

Storytelling Story Acting in a Kindergarten Classroom

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What happens when I use Storytelling Story Acting every day in my kindergarten class?

1. How does using Storytelling Story Acting (STSA) impact narrative development in both English Language Learners (ELLs) and Native English Speakers (NSs)?
2. Will interest in STSA transfer to Lucy Calkins' Writer's Workshop framework? Is the transfer evident in their narrative writing samples?
3. How does using STSA impact language and vocabulary development in both English Language Learners (ELLs) and Native English Speakers (NSs)?
4. How does using STSA help motivate kindergarteners to create and write their own stories?
5. Does using STSA in a kindergarten classroom change student attitude and develop confidence about storytelling, writing and reading?

Rationale

Last year I used STSA in a Head Start classroom and saw how excited and engaged preschoolers were when using their imagination and rapidly developing language to 'tell their story' as well as take a role as an actor in each other's stories. I began to notice that my ELLs were not only motivated to dictate a story, but were also developing language quickly. In addition, I observed how these same children showed their understanding of stories throughout their movements and facial expressions. I began to wonder if I would have the same learning outcomes when using STSA in a kindergarten class?

Although storytelling and dramatization are often associated with early childhood, I have found that our curriculum and academic expectations for this age level, force many teachers I know to put creative strategies such as STSA to the wayside. The new Common Core State Standards supports and values my belief that in order to ensure that all students in the United States are career and college ready in literacy, we must have rigorous grade specific standards, defined expectations and teachers who use higher level questioning while using an interactive model of literacy. The Common Core State standards also give teachers the freedom to decide what strategies and programs to use in order to meet the learning goals.

The revised Bloom's taxonomy levels of thinking place creativity as the highest form of thinking and questioning. By broadening our curriculum and using creative programs such as STSA, children will be given the opportunity to think out of the box and create their own stories. In addition, dramatization helps children to create pretend worlds and let characters come to life in these worlds. In my opinion, this is what reading and writing is all about. Both STSA and Lucy

Calkins' writing program complement one another in their balanced approach to literacy as well as give children real-life experiences as writers, authors and creators. I believe these skills will help them be college and career ready as well as help them believe that what they say and do is valued and important.

Finally, I believe that Common Core's "educational freedom" is a gift to creative and passionate teachers to use their own higher level thinking, experience and knowledge to use and create teaching strategies which will help all children meet and exceed their learning goals. I wanted to examine how using STSA helps children meet the Common Core State Standards in reading, speaking, listening and using language effectively.

School and Teaching Context

I am beginning my twenty-third year teaching in an early childhood classroom at an urban elementary neighborhood school which has a rich history. Our school was built in the late 1800's, just as street railways began running through the neighborhood. At that time, farmland began filling up with bungalows and apartments which brought residents from many different cultures and backgrounds working, living and learning together. Although our neighborhood is historically known as European influenced, it has always been a melting pot of diverse cultures and languages. Today our school and neighborhood is rich in both ethnic diversity as well as a sense of community. I have a special bond in the community with family roots that stretch back three generations as well as grandparents that went to the school that I currently teach.

This neighborhood elementary school services pre-kindergarten through eighth grade students, has two to three homeroom classrooms in each grade, with approximately 707 students enrolled for the 2012-2013 school year. 88% of students enrolled are low income, 19.9% are special education students and 20.5% are limited English learners. The average expenditure per student at this school is 11, 729 dollars. The school is diverse with a demographic break down of 78.1% Hispanic, 10.7% White, 6% Asian, 3% Black and 1% American Indian or Multiracial. Although our school did not meet federal education standards, 78.6% of students met or exceeded standards across all sections of the ISAT test.

The SY2011 School Progress Report indicates that in pre-k through grade two students 69.7% were on level or above in reading and 41.9% of students were on level or above in math. In grades 3 through 5 on NWEA testing, 39.7 percent scored at or above in reading and 36.7% scored at or above in math. In grades 6 through grade 8 NWEA testing, 42% scored at or above in reading and 30.4% in math. This report indicates that our school is considered a level 2 school or middle performance school that needs improvement. Approximately 90% of teachers at this school have at least a master's degree and 5 are currently National Board certified. The teachers are creative, enthusiastic and driven to find strategies that create a rigorous curriculum. Most teachers are collaborative with support staff and are willing to share their resources, materials and expertise with others in the building. This year we have nine new teachers and they are mentored by master teachers who give educational support, share strategies and support.

Our school has a typical student services staff. There is a social worker, school psychologist, occupational therapist, nurse and speech pathologist that are shared between several schools. Additionally, we collaborate with C-4, a local behavioral health and social service provider which gives weekly support and counseling to our students and their families. Classroom assistants are also assigned to classrooms in which extra special education support is needed according to a child's individual educational plan.

In addition, our school is using the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and currently training all school personal. This comprehensive, school-wide program's goals are to reduce and prevent bullying problems among school children and to improve peer relations among children. I am one of twelve teachers who are on this important committee. Our PTO and our community group work together by fundraising, promoting volunteerism, grant writing, and promoting our school in the community.

I teach all core subjects in me contained kindergarten class of 26 students: 13 boys and 13 girls. I have 3 students receiving special education resource services from a learning disabilities specialist. Additionally, 5 of my students receive weekly speech therapy and 5 receive social work services. 16 of my students speak English as a second language and all newsletters and parent letters are translated into each family's native language. 93% of my classroom children are enrolled as low income and receive free lunches. All students have 60 minutes of gym, library, computers, music, health, and art weekly taught by resource teachers. I currently have four computers in my classroom and we will have a classroom Smart Board before the first of the year. Although I currently do not have any parent volunteers in the classroom, all families are supportive of our learning environment and do their best to help their children learn at home.

Both Common Core and Illinois Learning Standards drive our rigorous school and kindergarten curriculum. Starting in September, our kindergarteners begin to see themselves as writers as they create, share and draft their own stories in the Lucy Calkins' Writer's Workshop program. During our morning meeting, children have an opportunity to tell their own creative story and have their friends help them to act it out on our classroom stage. Children are also given learning and reading choices in our Daily 5 balanced literacy system. I act as a facilitator in their learning as kindergarteners work in partners and learn to ask and answer higher level questions with their friends. Children are also taught math with University of Chicago's Everyday Mathematics curriculum. This balanced mathematics curriculum gives our children real-world problem solving opportunities. Kindergarteners are given mathematical experiences using all their modalities in order to help them meet and exceed their learning goals. Children also investigate a topic in the project approach. In October, kindergarteners started investigating and researching the telephone. Children are working in small inquiry groups focused on finding answers about how a telephone works.

Literature Review: What Are Other Researchers Saying About STSA?

As a veteran teacher in a kindergarten classroom, I have noticed not only an increase in standardized testing, but a curriculum aimed at specific reading and writing skills. As a part of my action research, I wanted to find out what happens when I use Storytelling Story Acting every day in my kindergarten class. How does using STSA impact narrative development,

language and vocabulary in both English Language Learners (ELLs) and Native Speakers (NSs)? Will my kindergarteners' interest in STSA transfer to Lucy Calkins' Writer's Workshop framework, and is that transfer evident in their narrative writing samples? Can using STSA every day in my classroom help motivate kindergarteners to create and write their own creative stories? Will using STSA with my kindergarteners develop their confidence about storytelling, writing and reading?

I have no doubt that both my research on this topic and implementing STSA in my classroom will lead to new questions that may be more relevant and important to my teaching and learning. One of my idols, 60 Minutes creator Don Hewitt, once was asked about the key to success and stated, "I may not know a lot, but I think I know how to tell a story." I want to successfully give my children an arena to "tell their stories" with confidence, eloquence and creativity. Could STSA be a way to connect literacy learning and children's own creativity and experiences in a playful theatrical experience? When starting this journey I was curious how other researchers and educators, including Dr. Vivian Paley, implemented STSA and its advantages and disadvantages in the classroom.

