isbell, R., & Buchanan, M. 2004. *Everyone Has a Story to Tell*. Jonesborough, TN: Olde Towne. *Two children search for stories in Jonesborough, Tennessee, the storytelling capital of the world.*
- MacDonald, M. R., & Paschkis, J. 2001. *Fat Cat: A Danish Folktale*. Little Rock, AR: August House. *A greedy cat grows enormous as he eats everything in sight, including his friends and neighbors who call him fat.*
- Pinkney, J. 2006. *The Little Red Hen*. New York: Dial. *This is the familiar story of the hen unable to get help. There is the rat, the goat, the pig, and the dog, who refuse to help Hen make the bread but are perfectly willing to share the finished product.*
- Sierra, J., & Vitale, S. 1996. *Nursery Tales Around the World*. New York: Clarion. *This book is an international collection of 18 nursery tales for young children, illustrated with full-color borders and grouped by theme, such as Runaway Cookies, Slowpokes and Speedsters, and Chain Tales.*

Evaluation of the Storytelling Center

(This form is on the CD that comes with this book.)

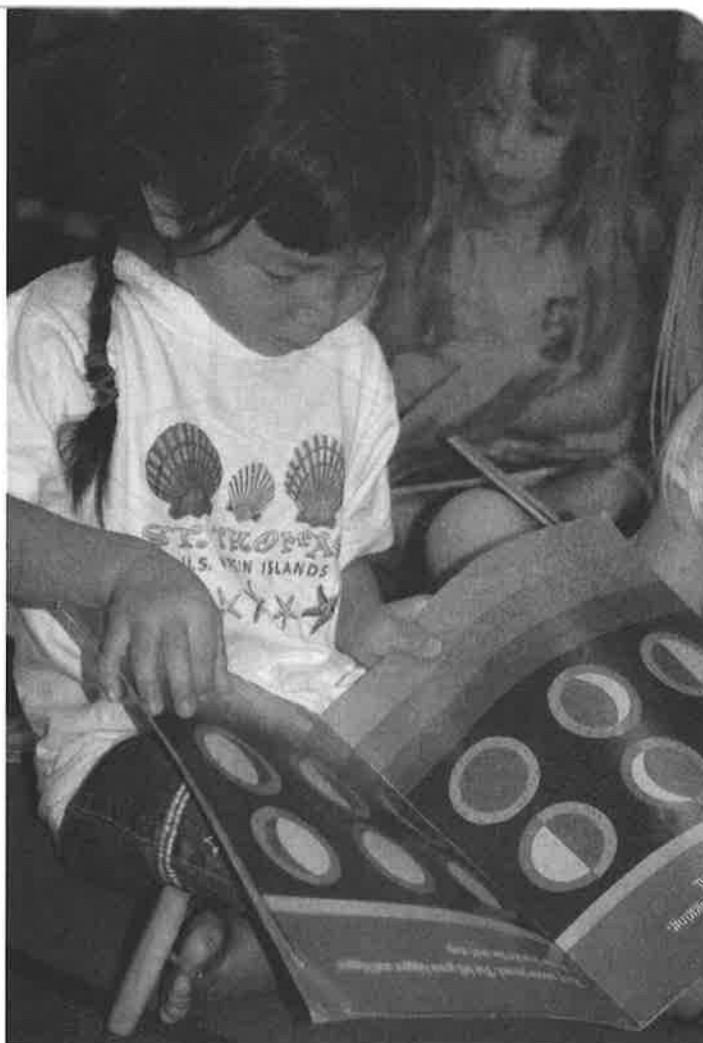
Ask yourself the following questions to evaluate the Storytelling Center in your classroom:

- Are children interested in listening to stories in the center?
- Are children telling stories orally with or without props?
- Are children telling stories that include expressive language, gestures, or sound effects?
- Are children demonstrating interest in different types of literature?
- Are children making props or puppets to use in their storytelling?

Observation of the Individual Child

(This form is on the CD that comes with this book. Always date observations of each child.)

- Is the child choosing to go to the Storytelling Center? What is she doing there?
- Is the child listening to the stories of others or on recordings? Which ones?
- Is the child retelling or creating a story? What vocabulary, language, or gestures is she using?
- Does the child seem confident in her abilities? What have you observed that leads you to this conclusion?
- Has the child demonstrated creativity in the telling or story creation? How?



A girl “reading” a book





THE GREAT GIGANTIC TURNIP

Here is a story that young
children enjoy and serve as
an introduction to the
storytelling center.



The Great Gigantic Turnip



IN THIS STORY ADAPTED FROM A RUSSIAN FOLK-
TALE, EVERYONE TRIES TO PULL A GIGANTIC
TURNIP FROM THE GARDEN, BUT IT STAYS PUT
UNTIL A TINY MOUSE JOINS THE TUGGING.

Each spring Grandfather planted a garden beside his house. One spring he decided to plant a turnip seed.

Each day Grandfather would work in his garden and check on his turnip to see how it was growing. He watered the turnip when it was dry and pulled up the weeds that grew around it. The turnip grew and grew and grew. Grandfather watched the turnip and took care of it every day.

Grunt and pretend to pull.

Finally, Grandfather decided it was time to pull up the turnip. It had grown into a gigantic turnip. Grandfather took hold of the stem of the turnip and he pulled and he pulled and he pulled, but the turnip was so gigantic that he could not pull it up.

Grunt and pretend to pull.

He called to his wife, "Grandmother, come and help me pull up this gigantic turnip." Grandmother ran to help her husband. She put her arms around his waist, and he held on to the stem of the turnip. Grandfather and Grandmother pulled and they pulled and they pulled, but the gigantic turnip did not move.

