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John F. Kennedy Center

TEACH THEM TO FLY!

HOW STORYTELLING GIVES WINGS  
TO PRIMARY-AGE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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>> LISA DAMICO: Good afternoon! And welcome to "Teach Them to Fly! How Storytelling Gives Wings to Primary-Age Children with Disabilities." I'm Lisa Damico, your moderator and webinar organizer. Today's webinar is part of a monthly series that comes out of the office of VSA and accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. This series addresses topics related to arts, disability and education. If you would like to view live streamed captioning of this webinar, you can follow the link you see on the screen, and in the chat box of the control panel located on the right side of your screen.

Before we get started, let's take a moment to make sure that you're familiar with the go to webinar control panel on the right side of your screen. This control panel can be hidden by clicking on the orange arrow in the top left corner. If you need to leave the webinar early, you can exit out of program by clicking on the "X" in the upper right corner. A recording of the webinar will be available afterwards so you can catch up on any parts you miss.

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You have the ability to submit or answer questions, which is especially encouraged in this webinar, using the chat pane located near the bottom of the control panel.

If you would prefer to say the question instead of typing it, you can click on the "Raise your hand" icon on the control panel and I will unmute your microphone.

Your questions will come directly to me, and during the designated question and answer time, as well as the interactive story telling time that we'll have in this webinar, at the end of the presentation, and then I'll relay them to our presenter.

I want to emphasize that following the presentation, I will send out a follow-up E-mail with the link to the recording of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, and any handouts that our presenter has prepared, as well as a copy of the transcript. This means you don't need to worry about frantically taking notes during the presentation. You can always go back and watch the recording and review the supplemental materials.

I'd also like to let you know about next month's webinar. "The Art of Self Expression, Textures, Tools, Techniques, and Thinking Outside of the Box" for our visual artists out there, and our visual teaching artists. That will take place Tuesday, June 23rd from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Washington, D.C. time with Lisa Bartoli. If you're active in social media, I invite you to connect with us using the #VSAwebinar, on Facebook at VSAInternational, on twitter @VSAINTL, and Instagram at VSAInternational, and with that I will turn it over to today's presenter, Sherry Norfolk.

All right, Sherry, I'm going to have you share your screen.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Do you have it?

>> LISA DAMICO: I just sent it to you now.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Okay.

>> LISA DAMICO: And there we go. Ready when you are.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: All right. Teach them to Fly! One of my favorite quotes is, "There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other, wings."

I take this quote as a special challenge to myself every day when I go into the classroom. I want to give children wings.

I've been a storytelling teaching artist for almost 20 years, working mostly with Young Audiences Atlanta, the Georgia Council for the Arts, Spring Board, Young Audiences of St. Louis, the Tennessee Arts Commission, and the Mississippi Arts Commission, but also with schools across the country and in Southeast Asia. My passion is using storytelling to increase learning. I'm really privileged that I get to work in inclusive and self-contained classrooms all over the country. In this picture, you will see children from a kindergarten self-contained classroom. They are telling a story together.

My mission is to give children with special needs their wings, and storytelling can help accomplish that goal. In this picture, Myla is telling a story and flapping her wings.

In this session, we will explore storytelling strategies that authentically address the common core state standards for English/Language Arts in the primary grades. We'll learn a story that you can immediately take into the classroom, and, most importantly, discover how storytelling can help children with special needs learn to fly.

Storytelling works. Research indicates a close correspondence between language development and cognitive processes, and the need for integration if children are to achieve their cognitive potential. There's a special process that they're talking about here, but what I'm thinking is that storytelling, that is clearly narrating and acting out a story, serves this very same purpose, and helps to achieve the same goals.

So what I want to be clear about, this is not about me as a storyteller. This is about how storytelling works in the classroom. When storytelling enters the classroom, it is a power tool for learning.

Storytelling provides multiple opportunities for engagement, representation and expression. And in this picture, you can see this little girl is expressively telling her story and she has engaged her audience.