What is Storytelling Story Acting?

Dr. Vivian Gussin Paley is best known for her use of Storytelling Story Acting in both preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Dr. Paley's STSA holistic storytelling curriculum consisted of both story dictation and dramatization. Children were given an opportunity to "tell their story" as well as take a role as an actor in each other's creative stories and fantasies. Paley (1981) wrote about how her kindergarten children were encouraged to learn by dictating their fantasies, stories, conversations, and dramatizing them in her classroom. Although Dr. Paley did not invent STSA, she popularized it and established it as a regular classroom activity. According to research in early childhood development, which included the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (National Centre for Educational Statistics 2005) concluded that investment in print, vocabulary development, overall language development and comprehension skills were more important to children's learning to read and write than skill knowledge (Hart and Risley, 1995; Snow, 1991, 2002; Snow et al., 1998 as quoted in Cooper, 2005). This balanced literacy approach to literacy instruction supported Dr. Paley's storytelling curriculum when looked at from a literacy perspective.

As I researched STSA, I discovered many researchers as well as educators used different variations of STSA in their classrooms. McNamee (2005) analyzed Dr. Paley's use of STSA and found that listening to children and dictation occurred both during choice time as well as in circle time. In some examples of Dr. Paley's work, her children acted out dictated stories immediately after dictation occurred and other times during circle time. She also discussed Paley's narrative tools that were imperative to her teaching. These narrative tools included: play, storytelling, dramatization, parent visits and their storytelling, stories read daily, dramatization and mural making, year-long author studies, teacher created folk tales and the use of Socratic method of

questioning. Dr. Paley's narrative tools use supported an interactive approach to reading and writing as well as helped the transition between what a child can say, create and the written word. This also supports Vygotsky's belief (1978) that "...play provides a medium in which children can easily remember, imagine, and recreate images and ideas from their previous experiences, even though these same mental operations might be too difficult if the same children were to simply try to think about or discuss them." (Wright, C., Bacigalupa, C., Tyler, B., Burton, M. (2007, p. 363).

How Do I Implement STSA in my Kindergarten Classroom?

I have modified and adapted Dr. Paley's STSA methodology to meet the needs of my kindergarten students. In September, I gathered children around "the stage" during our morning meeting. I asked children, "Who wants to tell me a story for us to do?" Next, a kindergartener would dictate his or her story as I wrote it down. In mid October, after reading Cooper's 2005 article, I began to have children "tell their stories" to me individually during either center time or during Daily 5. Acting as a scribe, I wrote down their stories and asked clarifying questions if needed. In my STSA version, I wrote down exactly what the child says. My view is that both ELL and NS's will adapt standard speech when they are ready. Dr. Paley also seemed to follow this belief when she write down exactly what a child says as well as listening and asking clarifying questions to the children in her kindergarten classroom. Cooper (2005) stated that this dictation decision is left up to the teacher and regardless of a teacher's view, dictation offers educators a chance to teach children about language usage as well as to learn what the children know and are ready to know. At this time my view is that both ELL and NS's will adapt standard speech when they are ready. I also believe that this also respects childrens' language as well as helps children take risks in language and learning. As Vivian Paley does in her practice, I sometimes offer children a suggestion such as, "Do you want to say that the queen went to the store?" I listen to children and write down what they suggest.

Dramatization or story acting occurs every day as all children gathered around "the stage" or carpet area. I read the story to the audience and potential actors and then read it aloud again after the children were assigned to their acting roles. I assume the role of the director and offer suggestions to the actors just as Dr. Paley portrays in her books. I also type every story, place one copy in our class STSA binder and send one home with the storyteller. Children share and read their stories with families at home. Our class STSA binders (one for each month of the year) are available in our classroom for all children to read, revisit and act out with their peers. STSA is consistently done every day in my classroom as Dr. Paley has demonstrated in her 1981 book. I anticipate my definition of STSA will evolve throughout this journey and I predict a connection between children's written stories and their STSA.

What Makes a Good Story?

Dr. Paley believed that children are born knowing how to put thoughts and their feelings into story form and play is their story in action just as storytelling is play put into a narrative form. Paley (1990) stated that young children are able to think up plots and dialogue without instruction. She also stated that children develop language and storytelling through a variety of narrative tools and collaboratively they create a curriculum of literacy development as well as other areas of learning. Cooper (2005) revealed the fact that American schooling tends to reward students with stories that contain a beginning, middle and end as well as celebrated stories with a well-developed plot and characters. Cooper celebrated Paley's STSA strategy for giving children permission to experiment with language and content. She noted that dictation also promoted independent creative writing. Upon reflection, I thought how Lucy Calkins began our writer's workshop program having children write and draw their own personal narratives. Both Paley and Calkins' programs seem to empower children with their creative and personal thoughts and expression. In my classroom, I model stories with a linear sequence such as a beginning, middle and end as well as other types of stories. Kindergarteners are making discoveries about the different kinds of stories they listen too as well as the kinds of stories they can tell and write.

What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Using STSA in the Classroom?

Narrative, Vocabulary and Language Development

Dictation and dramatization has been recognized for its impact on children's language, narrative as well as psychosocial development (Cooper, 2005). She also concluded that some instruction in sub skills are useful in early childhood curriculum, and that prekindergarten and kindergarten activities enriched in play and dramatization, serve young children's overall needs better. In a sense, through storytelling children learn both indirectly and directly about language, narrative and print awareness. (Morrow, 2002, as quoted in Cooper, 2005). Both researchers also showed that when teachers used STSA regularly in a classroom, children naturally searched for meaning and narrative development. In a holistic way, STSA can lead to teaching sub skills through motivating child-centered literacy experiences with specific academic opportunities. Cooper (1993) also found that STSA helped children internalize language, links dialogue and description and assisted children in creating pictures in their heads, all essential in reading and understanding narrative.

Writing

Wright et al, (2007) discussed both Paley and Cooper's belief that STSA introduced children to the purposes of writing, allowed for creative verbal and written expression and allowed children to work through ideas and experiences. The authors also stated that conventions of print occurs when the teacher was moving the pencils from left to right as well as reading the finished story to the class. I consider this shared writing experience to be pivotal in the development of beginning reading and writing skills and I give many shared writing experiences to my children daily. Wright et al, 2007's research supported my belief that shared writing was an important literacy

skill and the repetition of dictated stories with children helps them learn to read, or say his or her words and how words can be written down. Children's writing expert Lucy Calkins also believes that play and dramatization is vital in children's literacy development, creativity, curiosity and expressive and flexible language (Calkins, 2003).

Home Connection

Wright, et al, (2007) discussed how sending a copy of a STTA story home with families not only involved families in this strategy and the learning process but reinforced oral language and cognitive development as well as building a child's self-esteem. I have noticed that sending a copy of STTA stories home not only connects the school and home relationship, but seemed to motivate children to read and create stories with families. Another researcher defined Paley's sixth tool for building connections in a classroom community as inviting families to come to the classroom to tell stories about their childhood (McNamee, 2005). Upon reflection, I realized that Paley's six tools for building connections in a classroom community support Joyce Epstein's research on the positive effects of parental involvement in education. She concluded that family involvement is the number one indicator for student achievement. Perhaps the use of STTA can positively connect families, increase student achievement as well as encourage families to listen and share stories with their children. Forming a positive partnership with families was supported by all the researchers I examined.

Motivation

I believe that giving children the freedom to create, tell, dramatize and read their own stories is motivation in itself for children to learn. Wright, et al, (2007) concluded that dramatizing stories was highly motivating for children as well as allowed children to think in more sophisticated ways. In addition, they stated that it also helped a concept that is abstract and difficult for young children to understand in isolation possible in the context of playacting. Cooper (1993) stated her belief that stories empowered children. Paley (1981) and Cooper (1993) both concluded in their work that dramatization in STSA is a powerful motivator in the learning process.