**Grandmother called to her daughter,
"Come help us pull up the turnip."**

Pretend to wipe your brow.

Her daughter ran to help. She put her arms around Grandmother, who had her arms around the waist of Grandfather, who was holding on to the stem of the gigantic turnip. They pulled and they pulled and they pulled together, but the gigantic turnip did not budge. Grandmother's daughter called her daughter, "Come help us pull up the turnip."

The little girl hurried to help. She pulled on her Mother, while Mother pulled on Grandmother, while Grandmother pulled on Grandfather, while he held on to the stem of the turnip. They pulled and they pulled and they pulled together, but the gigantic turnip did not move.

Look discouraged and shake your head.

The little girl called to her puppy,
"Come help us pull up the big turnip."
The puppy barked excitedly and came running to help.

The puppy caught hold of the little girl's dress and pulled. The little girl pulled on her Mother, who pulled on Grandmother, while she pulled on Grandfather, while he held on to the stem of the turnip. They pulled and they pulled and they pulled together, but the gigantic turnip did not come up. It did not move.

Make pulling motions with your arms.

Then the puppy called to the cat who came running to help pull up the turnip. The cat pulled on the dog. The dog pulled on the little girl. The little girl pulled on Mother. Mother pulled on Grandmother and Grandmother pulled on Grandfather, who pulled on the stem. They pulled and they pulled and they pulled together, but nothing happened. The turnip did not come up.

Pretend to be out of breath.

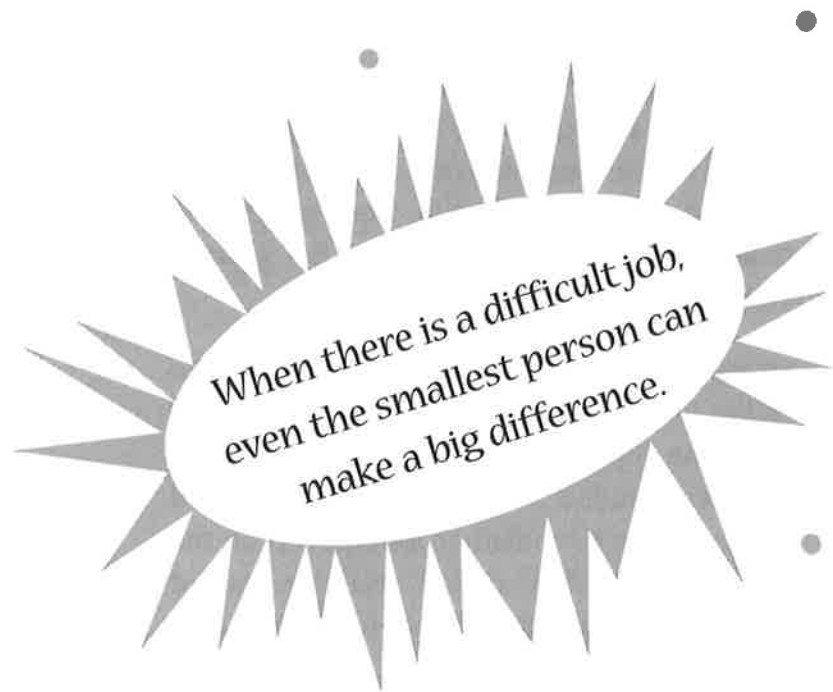
A tiny mouse heard all the noise and came to see what was happening. The mouse said, "I will help you."

Sound confident.

Clap with joy.

The mouse pulled on the cat, who pulled on the dog, who pulled on the little girl, who pulled on Mother, who pulled on Grandmother, who pulled on Grandfather, who held onto the stem of the turnip. Together they pulled and they pulled and they pulled. Out popped the great gigantic turnip!

That night everyone—Grandfather, Grandmother, Mother, the little girl, the puppy, the cat, and the tiny mouse—had a big dinner made from the great gigantic turnip.



Storytelling Tips

- Some listeners may not be familiar with a turnip, so you might want to show them one. Talking about other vegetables that grow in the ground might be a good expansion.



- This story is especially good for telling because it is a cumulative tale. Practice repeating the characters in the order they are added to help pull the turnip.
- Emphasize how hard they must pull to get the gigantic turnip out of the ground. "They pu-l-l-ed and they pu-l-l-ed and they pu-l-l-ed."
- After each segment of pulling, pause to see if the turnip has moved. These pauses will help build anticipation for the story climax.

Questions

- How many different people and animals were needed to pull the great gigantic turnip out of the ground?
- Why did the tiny mouse make the gigantic turnip finally come out of the ground?
- Who would you ask to help pull up the big turnip? Why?

TASTING PARTY

Materials

Vegetables that are familiar and unfamiliar (include a turnip if possible)

Tray

Cutting board and knife



Steps

- ❏ Collect some vegetables that are tasty when eaten raw, such as carrots, green peppers, celery, turnips.
- ❏ Let the children help wash and cut the vegetables.
- ❏ Taste the vegetables together and talk about how they are alike and how they are different. Ask the children which vegetables they like and which they don't.

PULLING TOGETHER

Materials

A jump rope or thick rope

Household items that the child could pull with the rope

Steps

- ④ Help the listeners tie the rope around a toy chest, small garbage can, or old chair. (Choose an item that would be difficult for one child to pull.)
- ④ Invite each child to try pulling the item without help.
- ④ Suggest that two people pull the item together. Talk about how much easier it is when the two of you pull together. If other adults or children are around, ask them to help pull too.