In storytelling, language is layered on top of sensory experience and physical activity, allowing learners to store, access and exhibit understanding of information in multiple modalities. This little girl and her friends are acting out the story, "Anansi and the Moss-covered Rock." In the background you

see the background setting that they have created so they have developed sensory experiences. They are acting out the story, and they are going to remember this story for a long, long time.

Students connect with stories as active listeners, writers, performers and collaborators, exploring a wide variety of options for learning and re-telling and creating and presenting narratives. These pictures show children doing just that.

In the top picture you see more children still acting out "Anansi and the Mott moss-covered rock." But what I want you to see is that the audience is not just standing there. They are collaborating. They have instruments and they're actually creating the sound effects for the story.

In the bottom picture is a group of children from a self-contained classroom, acting out a story with their teacher. They are definitely having a joyful experience.

So I'm going to take you through a lesson plan that I use in primary special needs classrooms. In self-contained classrooms, also in inclusive classrooms. In this lesson plan, the very first thing we're going to do is hear a story, so you might want to enlarge your web cam image because I'm going to be using gestures and facial expressions that are pretty much important to the story.

While you're increasing the web cam size, I just wanted to mention that this lesson plan and the full text of the story, plus everything about the standards we're meeting and everything are in the handout that you will receive later. So again, you don't have to take notes.

This is a story I call "Too noisy." It's an adaptation of a Yiddish folktale.

Once upon a time, there was a farmer who said, my farm is too noisy! Because the dog barked. Woof! Woof! Woof! And the cat meowed! Meow! And the baby cried. Waaaah! My farm is too noisy, said the farmer. I'm going to see the wise man. Off he went. Stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy stomp. He knocked on the door. Boom! Boom! Boom! The door opened. Squeak!

Yes? What do you want?

My farm is too noisy, says the farmer.

Go back, said the wise man. Put some cows in the farm with you.

What!

Some cows.

All right. Back he went. Stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy stomp. He put some cows on the farm and the cow mooed. Mooooooo! And the dog still barked. Woof, woof, woof! And the cat still meowed. Meow. And the baby still cried. Wah!

My farm is too noisy, said the farmer. I'm going to see the wise man. Off he went, stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy

stomp, stompy stomp. He knocked on the door. Boom! Boom!  
Boom! The door opened. Squeak!

Yes, what do you want?

My farm is too noisy!

Go back, said the wise man. Put some chickens on the farm  
with you.

What!

Some chickens.

All right. Back he went. Stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy  
stomp, stompy stomp. He put some chickens on the farm, and they  
clucked. Cluck cluck cluck. And the cows still mooed. Mooooo!  
And the dog still barked. Woof! Woof! Woof! And the cat  
meowed. Meow! And the baby still cried. Wah!

My farm is too noisy, said the farmer. I'm going to see the  
wise man. Back he went. Stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy  
stomp, stompy stomp, stompy stomp. Boom! Boom! Boom! Squeak!

Yes? What do you want?

My farm is too noisy!

Go back, said the wiseman. Put some ducks on the farm with  
you.

What!

Some ducks.

All right. Back he went. Stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy  
stomp, stompy stomp. He put some ducks on the farm, and they  
quacked. Quack, quack, quack, quack. And the chickens clucked.  
Cluck, cluck, cluck. And the cows mooed. Moooooo! And the dog  
still barked. Woof! Woof! Woof! And the cat still meowed.  
Meow! And the baby still cried. Wah!

My farm is too noisy! I'm going to see the wise man.

Back he went. Stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy stomp,  
stompy stomp, stompy stomp. Boom! Boom! Boom! Squeak!

Yes? What do you want?

My farm is too noisy!

Go back, said the wise man, take out the cows. Take out the  
chickens. Take out the ducks.

All right! Back he went. Stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy  
stomp, stompy stomp, stompy stomp.

He sent away the cows. Mooooo! He sent away the chickens.  
Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck. He sent away the ducks. Quack,  
quack, quack, quack. And the dog still barked. Woof! Woof!  
Woof! And the cat still meowed. Meow! And the baby went to  
sleep.

Ahhhh, said the farmer. Oh, said the farmer. My farm sounds  
just right, and he lived happily ever after.