Are there Any Disadvantages to Using STSA in a Classroom?

Some research suggests that sometimes very young children have difficulty understanding the concept of a story, repeat repetitive narratives, and had difficulty sitting for the dramatization. Another concern when using STSA with kindergarteners is the amount of stories elements taken from books or media. Wright et al, (2007) defended STSA by stating that this tendency to reuse characters, plots or settings is a part of children's cognitive development. Retelling helps children practice important literacy skills such as story comprehension, language development

and helps make sense of story elements and structure (Morrow, 2005 as quoted in Wright et al, 2007). In both of Paley's books, Dr. Paley seems to use STSA to not only help a child academically but to better understand the entire child in order create the best learning environment for all children.

Putting it all together

Research supports STSA as a balanced literacy approach to literacy instruction and points out its many benefits when implemented in an early childhood classroom. In addition, the studies concluded that STSA can positively impact children's language, narrative development as well as psychosocial development. This holistic play-based strategy also gave many opportunities for not only literacy learning, but creativity, expression, family involvement as well as being a motivator for reading, writing and storytelling.

I also believe that the new Common core State Standards support and value my belief that in order to ensure that all students in the United States are college and career ready in literacy by the end of high school, we must have rigorous grade specific standards, defined end of the year expectations and educators who use higher level thinking questioning while using an interactive model of literacy. The Common Core State Standards gives creative teachers the freedom to decide what strategies and programs to use in order to meet the learning goals. I want to continue to use STSA in my kindergarten classroom and see if this balanced literacy strategy will support CCSS standards in reading, listening, speaking and using language effectively. Perhaps children's enthusiasm for STSA can motivate children to read for enjoyment as well as to learn and make a difference in our world. Cooper (2007) also discussed how many creative play-based program in early childhood were put to the side due to the No Child Left Behind educational policy but made that point that STSA supports academic learning. The revised Bloom's taxonomy levels of thinking places creating as the highest form of questioning and thinking. I believe that by broadening the curriculum and using STSA, children will be given an opportunity to think out of the box and create their own stories. McNamee and Cooper both mentioned Bloom's taxonomy in their research on STSA. McNamee (2007) discussed how Dr. Paley uses open ended questions when discussing stories with her children. Cooper mentioned how the goal of teaching reading is to both help children develop a positive attitude toward reading as well as support their problem solving (cognitive and affective domains of Bloom's Taxonomy as mentioned in Cooper's 2007 research).

Educational historian Diane Ravitch often discusses how if we focus only on standardized tests we ignore the humanistic elements of education. I have learned from many research articles and books that Dr. Paley genuinely listens to children and uses their interests and stories to not only teach sub-skills of literacy, but to help children connect to storytelling as well as their classroom community. I hope to listen very carefully to my kindergarteners and learn from them about how STSA can impact their lives.

Data Sources and Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data Sources:

- Collection of all stories told during our daily Storytelling Story Acting program
- Teacher journal
- Case study of four students (three English as a second language and one native English speaker)
- Lucy Calkins' writing samples
- Motivation data as well as student behaviors and attitudes towards writing, telling stories, dramatization and reading
- Comparison of results of the REACH Literacy Beginning of the Year and End of the Year Performance Task for the 2012-2013 school year
- Photos, taped stories, and videos of performances

Collection of STSA dictated stories: Starting in September, I typed up all the children's stories told during our daily Storytelling Story Acting program and placed in a binder. The binder was available for both children to read, and for me to further analyze academic growth by comparing children's stories throughout the year. Throughout my STSA journey, I was examining many areas of student academic growth including narrative development, language, and vocabulary. Additionally, I gave each student a copy of their story to take home to read and act out with their families.

My Teaching Journal: My journal has been a place for me to reflect upon what happens when I consistently used STSA in my kindergarten classroom. Writing about my experiences using this strategy has helped me to let a "true vision" of this creative journey emerge. I was able to document not only children's narrative development and language growth but to reflect upon how I could improve our STSA program in order to meet the needs of all of my children. I reread journal entries in order to not only analyze children's stories, but to help me discover underlying patterns in their storytelling, interests, writing, and behaviors. Lastly, my journals help me to connect my STSA experiences to the experiences of Vivian Paley in her kindergarten classroom. My entries have helped me to reaffirm the importance of actively listening to children and experience learning from their perspective. While our education system seems to focus on standardized tests and "teaching" children, the use of STSA helped me to use children's interests, creativity and experiences and learn from them.

Case Study of four students: Three English as a Second Language (ELL) children and one Native English Speaking (NS) student in the class were selected to serve as case studies for my research. I collected the following from each of the four: Lucy Calkins' writing samples, STSA dictated stories, photos, videotapes and transcripts as well as REACH Literacy Performance Task results. Focusing on four children has helped me see patterns and growth in their learning and attitude towards STSA, writing, and reading.

Lucy Calkins' writing samples: In my teaching journal I was able to write and reflect about my Writer's Workshop journal with my entire classroom as well as go deeper in my thinking with my four case study students. Close examination of Lucy Calkins' writing samples enabled me to make some discoveries about the connection between Writer's Workshop and my students' STSA stories. In order to assess student's growth in writing, I used an 8 point kindergarten rubric which is leveled the following way:

Level of Writing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Drawing, scribbling, sounds to represent letters.								
Letter strings								
Only copies words from environment without meaning.								
Use sight words.								
Uses the beginning sounds when trying to spell words.								
Some medial and ending sounds.								
Attempts vowels.								
Uses real spelling and silent letters.								
Draws matching pictures.								
Spaces between some words.								
Spaces between most words.								
Two or more sentences								
Usually uses end punctuation.								
Usually uses appropriate capitalization.								

Motivation Data: To document motivation and enthusiasm for STSA I had children raise their hands if they wanted to tell or perform a story and I recorded the number of volunteers. I began this on the first day of school and continued using it throughout the year. I also documented student motivation and their attitudes by observing behaviors throughout the school day and documenting in my teaching journal.

REACH Literacy Performance Task 2012-2013 class results: I will compare the results of the REACH Literacy Beginning of the Year and the End of the Year Performance Task for the 2012-2013 school year. In this task children perform two literacy activities. In both activities, children are read a story and then they are asked to tell and write/draw key details about the story. Children will also be scored by a rubric on their oral responses to text narrative development questions.

Photos, taped stories and videotapes of Storytelling Story Acting were also used throughout my STSA journey as a form of documentation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Case Studies I started STSA on the first day of our kindergarten year and for the following two weeks, I actively observed children's behaviors during STSA and throughout the day. I found that the majority of my observations and reflections in my teacher journal revolved around

four students in particular. I closely examined these four students throughout my research. I purposely chose one native English speaker and three English language learners because they uniquely represent our classroom of diverse learners. In each of the four case studies, I will give you a brief snapshot of each child as well as show and explain data regarding their STSA and Lucy Calkins' writing experiences, observations, motivation and academic growth.

Let Me Introduce You to Sean!

Sean is a fairly reserved six year-old who came to school with some letter and sound recognition as well as great interest in learning and literacy. Sean is a monolingual student and both his mother and father value education and parent involvement. In the beginning of the year Sean had some difficulty with self regulation and at times difficulty staying seated on the carpet during circle time. This is how I describe Sean in my teacher journal on 9/27/13:

“Although today Sean was either laying or rolling around on the carpet for circle time, when asked who would like to tell a story, he immediately sat with legs crossed, raised his hand and was eager to participate in STSA.”

His enthusiasm for STSA continued throughout the year, as well as his interest and documented growth in writing, reading, and creating.