Now, as you can see, there's lots of action, lots of sounds  
in that story. And I wanted you to see a little video clip of a  
special needs self-contained classroom listening to that story.  
Now, as they listen to the story, they become really engaged.  
These kids, when I first went in there, were a mess. It was a

hot mess in that classroom. They were all over the place. They sat down, and I want you just to see how they begin to engage.

Now, this is a silent video, but you can watch them start to engage and re-engage through the first clip of the story. These kids are kindergarten through third grade students with various pre-vocational, academic and social needs and they have fun with this story. Watch.

Not yet. They're not engaged.

And now the kinesthetic children are starting to become involved. Dog is barking. Cat's meowing.

Really going slow. Sorry about that. And in a minute you'll see the baby start to cry. That's when all of them become 100% engaged. There they go. They like the cry.

What happens within the story is that the children can -- their attention will start to wander, and they have attention deficits, but immediately, the sounds or the action or something in the story will pull them back over and over and over again.

So storytellers can engage learners with expressive character voices, facial expression, sound effects, meaningful gestures and body language. We have the opportunity to keep them involved and engaged.

The visual learners watch the gestures and the body language and the facial expressions, and you'll often think that they're not paying attention, because they seem to just be staring, but they are getting the story. They're processing the story through the visuals that you're giving them. The kinesthetic learners mirror the actions and the expressions of the story teller. In this picture you can see the audience is doing exactly what I'm doing on stage.

Auditory learners mimic character voices, vocal expression and sound effects. And they have a really good time.

Now, in this lesson, I don't want children just to hear a story. I want them to learn the story and to be able to re-tell the story. Story learning and re-telling are facilitated by breaking the process into small steps, modeling each part of the process, exploring patterns in the story and layering language on top of sensory experiences and physical activity, with lots and lots and lots and lots of repetition.

We take it step by step. I've already told the story, hopefully with an expressive voice, and obviously repetitive actions and sound effects.

Now, the next thing is we're going to review it orally, kinesthetically, linguistically, logically and visually. The kinesthetic and visual review I do with the kids, and you might want to do this wherever you are. We're going to do just the beginning of it. Just with our hands.

The visual learners watch and review the story in their minds. The kinesthetic learners are doing it with me. The linguistic learners are reviewing the story linguistically in their minds as we're doing that.

So we go through the whole thing that way, and then we're going to review the story sequentially and linguistically, imprinting print, whether or not the children can read. I still want to imprint print. I want them to see the correlation between the printed word, the written word and the words that we've been using. I also want to review the different elements of the story. So I would ask them these questions. What is the setting? And they will tell me either house or farm for the story.

Who is the main character? The farmer.

What is the problem?

No one ever has an issue with this. They know. It's too noisy!

And there are three things making noise. There's the dog, the cat and the baby. They attempt to solve the problem. The farmer goes to the wise man who says to add three more things, the cows, the chickens and the ducks. But the problem hasn't been solved yet. The problem isn't solved until the wise man says to take out the cows and the chickens and the ducks. And then the conclusion is the dog still barks, the cat still meows, the baby is asleep, and they live happily ever after.

Now we're going to explore the pattern. We're going to review. How many noises are in the beginning? There were the three noises. How many are added? Three. How does the problem get solved? The final three have been removed. That's the pattern of this story.

We could also review the story nonlinguistically with 3D props, puppets or picture cards. I have a picture here of some 3D props that help children who maybe have visual impairments to process the story. Children who aren't able to move very much or don't use language can point to the pictures on the picture cards of the farmer, the cow, the horse, the pig. Or they could use the finger puppets to show what is next. They can demonstrate their understanding of the story that way.

The next thing, though, is I want the children to work together to dramatize the story. We're going to embody the story.

Now, I have, with this group I had already -- we chose who was going to do what. We didn't have a whole lot of kids in the group, so I had to be one of the characters. I want you to see just the ending of it so you can see that these kids really did get it. Now, I should tell you that I have not met these children before, hadn't even really gotten to observe them except that few minutes before I started, where, as I said, we were in chaos. But they got the story. Now, we're going to be joining the story right at the end, where the farmer has returned to the wise man for the final time. Again, you won't hear the video, but you'll be able to tell that they are doing what they're supposed to be doing.

The boy standing is the farmer. The boy who is sort of on the chair is the wise man, and the rest of us on the floor are the various animals.

Here we go.

The baby's asleep and he's going to fall over in a minute. There he goes.

Happily ever after!

They've got wings. They're very proud of themselves.

Okay. We've learned the story. We've re-told the story. The next thing I want to do is to create a new story using that pattern. And the group is going to do this together. Group story creation is facilitated by establishing familiarity with the folktale framework. We have done that. We've looked at the pattern. We've used the pattern to tell the story. Connecting to prior knowledge to generate new settings, characters, problems and solutions, and modeling results.

This process allows for cross curricular applications. So we're going to create a story together right now. First we need a new setting. Now, this can be some place the students are familiar with, or, for instance, the zoo or the classroom or the playground, or a place that's relevant to our current unit of study, like a rain forest or the garden or the ocean.

When I did this with the boys in the video, they chose a haunted house. Often around holidays they will choose like the North Pole. But right now, I would like to hear from you what setting should we choose?

>> LISA DAMICO: This is Lisa. That means that you're going to type in to that chat pane what your answer is. What setting do you suggest?

I've heard zoo. We got a lot coming in: Zoo, African village, Tropical Island, circus, ocean, swimming pool, Mars, shopping center.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Mars? [Chuckling].

>> LISA DAMICO: An igloo. An apartment in the city. Got a lot of options.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Okay. So I think I'll just go with the zoo.

>> LISA DAMICO: Okay.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: And now, so I'm writing that down. Our setting is going to be the zoo. Next we're going to use the pattern of the story, and drawing on prior knowledge, students answer the questions, who think it's too noisy at the zoo? Who should our main character be?

>> LISA DAMICO: Zoo keeper, elephant, mommy, the monkeys, sloth, a child.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Sloth! That's a good one. I'm going with sloth, yeah.

>> LISA DAMICO: You've got everybody excited, Sherry. A bat.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: This is kind of like working with the kids. I get a thousand ideas. And I should say that the kids give me lots and lots of ideas, and we vote. This is about learning how to evaluate, to use some critical thinking. We vote on what we think would be the best main character.

Now, some of the ideas that we came up with may be now used here because we now need to have three characters or things that are making noise, and we also need to know what sounds they make.

>> LISA DAMICO: Lion, zoo visitors, monkeys, ooh, ooh, eeh eeh, monkey, oh, oh, oh, grandma sneezes, camel bleats. Oh, lion roar.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: What sound does a visitor make?

>> LISA DAMICO: We had a belch, laughter --

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: A what!

>> LISA DAMICO: Wow! Screams, yells. Wow, look at that! Visitor crunching popcorn. Where's the bathroom. A .

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: I'll go with wow. Now, if I'm doing this with kids, I would ask them not only what the sound is, but I would ask them to help me spell it so we're using at least the beginning sounds of words. If they can't do anything further, that's okay, but at least give me the beginning letters of the words. So we are imprinting print and we are thinking about phonemic sounds and spelling.

The next question is who is the wise one in the story? Who does a sloth go to for help?

>> LISA DAMICO: The oil, the cheetah, the tortoise.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Okay. The cheetah. And now, we're going to need three more characters or things that the -- that we'll add, and we need to know what sounds they make.

>> LISA DAMICO: So elephant, koala bear, snake.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: And the sounds.

>> LISA DAMICO: Donkey.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Donkey. At the zoo?

>> LISA DAMICO: Apparently. A llama, popping balloons, an elephant horn sound.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Okay.

>> LISA DAMICO: A gibbon that hoots or an evil shriek.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: And did you say snake at one point?

>> LISA DAMICO: We had a snake that hisses.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Okay. So we have now -- you didn't get to vote. Sorry about that. So here are the selections that I made. The setting is going to be the zoo. The main character will be the sloth. The three animals or the three noisy things in the beginning of the story are the lions, the visitors saying wow, the monkeys saying ooh, ooh, ha, ha, the sloth will go to the cheetah, who tells him to add the elephant, the Gibbon and the snake, and then, of course, they'll all be taken out.