Sean was administered the REACH assessment on 9/28/13 and received a score raw score of 1 out of 3 on the assessment rubric. The average raw score for our class was .7 out of 3. This data tells me that although Sean was above our classroom average, at this time he is below level in his ability to ask and answer questions about key details in a narrative text. The REACH assessment will be re-administered to the entire class in May, 2013 and the results will be included in my data interpretation.

Sean's STSA experiences

Experience #1 on 9/26/12 Sean was selected to tell a story today and he has consistently raised his hand 100% of the time thus far in September to not only tell a story but to act one out (as noted in my teacher journal on 9/26/12). The following is a transcript Sean's story:

Sean: It was a little boy playing in the bathroom. And then a dog wanted to walk outside. And then he was lost because he didn't know which way to go back home. And then his daddy called him and then he checked in the playroom and the boy wasn't there. And then a big boy helped him go back and he just has the dog on the leash. Then the parents saw the little boy and then the parents picked him up home. And then they were all happy.

My 9/26/12 journal entry states:

“I believe Sean definitely told a well-developed narrative story and although ambiguous at times, he was able to articulate the conflict of the story that the boy was lost and then found at the end of the story. Sean took his job as a storyteller seriously and looked away as he told his story and his facial expressions demonstrated profound concentration. Even when other children were chatting during this storytelling, Sean continued to stay focused and tell his story.” 96% of the children raised their hands to act out the story all our actors were able to portray their characters with accuracy and enthusiasm.

Experience #2 on 11/21-12 From 9/26/12 to 11/21/12 Sean raised his hand 96% of the time to tell a story and 96% of the time to act out a story. I asked him on 10/10/12 why he didn't raise his hand to act out a story and he responded, “I wanted to watch.” Perhaps motivation in STSA could be assessed by not only participation but by active listening and enjoyment. Sean's second STSA was told to me in the writing center while other children were in Daily 5 balanced literacy activities. Here is Sean's story:

Sean: Once there was a boy with his dog. And the dog got lost. Then the daddy found the dog. Then the daddy came back came back from the park where the dog was lost. The boy was eating when he found out the good news that the dog was found.

Me: I noticed that you told a story about a lost dog before. Did this story happen to you in real life?

Sean: Yes! I happened to me and my daddy and we found the dog.

I videotaped the story with his friend acting. I noted in my journal entry on 11-22-12:

“Such expression on their faces and they all used their bodies to portray the characters.” Sean illustrated the story later that day and I noticed more details in the story characters; especially in their facial expressions (even the dog). I also discussed in my teacher journal about the repetition of this story and said:

“Sean retold the same story and I believe it helped him cope with the experience of losing and finding his dog but helped him to connect and tell this personal experience to his friends and teachers. STSA also gave children like Sean the freedom to express themselves as well as create make believe stories and fantasies.”

I would like to do more research to see if I could quantify that there is a connection between childrens' telling and writing stories in order to cope with real-life experiences as well as developing children's confidence in communication of both real-life and creative stories. My teacher journal indicated that during the months of December and January Sean has been creating stories, dramatizing other stories, and writing letters to his friends. Instead of rolling around on the carpet at our morning meeting, Sean wrote a story or a letter first and then joined

us on the carpet when he is finished. Creativity and writing for meaning and expression had replaced self-regulation issues.

Experience #3 on 1-23-13 Sean loved the different versions of the *Gingerbread Boy* books and loves to create his own versions in the writing center. Here is his STSA story told to me right before lunch.

Sean: Okay...Once upon a time...and a very long time ago, there was as brown gingerbread boy. He had a mom and a dad who baked him one day and then made him real. He ran away and did not listen to them or anybody else. He just wanted to run and play and not listen.....A mean dog tried to be his friend but he really was not his friend and was tricking him. The dog tricked him and ate him like dog food. Then that was the end of the gingerbread boy and the mom and the dad had to bake one more.

Me: Maybe your next story could be about the next gingerbread boy that they make?

Sean: Hey....okay...maybe he could have a girl sister? I want to act in my story!

Sean's one hundred-five word narrative story had both a well-developed beginning, middle and end as well his own creative ideas with his use of a dog as a villain in his version of the story. He used his interest in dogs to adapt his own version of the *Gingerbread Boy*. Isn't this the kind of creativity that adult writers use to create a novel, sitcom or movie?

By comparing Sean's three STSA samples I was able to conclude that although his narrative development had increased, his vocabulary and the length of his stories did not significantly increase when comparing the growth in the first two STSA samples. In fact, his first story had a word count of 89 and his second sample story was repeat of his first story in a shorter version with containing 49 words. His retelling of his lost dog experience seemed to help him make sense of story structure. Research also supports that when children retell a story they are practicing important literacy skills, internalizing story comprehension, developing language and helping them make sense of story structure. Although his vocabulary growth was not evident when comparing the first two samples, his motivation for writing and telling stories had increased. In addition, his STSA sample 3 had a word count of 105, a 16 word increase from sample #1. This story showed significant growth in both narrative development and his creativity with his adaption of *The Gingerbread Boy*. In September, Sean started out the year not able to read independently. Now was not only able to independently read his second story, but reading at a level E by 1/21/13, the level our school wants all first graders to be in the beginning of grade one.

Sean's writing samples from his Lucy Calkins' folder indicate that he was in Level 1 or Prewriting stage in September, 2012 and his January, 2013 writing sample indicated that he was writing at a Level 6 or Early Developmental Spelling stage. I have also noticed that his interest in informal writing during school has increased. He now can be observed writing letters to friends,

messages on post it notes or creative stories during choice time. Sean's Lucy Calkins' sample 2 was created on 10/23/12. In this sample, he drew and wrote letters to show his "small moment" in three parts, a beginning, middle and end. His writing represents that he is using sight words in sentences as well as beginning and ending sounds. He is now at the Early Developmental Spelling stage and he is now writing and drawing in all areas of our classroom. Sean created a story in his Lucy Calkins' writer's folder (sample 3) and he was able to read his story to me which said, "the mouse tried to get up the tree and my family but my dad catch it." His exact letters were "the mas mt I D toEet up the tez and my feelf but my m dad kdt. He is now combining sight words, beginning and ending sounds and can read back his story to me. Some ending sounds in words are apparent and there are some spaces between words. His illustrations match his words and details in facial expressions (even the mouse).

Overall, using STSA, Lucy Calkins' writing program as well as a balanced literacy program gave Sean specific academic opportunities which empowered and motivated him to read, write and use and learn new language to "tell his story". The motivation data showed that Sean consistently raised his hand to tell a story and act out a story more than 90% of the time. Sean also scored 3 out of 3 on the rubric for the end of the year REACH Assessment Literacy Performance task. His score indicated that he is now able to successfully identify story elements in a narrative story. I also observed Sean writing his own creative narrative stories, writing to communicate and reading and dramatizing other STSA stories with expression and enthusiasm. Sean was able to use all his modalities when expressing himself and linking dialogue and description. He started out kindergarten at level 1 on our kindergarten rubric and by January he was writing at level 6 and reading at a beginning first grade level. My data suggests that this native English speaker demonstrated growth in creativity, narrative development, some vocabulary growth, and significant reading and writing growth.

Let Me Introduce You to Danny!

My teacher journal on 10/4/12 describes Danny in this way:

"Danny glows with excitement when he is constructing and building with blocks. My goal is to help engage this ELL child in writing and creating stories through both STSA and writer's workshop".

Although Danny speaks Spanish at home, this ELL child is able to speak in well-developed English sentences. In September and October Danny raised his hand only 71% of the time to tell as story and 86% of the time to act out a story. I decided to follow Israel very closely and see how his STSA and writing journey would develop.

Danny was assessed the REACH assessment on 9/26/12 and received a score of 1 out of 3 on the REACH assessment rubric. Israel is an outgoing child, but at times has difficulty staying on task

or motivated to finish work. I will re-administer the REACH test to all children in May and report Danny's growth.