Now, the kids have now -- or you -- have now composed a new story using a pattern of the old story. And now I'm going to

model the resulting story to the group. So they can see how we can go from a bare bones outline that just has setting, characters, sequence, problem, solution and conclusion, just the bare bones, to a full-fledged story. So again, if you want to, you can enlarge your web cam and let's see what happens with the story.

Once upon a time, there was a zoo, and in that zoo there was a sloth who said, oh, my zoo is too noisy. Because the lion roars. Roar! And the visitors yell, wow! And the monkeys chattered, ooh, ooh, ah ah.

Oh, my zoo is too noisy. I'm going to go talk to the cheetah. Off he went. Da dump, da dump, da dump, da dump.

Hey, my zoo is too noisy.

I'll tell you what to do! I'll tell you what to do! Go put some elephants in the zoo with you.

All right.

Back he went. Da dump, da dump, da dump, da dump.

He put some elephants in the zoo and they trumpeted. And the lions still roared. Roar! And the visitors still yelled wow! And the monkeys still chattered. Ooh, ooh, ah, ah!

My zoo is too noisy. I'm going to talk to the cheetah.

Back he went. Da dump, da dump, da dump, da dump.

Hey, my zoo is too noisy.

I'll tell you what to do I'll tell you what to do! Put some gibbons in the zoo with you!

Oh, all right. Back he went. Da dump, da dump, da dump, da dump.

He put some gibbons in the zoo and they hooted, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh! And the elephants trumpeted. [Trumpeting noise]. And the lion roared. Roar! And the visitors yelled. Wow! And the monkeys chattered, ooh, ooh, ah, ah!

Oh, man. My zoo is too noisy! I'm going to go talk to the wise man. Cheetah. Back he went. Da dump, da dump, da dump, da dump.

Hey, my zoo is too noisy!

Well, I'll tell you what to do! I'll tell you what to do! Put some snakes in the zoo with you!

All right. Back he went. Da dump, da dump, da dump, da dump. He put snakes in the zoo and they hissed. Ssssssss. And the gibbon hooted. Ooh, ooh, ah, ah, ooh, ooh. And the elephants trumpeted. [Trumpeting noise]. And the lion roared. Roar! And the visitors yelled. Wow! And the monkeys chattered. Ooh, ooh, ah, ah!

It's too noisy! I'm going to go talk to the cheetah. Back he went.

Da dump, da dump, da dump, da dump.

I told you, it's still too noisy!

Well, I'll tell you what to do! I'll tell you what to do! Take out the elephant. Take out the Gibbon, take out the snakes.

All right.

Back he went, da dump, da dump, da dump, da dump.

He took out the elephant. [Trumpeting noise]. He took out the gibbons. Ooh, ooh, ooh! He took out the snakes. Sssssss.

The lion still roared. Roar! The visitors still yelled. Wow! And the monkeys still chattered. Ooh, ooh, ah, ah, ah!

Oh, my zoo sounds just right. And he slept happily ever after.

You guys wrote a great story.

The next step would be now that the children have heard this story and they've seen the actions they can use and they participated in the telling of that story, now they're going to create a collaborative dramatization like the kids are doing in the picture here.

Now, one thing I should mention, and I said that this can be cross curricular. You can apply this to anything you're studying, really. In math, you can write math sentences. So you had three elephants, two gibbons, one cheetah. If you take away one cheetah, how many animals are left. If you add four giraffes, how many animals do you have now? So you can do the math problems with it.

In social studies, you could set it in a particular place. You could do it in the community with community helpers. You can put it in an average village and talk about the different kinds of people and who would be there and perhaps what animals might be in the area. In science, you can look at habitats and talk about the different habitats and what animal is in a particular habitat. So you can draw on prior knowledge and enforce that knowledge by having them create a story.

Students can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through lots of modalities when they're doing storytelling. They can use creative drama, as we've been doing. They can use props. They can use puppets. They can do individual re-telling of the story, and some of those kids are really going to be able and ready to do that. If they don't have language, they can draw the story. They could write the story. They can represent that story in any way they want to that works for them.

Storytelling authentically addresses the common core state standards for English/language arts and/or the language arts standards implemented in any state or region.

And, storytelling addresses National Core Arts Anchor Standards, such as creating, performing, responding and connecting. We've done that all in this lesson plan.

And by the way, I just want to remind you, the standards that were addressed in this lesson are in the handout that you're going to get.

Storytelling also addresses the 21st century skills, creativity. They created a story. And they were creative in the way that they told the story. Communication. They communicated their story. They collaborated in creating that

story. And they used critical thinking in developing the story line.

Storytelling also employs the four effective teaching components: modeling, small steps, it's multimodal, and it provides lots of clues to facilitate recall. All of the actions, the sounds, that helps the kids remember what comes next.

Storytelling addresses the integration of the left and the right side of the brain, the development of the corpus callosum. As children listen to stories, they are processing the words and the sequence of the story on the left side. They are visualizing the story on the right side, and the two sides have to communicate in order for them to understand the story.

They're using all ways of knowing. Definitely linguistic. There's lots and lots of words here. The linguistic, the acquisition of vocabulary is really, really easy through storytelling. In fact, storytelling is considered the second most powerful way to acquire vocabulary because when children encounter new vocabulary in stories, they hear it in context, they hear the sound of the voice, the look on the face, the gestures that give it meaning, so they're getting vocabulary. It's mathematical in that it has a very specific pattern to the story. It is spatial. They're visualizing the story. They're also acting out the story and moving from place to place, as you saw in the video when they were moving around to re-tell the story.

It's musical. In this particular story and in most of the stories that I use with young children, there's the rhythm to the story in the stompy stomp, stompy stomp, stompy stomp. They're making their own rhythm. It's interpersonal. Lots of collaboration. And intrapersonal in that the children get to decide what is going to work for them. Do they want to be a dog? Do they want to be a cat? Do they want to be the farmer? So they get to make those decisions. They're never forced on that. They get to make the decisions.

And of course it addresses all learning styles. It's visual, kinesthetic and auditory.

In conclusion, storytelling is multi-modal. It provides natural options for engagement, representation and expression.

Storytelling experiences involve students in activities that improve artistic/performing skills, increase academic achievement and intellectual development, and encourage social and emotional growth through collaboration and cooperation. And, most importantly, storytelling helps give children wings!

Take a bow!

They were told to line up and take a bow, so they got in a circle.

There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other is wings.

And now, I'm ready for any questions.

>> LISA DAMICO: All right. We've had a couple that have come in so far.

What if the kids or the teacher doesn't know what an animal looks, sounds or acts like? Do you support materials like a sound Bible?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: I think I must be the sound Bible. I make it up myself. I tell them. So if they say, what does a cheetah sound like? He snarls. So I'm the sound Bible.

And if they don't know what it looks like, we can look it up. We can go to a book. Usually if they come up with an animal, they don't know what it looks like. That's rare. If they -- that they come up with an animal that they don't know what it looks like. But if they don't, then we can look it up.

>> LISA DAMICO: Can you explain corpus callosum?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Corpus callosum? It's the connecting -- it's the way the left and the right side of the brain connect. It's the only communication between the left and the right side of the brain. It's developed mostly before the age of four. It develops when both sides of the brain are works together. Anything that you do that crosses the median, that crosses the middle part of the body will help develop the corpus callosum so when you're doing actions, finger plays, that helps. Anything like crawling, where you're using both sides of the brain or both sides, you know, of the body, therefore both sides of the brain, helps to develop the corpus callosum, and storytelling, singing, things like that are really, really good because it requires both sides of the brain, and therefore it's building and maintaining the corpus callosum.

>> LISA DAMICO: Thank you. One of our participants, Linda, has said thank you so much. Great ideas and so useful for me as a music educator. I'll be applying the Yiddish story this fall for my students, having them create songs for each character in the story.

Do you have a source for the Yiddish story?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Wow, that's in lots and lots of different versions. And of course right now, my whole brain is going completely blank.