Danny's STSA experiences

Experience #1 on 11/14/12

Danny: One time there was a boy and he went to watch TV. And then he went to wash the dishes. And then he asked his mom if he could get some money. And then he went back home.

I read the story back to Danny and despite his ambivalence to "tell his story" had a great big smile accenting his adorable dimples! He portrayed the boy in the story and all the actors showed their comprehension of the story through their performance.

Experience #2 on 12/6/12 Here is his story dictation:

Danny: One time there were a happy boy.

Me: Should we say one time there was a happy boy? What do you think?

Danny: Yeah...that is good

Me. (I reread the story back to him with the word was instead of were). What happens next?

Danny: He went to school and somebody took his seat. He told the teacher. She said that he needed to go to his spot and not in the other seat. Then the kid let the boy sit in his seat. They worked together and read penguin books together. They were friends.

Over the course of only a few months I saw dramatic improvements in both Danny's narrative development, vocabulary use, as well interest and writing development. In September, Danny would select to build with blocks during free play and by December he often would be observed writing stories or letters to his friends. An example of his increase in narrative development and vocabulary use is evident in STSA experience #3.

Experience #3 on 1-30-13:

Danny: One time at the part in the summer a boy went to play in the monkey bars with is best friend. Then they were playing on the swings and then the boy went way up. He was upside down and he was not scared cause he was twenty years-old. Then he went back to his house to eat delicious pepperoni pizza with his family. Then he played with his cards and then he play cards with his brother. It was a wonderful and exciting day! The End

All of Danny's story dictations are narrative stories that have a mix of real-life experiences as well as fantasy. His first story had a word count of 38 and his next story increased to a word count of 55 showing an increase of 17 words. His final narrative story had a word count of 85 words, and included sophisticated adjective use such as "delicious", "wonderful," and "exciting".

STSA gave Danny permission to not only play with language but gave him the freedom to tell as pretend story with some elements of real-life. Danny's STSA samples indicate significant growth in language, vocabulary, narrative development as well as creativity. On the REACH Literacy Performance task given in May, 2013, Danny scored 3 out of 3 on the rubric. His performance on this task indicated that he is now able to identify story elements in a narrative story. He was able to successfully communicate his understanding of narrative development in both written and oral expression. Danny also showed a significant increase in his motivation for both telling a story and acting in one. In October, Danny raised his hand only 71% of the time to tell as story. During the month of January, he raised his hand 96% of the time to tell a story, which is a 25% increase in his willingness to tell as story. In October, Danny raised his hand 86% of the time to act in a story. During the month of January he raised his hand 92% of the time, which is a 6% increase in willingness dramatize other's stories.

Danny's developmental growth is also demonstrated in his Writer's Workshop samples. In September Danny was at the Pre-Writing stage or level 1 on the rubric used. By 11/27/12 Danny writing samples indicate that he was at the Beginning Sounds stage (level 5) and his sentences included sight words and some beginning and ending sounds. By 1/4/12 Danny's writing samples indicated that he was at the Early Developmental Spelling stage (level 6) and he enthusiastically read his stories to his classroom and family members. Stories that Danny dictated to me during STSA seemed to be a combination his own experiences and fantasy as indicated in experience #3.

Overall, my data shows that using a combination of both STSA and Lucy Calkins' writing program as well as a balanced literacy program not only motivated him to tell and write stories but also increased his, writing, narrative language as well as vocabulary skills. In September, Danny was not able to read independently and by January, 2013 his independent reading level was at E, or beginning of first grade. While the variety of writing opportunities motivated Danny to create and express himself, STSA increased his confidence and motivation to "tell his story" as well as an area to use all his modalities to portray different characters. In addition, Danny often read other children's stories in our class binder and organized a cast of performers to act out a story. Danny said it best when on April 24th, 2013 he stated, "I live for writing!"

Let Me Introduce You to Rose!

Rose is an enthusiastic kinesthetic learner who speaks both English and Spanish at her home. I describe Rose in my teacher journal on 9/15/12 like this:

"Rose's favorite part of our day is choice time where she can either create a masterpiece in the art center or draw and "write" a story. She is a born leader and often gives children roles to play in the dramatic play area. My goal is to help use Rose's interest and creativity in her self-directed activities and increase her listening span and academic

knowledge. I believe STSA might be a way for Rose to use her creativity and interest to increase academic knowledge.”

Rose was assessed on the REACH assessment on 9/26/12 and received a score of 1 out of 3 on the REACH assessment rubric. The average raw score for our classroom was .7 out of 3. Rose’s REACH end of the year results will be added in May, 2013. Although Rose is above our classroom average her score is considered below level in the areas of narrative development as well as asking and answering questions about key details in a text.

Rose’s STSA Experiences

Experience #1 on 10/21/12 according to my motivation data, Rose has raised her hand 91% to tell a story and 98% to act out a story. Rose seems to enjoy listening to other children stories and could be observed writing her own stories during free choice time. Rose told me her story during Daily 5 balanced literacy activities. The following is her story:

Rose: One time there was a princess. The princess asked the mom and dad if she could go outside with her friend. Then...the princess went with her friends. The friends drove her home and she went to take a shower and brushed her teeth. Then she went to sleep.

I read the story over to Rose and asked her if she wanted to say “drove” instead of “drived” and she responded, “no...just drived is good”. I left her story exactly how she dictated it to me in respect for her risk taking.

Rose chose to act out the princess in the story and all four performers showed their comprehension for the story with their acting abilities. I had an “aha moment” in my teacher journal that evening on 10/21/12:

“I am noticing a pattern of children using fairy tale characters in stories about every day experiences that a kindergartener experiences. Rose uses a princess in her story but calls her royal parents mom and dad instead of the king and queen. STSA gives children the choice to make up their own rules about stories both orally told or in the written form.”

Experience #2 on 11/8/12

Rose: One boy and one girl played blocks in the house. Then...they went to the store. Then they read some books. Then they went to the carpet. The girl went to play soccer and the boy scared the girl. He said sorry. They were happy.

After I read Rose’s story twice to the children, Tommy raised his hand and said, “The problem is when the boy scared her and then at the end they became friends and were happy.” This is one example of how children are understanding elements of stories and able to identify parts of a story.

Experience #3 on 2-6/13

Rose so far has raised her hand to tell a story 88% of the time and raised her hand 96% of the time to act out a story. Here is Rose's third story:

Rose: a glowing flower that was really a baby named Rapunzel. She got stolen by a terrible mean witch named Goster. She told Rapunzel to stay in her castle and she could never come out. But...when Rapunzel grew up, she escaped from the castle and she found her mom! Then her hair started to grow and she found a boy who wanted to help her go to her real family. They found her family and they were happy. They were happy and they were together as a family.
The End

Rose wanted to act out her story and I let her pick the actors for the parts. I noticed again that Rose is using elements of real life along with a familiar fairy tale. Her story is in narrative form and Rose now is using adjectives to describe characters in her stories.

Rose's writing sample from 9/4/12 indicated that she is in the Environmental Print Stage of writing, or level 3 or the rubric used. Rose drew a picture of her family and wrote the words "dad" and "mom" by using an anchor chart about families that we just created before Writer's Workshop. Her illustrations of her family have some detail and Rose even used arrows to label her mom and dad with the written word on the page; a skill she just learned in Writer's Workshop. Her second writing sample was written on 10/11/12 and she has now entered an Early Developmental Spelling stage of writing, or level 6 in the rubric used. My teacher journal entries indicated that Rose has been creating stories, lists of items, letters and labeled pictures throughout all areas of the classroom. She also has been seen using anchor charts throughout our room to find words to spell. Sample #3 was written on 1-4/13 and indicates that Rose is now at the Transitional Spelling Stage of writing, or level 8 of the rubric used. She wrote, "I went to the zoo! I left the zoo and went to the park". Rose is now writing sight words and leaving spaces in between words.