I can E-mail -- if you will E-mail me that question, and my E-mail address is on the handout, E-mail me that question. I will be happy to send you three or four sources for that story. And you also are getting the text of the story in the handout.

>> LISA DAMICO: And do you give us permission to use this lesson ourselves?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Absolutely! Yes! Take it, use it, play with it, improve on it! It's yours.

>> LISA DAMICO: And we've had a couple of participants who have asked what other stories are good with this type of program, or have you used other stories in this manner?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: I use lots and lots of stories in this manner.

One story that works really, really well is the great big enormous turnip. I'm trying to think, it's maybe a Yugoslavian folk tale. It's a very, very simple story where an old man wants a turnip, so he plants a seed, it grows, it grows, and it turns into a great big turnip, and he tries to pull it up but it won't come out so he gets the old woman, they pull together, it won't come out. She gets the little boy, the little boy gets the little girl, the little girl gets the dog, the dog gets the cat and the cat gets the mouse and the mouse says but I'm too little but the mouse tries anyway and when they pull the turnip pops up out of the ground and they wash it and they chop it and they cook it and they eat it and then they live happily ever after. So that's a sequence of seven. You can easily act that out. In fact, I think one of the pictures that I showed you was of a group of children with special needs acting out that story. And it's a really, really popular one. That's another one that you can take the pattern of the story and make up new stories with new settings and new characters with the same problem, that they need to pull something up out of the ground or off the ground.

I also use, I call it grandmother spider, it's a Cherokee folktale, a lot. It's a story about in the beginning, there was no light. The bear knew that there was light on the other side of the world, so he asked for volunteers, and the buzzard went first. He took the light, but put it on his head to carry it back and it burnt off all the feathers, and that's why buzzards are bald.

Then the opossum went and she put the light on her tail, and that's why opossums have naked tails.

And then finally, Grandmother Spider said she would try and they laughed at her and said she was too little, too old, too forgetful, wouldn't remember her way back and she said well, I reckon you better let me try, so she went, but she had a plan, and she wove a web to the other side of the world. She scooped up some cold, wet mud, she took the light and put it in the mud to carry back and followed her web back across the world. Then on the way, the light baked the mud until it was solid. It became the very first mole in the whole world and the light was safely inside. So she took the light and threw it up in the sky. Now, ever since that day, buzzards have had bald heads, opossums have had naked tails, spiders have spun their way on the way to the sun, people have bowls to carry things and they have light.

That's with four or five kids in a group, and it really -- it's a marvelous story to work with. Again and again, you can use the pattern that story can make up a thousand new stories. I'd be happy to send the text of those stories, the lesson plans. Just E-mail me and I'll send them to you.

>> LISA DAMICO: Wonderful. That's a great resource.

So this question comes from Cathy. What if you're working with a group of children with autism. How might you adapt some of the activities?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Believe it or not, children with autism have done all of these lessons I just told you about. They've worked with them very well. A lot of the time it has to do with letting them choose how they want to interact with the story. I found that in the story, "Too Noisy," the autistic children really love to be the wise man because they are then in control of the way the story moves. They can make sure that the order is in exactly the right order. There's no touching in this particular story, so it doesn't have to be adapted that way. If the autistic child has a real sensitivity to noise, they can wear ear phones, they will often do that to reduce the noise level so it's not such a problem for them.

With the turnip story, there's pulling. Often the autistic child would then choose to be the turnip, and they don't have to be touched.

Because I allow children to make their own decisions about how they interact with the story, they can usually find a way that works for them. And they don't have to make sounds if they don't want to. They don't have to be touched if they don't want to. Or they can use picture cards or something to tell the story that way. If they don't want to interact with the other children.

Oh, and also, I've noticed that if it requires interaction, like with older kids, third, fourth and fifth graders in special needs classrooms, I have often used the story of Coyote and Raven. It's only got two characters in it and when we act that out, the autistic children will act it out with me. I'll be the coyote or I'll be the Raven and they'll act it out with me. If they won't interact with the other children in the class, they will do it with me, so it's those kind of adaptations, allowing them to work in a way that's comfortable for them that will make it successful.