Overall, that data shows that using STSA, Lucy Calkins' writing program as well as a rich balanced literacy program gave Rose specific academic opportunities which increased her reading, narrative development, writing and language growth. Rose scored 3 out of 3 on the REACH Literacy assessment administered in May, 2103. Her score indicated that she can successfully identify narrative story elements both verbally and in written form. The motivation data also showed that by February, Rose consistently raised her hand 88% to tell a story and 96% of the time to act out a story. My journal entries indicate that during choice time Rose consistently was writing her own stories and could also be observed leading a group of children in acting out one of her stories. Although my motivation data percentages showed that Rose raised her hand 8% more to act out a story than tell one, my observations indicate that Rose enjoyed writing her own stories and acting as a director when casting her friends in her own

stories. When comparing her three STSA samples, I was able to conclude that Rose's narrative development, vocabulary and length of stories did significantly increase. When comparing her first STSA story to her third sample, Rose had a 41 word increase in her story length. In addition, Rose's narrative story samples included some adjectives as well as used elements of fantasy and real life. Unlike our Lucy Calkin' writing program, STSA gave Rose the freedom to combine fantasy and real-life to tell her creative story. In September Rose was not able to read independently. By January, 2013, her independent reading level was at level C. Her writing samples indicated that she started the year writing at The Environmental Printing stage, or level 3. By January 2013, her samples indicated that she was writing at level 8 of our kindergarten rubric. My data suggests that this ELL student demonstrated growth in creativity, narrative development, vocabulary, and significant reading and writing growth.

Let me Introduce You to Jane!

Jane is a reflective and curious child who speaks Spanish at home with her family and mostly English during school and at daycare. I described Jane in my teacher journal on 9/22/12 this way:

“Jane seems to want to sit outside of our circle time meetings or carpet lessons and her mind seems to be elsewhere. Although she can be extroverted at times, she has only raised hand to tell or act out a story two times so far, but seems to enjoy watching other children perform.”

I wanted to examine how STSA could not only motivate Jane to create her own stories but to connect her to our classroom community and help her feel confident that what she says and does important. Jane was administered the REACH assessment on 9/26/12 and received a score of 1 out of 3 on the REACH assessment. The average raw score for the class was .7 out of 3. Jane's end of year REACH assessment results will be included in my data after administered in May, 2013.

STSA as well as writing a variety of writing experiences which included Lucy Calkins' program allowed Jane to talk about events that happened at home. The following are three samples of her STSA stories:

Experience #1 on 9/21/12: It about a princess and her dad doesn't let her go outside. The girl wanted to go outside to play with her friends. Her dad don't let them because people outside. The dad was jealous that people were outside. The mom said the dad needs to go inside to help her with cooking and cleaning so the dad like called a friend over to help her so the dad can play outside with his friends. He was happy because his friend help a lot and now he can play. The princess got to go outside at the end of the story.

Experience #2 on 12/3/12: There was a princess and a dad. And then the princess went outside She saw her friends and they came to visit her. And then her mom went to the store and her dog wanted to play fetch so the princess and her friends plays with the dog. Then the mom said it is time to eat. Then the princess ate, went to the bathroom and went to sleep. The princess had some good dreams.

Experience #3 on 2/8/13: Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess named Rosalina. Her dad, mom and sister and brother lived with her in a beautiful house. And then they all wanted to go to the zoo but the mom and the dad was working. The mom and dad said they could go another day but now the kids had to stay in the house while they worked to make money. The next day the dad said, "It's okay today! Me and mom are not working and we can spend a lot of time with you!" The brother asked, "Can we go to the zoo?" They said, "Okay!" They went to the zoo and had fun. They lived happily ever after!

Overall, this data suggests that using STSA, Lucy Calkins' writing program gave Jane specific academic opportunities which motivated her to increase her narrative and vocabulary development, reading writing and confidence in "telling her story." The motivation data showed that in September Jane only raised her hand 73% of the time to tell her story. In February 2013, Jane was now raising her hand 99% of the time to tell her story, which was a 26% increase in her storytelling motivation. As the year progressed my observations notes concluded that Jane was participating in more conversations with other students as well as independently creating stories both verbally and in the written form. In September 2012 Jane raised her hand 82% of the time to act out a story. In February 2013, she was now raising her hand 99% of the time, a 17% increase in motivation to act out a story. Jane's STSA samples indicated significant growth in narrative development, story length and vocabulary use. Her first story showed her understanding of narrative development and had a word count of 101. She also used adjectives such as "beautiful" in her descriptions. Although her second story only had a word count of 75, it also demonstrated her understanding of narrative development. She used both adjectives to describe characters as well as transition words such as "next" and "then". Her third STSA sample had a word count of 119, an 18 word increase from her first STSA experience. In this story, Jane's uses transition words such as "next" and "then" as well as adjectives such as "beautiful". In addition, she used dialogue in her story. All three stories were a combination of real life experiences with an element of fantasy and pretend. They all had a main character of a father which was something that was absent in Jane's life. STSA seemed to give her a canvas to express her thoughts and dreams about a family.

Her writing samples indicated that she was at a Pre-Writing stage (level 1) in September and an Early Development Spelling stage (level 6) by January 2013. I also observed Jane writing to express herself during choice time as well as bringing back stories that she and her mother created and acted out at home. In December, I sent all children a journal to create their own narrative stories with their families. The following week, Jane brought back her journal with a narrative story that she and her mother created. Her motivation to "tell her story" had increased

which also lead to an increase in her reading ability. In September, Jane was not able to read independently and by January, 2013 this ELL student was reading at a level C. In addition, Jane scored 3 out of 3 on the end of year REACH Literacy assessment. This score indicated that she is now able to identify narrative story elements in both her oral and written responses. My data suggests that giving Jane a variety of creative experiences such as STSA enabled her to use all her modalities which fostered academic, social and emotional growth.

Analysis of Lucy Calkins' Writing Samples

In order to access all students' growth in writing, I used an 8 point kindergarten rubric which was leveled the following way:

Level 1	Pre-Writing
Level 2	Letter Strings
Level 3	Environmental Print
Level 4	Sight Words in a Sentence
Level 5	Beginning Sounds
Level 6	Early Developmental Spelling
Level 7	Developmental Spelling
Level 8	Transitional Spelling

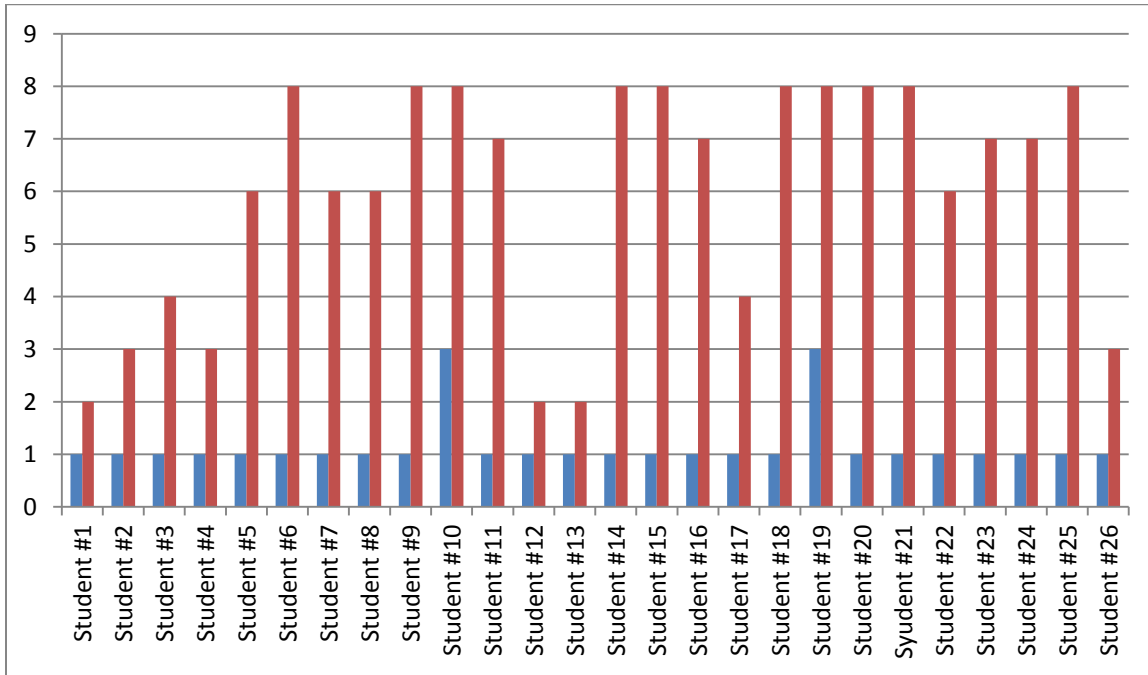
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Lucy Calkins' writing program was consistently implemented in my classroom and all children were also given many other informal and formal writing experiences integrated throughout the curriculum. I chose this particular rubric because it is both developmentally appropriate for kindergarten students and supports my belief that children's writing comes progressively overtime as elements of mechanics are integrated with elements of meaning. Both STSA and Lucy Calkins' program supports this philosophy.

The first chart below shows some characteristics of each developmental level in the kindergarten rubric. The second chart shows all 26 students in my classroom, their writing level in September, 2012, and their writing level in March, 2013.

Kindergarten Writing Rubric

Level of Writing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Drawing, scribbling, sounds to represent letters.								
Letter strings								
Only copies words from environment without meaning.								
Use sight words.								
<i>Uses the beginning sounds when trying to spell words.</i>								
Some medial and ending sounds.								
Attempts vowels.								
Uses real spelling and silent letters.								
Draws matching pictures.								
Spaces between some words.								
Spaces between most words.								
Two or more sentences								
Usually uses end punctuation.								
Usually uses appropriate capitalization.								



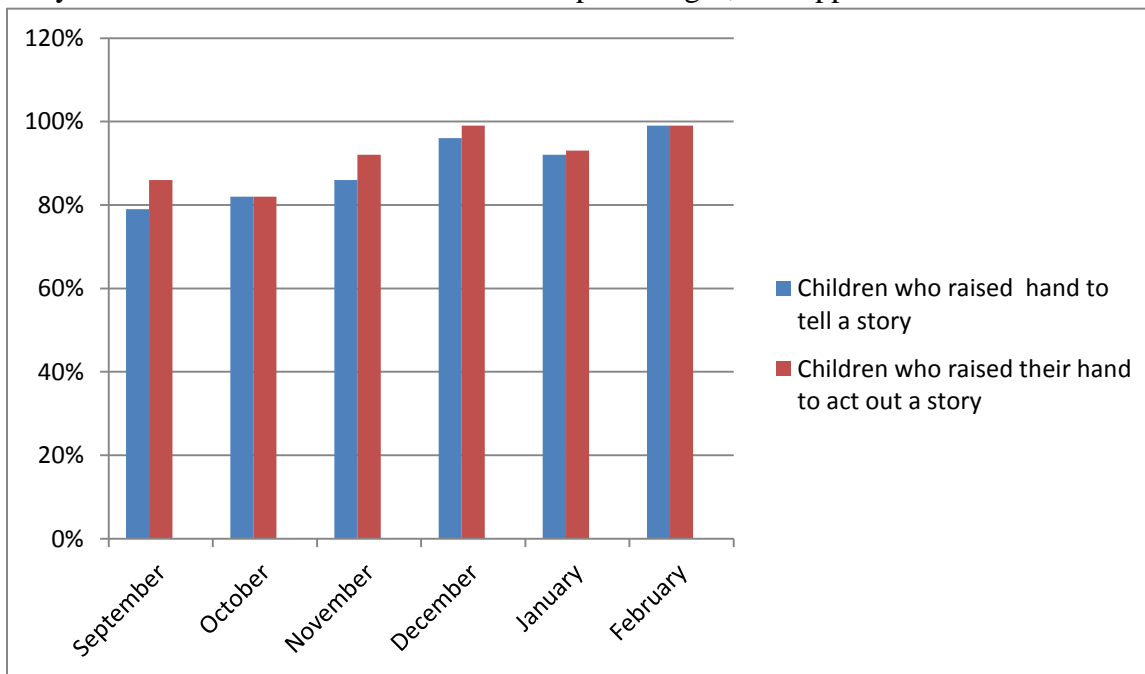
■ Writing Rubric Level indicated by student Lucy Calkins' writing sample done the week of 3-4-13

■ Writing Rubric Level indicated by student Lucy Calkins' writing sample done 9-5-12

The above data indicated that children showed some developmental growth as indicated by comparing their work samples from September 2012 and again in early March 2013. By March, **69%** of the children were writing at or above an **Early Developmental Spelling stage or Level 6** of the rubric used. These children were all able to use sight words and some beginning sounds of a word in a sentence as well as read back their writing. In addition, these children added spaces between some words written and drew detailed illustrations to go with their sentences. **53%** of children were writing at or above the **Developmental Spelling stage, or level 7** of the rubric. Amazingly, **38%** of the children were writing at **Level 8, the Transitional Spelling stage of writing**, which is writing at a beginning of first grade level. Both English language learners and native speakers showed increase in their writing development. Children that were still at the beginning levels of writing were given extra writing and literacy experiences in both private conferences and in small groups in order to help them increase their writing skills. My data suggests that using a balanced literacy approach to reading, writing and speaking, which includes STSA, has increased children’s writing ability quite significantly. The combined use Lucy Calkins’ and STSA had helped link oral and written language as children developed their writing skills, mechanics as well as motivation to “tell their story” in a variety of ways.

Motivation Data

The following data chart shows both growth in motivation and enthusiasm for telling a story as well as acting out a story during our STSA activity. For the complete monthly charts reporting daily data with both real numbers as well as percentages, see Appendix A.



There was a 20% increase in the number of children who raised their hands to tell a story in between September and March. This shows the increase in student enthusiasm for telling a story.

In addition, comparing the percentage of children who raised their hand to act out a story in September and then in March, showed a 13% increase in student motivation to act out a story. After reviewing my motivation chart, I discovered that by the end of February, 99% of children were motivated to tell as well as dramatize a story. My data also revealed that more children were comfortable in the beginning of the year dramatizing then telling a story. In addition, I noticed in my teaching journal that on October 15th I decided to have children dictate their story in an individual conference instead of in front the entire group. On that day, 91% of the children raised their hand to tell their story, a 7% increase from the previous day. Perhaps some children were more comfortable taking a risk and telling their story during our private conference? Our individual conferences also enabled each child to see the mechanics of the writing process and the connection between oral language and written words. December percentages for storytelling were also very high and I believe it was due to the fact that because of holiday activities I was inconsistent with my STSA program. Children stated that they really missed STSA and their hand raising percentages for the month is proof of that fact.

When further analyzing data as well as STSA dictation samples the following patterns were noticed:

- More girls were hesitant to act out a story starting in September through November. By December, an equal number of girls and boys volunteered to act out a story.
- Children seemed to raise their hands more often with stories with more than 2 characters in them.
- As the year progressed more children participated in not only volunteering to act out stories in STSA but in other class role playing/acting experiences.
- Giving children to opportunity to dictate their stories during a private conference instead of in front of their classmates increased the percentage of children who volunteered to tell a story.
- Stories that had high percentages of children who raised their hands to act out were stories that had elements of fantasy as well as real-life experiences.