>> LISA DAMICO: Great. Elizabeth says, I once told a story that was like the spider, and a young student, maybe fourth grade, maybe four years old, said, that's not true, and he was right. How do you handle that situation?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: I introduce that story by saying this is a story that nobody ever really believed. And that really helps. That this is a story that people didn't believe, but they needed to find a way to explain things, so they made up stories to answer the questions. It was early science. But I say, you know, it's a story. It's not true. And putting that out there right up front helps kids get over that hump of well, how can that be true. But also, animals don't talk, so -- and usually when one kid comes up with a question like that or with a comment like, that's not true, the other ones will usually answer for you, they'll say things like, it's a story! Well,

the animals can't talk, either! And you don't really have to say very much, but learning to say ahead of time, this story, nobody really believes this story, but they like to tell it, and then immediately they accept it, they move on.

>> LISA DAMICO: All right. Thank you. This is from Ariana. Thank you so, so much. It's wonderful to watch you teach over a video. How do you alter it for students that have difficulty with movement?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Oh, that's when they can use props. They can use the finger puppets, if they can move their fingers. They can point to the pictures on the cards if they can't move. They could be -- and too noisy -- let's see, they could be the wise man because the wise man doesn't have to move. The wise man sits in one place, doesn't move, and the story of grandmother's spider, they could be the bear because the bear doesn't have to move. In the turnip, they could be the turnip. I actually had a child who had no arms or legs, and he chose to be the turnip. I would never, ever have asked him to be the turnip, but he wanted to be the turnip, and he was absolutely delighted when, at the end of the story, the teacher picked him up as if he were coming up out of the ground and that kid giggled and giggled. You can always find ways to make it work and a lot of the times the children themselves will suggest the kinds of adaptations that work the best for them.

>> LISA DAMICO: We're getting a lot of different sort of adaptation questions.

Have you adapted "Too Much Noise" for ESL students, English as a Second Language, students?

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: They understand it, they like it. They will sometimes make different sounds, and they will give us the sounds that maybe would be used in China, or it might be used in Spanish so we can add those different sounds in, but it's never been an issue at all. ESL kids love that story. I think because they can just participate by making sounds. They don't have to have a whole lot of language to tell the story. So making the sounds, they're very successful.

>> LISA DAMICO: That question came from Lynette, who also added there's a picture book called "Too Much Noise" by Ann McGovern.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Thank you, Lynette. That's one I couldn't remember.

>> LISA DAMICO: Well, I think that does it for the audience questions. We've had some really good ones today. And I've thoroughly enjoyed watching and listening to the storytelling.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Well, I want to reiterate that if you have questions that are specific to you, you know, if it's maybe for older kids, or a specific adaptation, please E-mail me. I'd be very, very happy to respond.

Also, if you want the text of those stories that I talked about, or in the other ideas, please E-mail me, or just to say

hi. One of the things about being a teaching artist that I love is being available, and sharing. So please do get in touch.

>> LISA DAMICO: I think Kelly speaks for all of us when she says that your improv storytelling, sounds and gestures were amazing.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Thank you.

>> LISA DAMICO: It helps. All right. Well, I'm going to take back control of the screen, and launch my survey.

All right. So I'd like to ask you, our webinar participants, to stay on the webinar for just a moment longer and complete a short evaluation survey that opens when you close the window. I read through all of your answers. I share them with our participants to give them some feedback. This webinar was particularly interactive, but sometimes when there's not as much participation, they don't know, you know, is anyone out there, did they like what I was doing? How can I make it better? I am also getting ready to plan and put out a call for next season's webinars, so one of those questions is, do you have any webinar presentations you would like to see, things that you particularly like help with that relate to arts, disability and education, or if you know some really amazing presenters or you're an amazing presenter yourself, please send all that information my way because I would definitely appreciate it.

So thank you for joining us! Thank you, Sherry. This was really fun and educational webinar, and I think everyone's going to be very excited to receive that handout and some new lesson plans they can use in their classroom.

>> SHERRY NORFOLK: Thank you.

>> LISA DAMICO: So with that, I will say good-bye, and I hope you all will join us again next month. So good-bye, everyone!

[Webinar concluded]