I realized creating a classroom community where my children were consistently given chances to act as well as tell their stories, was imperative to all children's risk taking and confidence building. Children that were hesitant to act our or tell their story, girls in particular, seemed to need time to observe other STSA experiences before taking risks in both telling and dramatizing stories. By the end of the February, all children were willing to not only tell their story, but participate in dramatizations. In addition, giving private dictation conferences seemed to enable children to more comfortably take risks in their storytelling. I discovered that Lucy Calkins' writing workshop private conferences also seemed to motivate children to tell their stories and developed their writing skills and mechanics. Unlike Lucy Calkins' writing program, STSA also seemed to give children permission to use their creativity and tell pretend stories.

Reach Assessment Test Results

The REACH Literacy Performance was administered by me to all twenty-six kindergarteners at the end of September, 2012. In this task, children perform two literacy activities. In both activities children are asked to read a story and then they are asked to tell and write/draw key details about the story. Children were scored by using 4 point rubric on their oral and written responses to the questions. The assessment was administered in small groups of 4-5 students and children were to complete the entire assessment within one sitting of 30-60 minutes long. In September the average raw score for the classroom was .7 out of 3. The District as well as the Region-Wide Average or percent correct was also .7 out of 3.

Class Breakdown of September, 2012 REACH Scores

Exceeds 3 on rubric	Meets 2 on rubric	Below 1 on rubric	Academic Warning 0 on rubric
0	2	13	12

The REACH Literacy end of year test was administered the week of May 27th, 2013. Children were scored using a 3 point rubric on their oral and written responses to questions. In June, the average raw score, or percent correct for the classroom was 2.7 out of 3. The average total percentile score for the classroom was 91%.

Class Breakdown of May, 2013 Reach Scores

Mastery 3 on rubric	Emerging 2 on rubric	Below Level 1 on rubric
21	3	2

The class result indicated that approximately 87% of the children showed their understanding of narrative story development. They were able to verbalize their understanding of characters, setting, problem and solution of a story. In addition, they were able to write and draw how the characters in the story changed from the beginning to the end of the story and why the change occurred.

My Conclusions on Using STSA in a Kindergarten Classroom

Research has found that the more a child reads, the better they read (Allington, 2003). I have shown that the same is true for writing, creating and performing, using language or presenting in front of a group. By using STSA consistently every day in my kindergarten classroom, I have observed and documented children's growth in motivation, vocabulary, narrative development, and attitude towards STSA. I have also noticed that giving children many opportunities to

express themselves through writing, speaking, and dramatization, children were more confident in expressing themselves in front of others.

My data suggests that using STSA every day in a kindergarten classroom had many benefits to children academically, socially, and emotionally. Thus far, looking at four children up close and at whole class data, I have noticed an increase in motivation for storytelling, performing, and writing stories. STSA gave my children freedom to “tell their story” without rules and gave them a risk-free place to share and perform in their friend’s created stories. Where Lucy Calkins’ writing program focused on children writing about a “small moment” or a real life experience, STSA gave them an opportunity to create real life stories with some element of fantasy, or their own completely unique and creative story. I realized through my journey that the use of both STSA and Lucy Calkins helped engage and motivate children to tell and attempt to write their stories. STSA seemed to connect what a child said through their dictation, to real life through their performances, which increased story comprehension. I had an “aha moment” that was captured in my teacher journal on 1/2/13 when I wrote:

“Perhaps children need experiences dictating and writing with a variety of genres at an early age, in order for them to develop creativity as well as escape from their world and experience different fantasies. STSA gave children the freedom to tell their own unique stories, which I believe motivated them to think and write creatively”

Throughout my research journey, I observed an increase in children’s language and storytelling as well as writing for a variety of purposes throughout our day. Classroom families have often told me about how they have acted out their child’s STSA story at home. All children showed growth in their developmental stages of writing, vocabulary use, reading and narrative development. My research indicated that all children showed some developmental growth indicated by comparing their work samples from September 2012 and again in March 2013. By March, 69% of the children were writing at or above an Early Developmental stage (level 6) and 53% were writing at or above the Developmental stage (level 7). Amazingly, 38% of the children were writing at a Transitional Spelling stage of writing (level 8) by beginning of March, which is writing at a beginning of first grade level. Using a balanced literacy approach to reading, writing and reading that included the combined use of Lucy Calkins’ and STSA, had helped link oral and written language as children developed their writing skills, mechanics as well as motivation to “tell their story” in a variety of ways.

ELL students in particular showed growth in vocabulary use, narrative development which were both demonstrated in their STSA dictations as well as their writing samples. Children began to identify story elements in their classmate’s dictated stories. I began to notice children using transition words in their stories as well in their storytelling. Eventually children were able to have discussions about story elements as well as making predictions about narrative stories. In addition, some children began developing a unique style in their storytelling and writing as well as using dialogue in STSA. By January 2013, 57% of the children were reading at the end of

kindergarten level (C) or above. Although my data can't directly link STSA or Lucy Calkins' writing program to students' reading growth, it can support the fact that a consistent balanced literacy program with a variety of creative and motivating strategies can increase student achievement and motivation. I also noticed that children often reread their stories during free play and had their friends dramatize STSA stories in the classroom. In addition, several students volunteered to read their story as their friends acted out the story events. The consistent use of STSA seemed to help children develop a sense of confidence about telling their stories as well as performing in one. For ten minutes a day, our classroom became a community of creators and performers; similar to that of a theatre group. Children seemed to be in charge of their learning and I was able to act as a facilitator when playing the role of the director during the dramatization portion of STSA. In the beginning of the year, some children were hesitant to perform and show character emotions during the performances. By December, these same children were adding dialogue to their characters, facial expressions and used their bodies more in order to better portray the characters in the story.

I have read that Dr. Paley valued not only listening to children, but giving them many experiences of being heard as well as building confidence to "tell their stories." Throughout this journey, I have discovered that STSA broadened my kindergarten curriculum, included student interest, as well as gave children many opportunities for literacy learning. STSA as well as Lucy Calkins' writing program seemed to be a reflection of children's learned vocabulary, narrative development, social and emotional growth as well as creativity. This holistic strategy enabled me to listen and learn from children as I created opportunities for literacy learning with their own personal stories and ideas. I have no doubt that there are other literacy strategies that can increase academic achievement in a kindergarten classroom. Nevertheless, this journey convinced me that the combined use of Lucy Calkins' writing program and STSA helped link oral and written language as children developed their writing skills, mechanics as well as motivation to "tell their story" in a variety of ways. Both STSA and Lucy Calkins' writing program support my interactive view of reading as well as use children's interest to meet the Common Core State Standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Policy Recommendations and Implications

- All kindergarten teachers must be given training in STSA so it can be implemented in all kindergarten classrooms.
- For district leaders to further examine how STSA can help ALL children meet the needs of the Common Core State Standards in reading, speaking, listening and using language effectively.
- For school districts and administrators to support educators' use of teacher collaborative inquiry circles in order to help teachers reflect upon the use of Storytelling Story Acting in their classrooms. The overall purpose would be to help teachers share their STSA

experiences, support reflective practices, and use both collaboration and inquiry in order to effectively implement STSA in the classroom.

- For politicians and educational leaders to support funding for STSA programs in school districts.

Questions for Further Research

- What other ways can I involve student families and the community in helping children to “tell their stories” as well as confidently dramatize creative stories?
- What is the reading connection between children’s dictated stories and their reading development? Can using children’s own stories assist in both reading fluency, comprehension and word recognition?
- How can I effectively collaborate with other grade level classrooms in order to support STSA?
- What happens when I encourage students to write their own scripts after dictating and dramatizing their stories? Could collaboration with other grade level students give children multi-age creative and meaningful writing experiences?

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