



Why “ _____ ” Matters



Chapter 2 Voice & Choice

WHY SHARING OUR STORIES MATTERS



A story shared by Bryan Jackson at Northern Edge Algonquin on August 7, 2011

WHY SHARING OUR STORIES MATTERS



by [Bryan Jackson](#)

As individuals and communities, we are the stories we tell ourselves. How we make meaning and truth of our past experiences depends on our ability to rehearse and engage in telling our own narratives.

*We are taught the nature of history,
and government – communication,
storytelling in the name of
a pursuit of knowledge
of ourselves, and the breadth of our nature
to be capable of making something
and living the best life we can.*

Our shared vision of the Truth is stitched from the individual threads of our unique interpretations of the human experience, whether in empirical observation, or creative expression. If the role of education is to prepare learners to be active participants in the creation of themselves and their world, they must be versed in the language of narratives to authentically recognize and express their own voices.

*Our present moment asks that we stand and be counted
as lives lived to the best of our honest knowledge
about what our actions mean.*

In learning to create the conditions of personal and collective storytelling, we are empowering ourselves to better understand our role in the world, and participate actively in the creation of a shared future. If we are able to recognize ourselves as

protagonists within the larger narrative of our communities, we can write the story of our collective futures. We learn, after all,

*...To know what others
have been willing to stand for
when doing so has not been easy.
because it never is easy,
and surely will not be when it is our turn,
whether we are standing for our lives,
our minds, or our own opinion
in a world where everyone's
from New Orleans' orphans
to the Kings of Spain
is exactly equal.*

WHY PERSPECTIVE MATTERS



by [*Andy McKiel*](#)

We must attend to the various perspectives that each stakeholder brings into our buildings. Regardless of our roles, every one of us has a vested interest in the learning that takes place within our classrooms. And yet each of us has a different lens that we use to measure the effectiveness of these actions.

We must consider how our students, teachers, parents, colleagues, and administrators perceive events that unfold throughout a given day. For an administrator who walks into a classroom to observe a lesson, the best way to determine the effectiveness of the teaching isn't to sit at the back of the room with a clipboard. Rather, that administrator should sit down beside a student and talk to them about their learning. In many cases, we'll find that we glean more information from the things that we don't see, not in the things that are visible. Open conversations and shared observations can enable us to gain a better insight into the minds of others and see the world through their eyes.

When we take multiple perspectives into consideration, we develop a holistic view of our effectiveness as stakeholders in education. Looking at our actions through the lenses of others will provide a much clearer picture of the quality teaching and learning that takes place in our classrooms and schools.

WHY THE TOOL MATTERS



by *[Kim Gill](#)*

Student Voice:

I have trouble learning, I have special needs,
School is such a hard place for me
I need so much help that I really stand out
But I'd love to work independently

Wouldn't it be grand if people could understand
A desk isn't my best learning space
If people could see, movement's best for me
And learning can happen in many a place

Wouldn't I feel glee if my eyes could see
The numbers and words like my peers
I wish I could look into a book
Without this anxiety and these fears

Teacher Voice:

Here you will see we all learn differently
And we all have something great to share
How we obtain our facts and show what we know
We really don't compare

It'll be so great when you won't have to wait
To access facts and information
Jump online and learn in real time
Learning's not limited by time or location

It'll be so terrific when you can be specific
And demonstrate your learning with pride

Your interests detected by the tools you selected
Creating to show what you know is inside

I need a hook, beyond pencil and book
A tool I can call my own
I need challenges relevant to my world
To prepare for a future unknown

It'll be so exciting when you begin writing
Using social media for audiences beyond our nation
And develop your own learning network
For connecting, sharing, and collaboration

I want to take part and look really smart
I don't want to stupidly stand out in the crowd
I want to finish my work and not feel like a jerk
And make my parents and teachers real proud

Shared Voice:

So come on let's go, let's get ready to grow
Our journey will be as unique as we are
These accommodating tools that we will use
Will be the support that helps us go far.

WHY CHOICE MATTERS



by [Kathy Cassidy](#)

Choice gives me power. I personally can't imagine not having the freedom to create my own day. What to eat for breakfast, what time to leave for school, what to teach and in what order, which student to spend individual time with – these are choices I relish making each day. A day without these decisions would be akin to being in prison, with all of my choices taken away.

Students need this freedom of choice as well. They need to have control over their learning, especially at school where rules, bells and teachers tightly control much of their lives. Rules tell them what they must do and what they must not. Bells indicate where they must be and when. Teachers specify whom they may sit beside and when they may talk.

Choice in student learning can take many forms. It can mean choosing when, how, what, where, or with whom to learn. Or it can mean a combination of these. Choices need to include options that are appropriate for each learner.

This freedom makes learning more interesting. It allows for diversity, and encourages students to differentiate their own learning. Making choices is preparation for a future in which students must make their own decisions. Choice gives power.

WHY DOODLING MATTERS



by Giulia Forsythe

Why

DOODLING

Matters

Thinking in Pictures

"THE WORLD NEEDS ALL KINDS OF MINDS"



IS A FORM OF EXTERNAL THOUGHT

makes CONNECTIONS

IN YOUR BRAIN

CONSCIOUS

can assist CONCENTRATION



with ideas

(with people)

even

UNCONSCIOUS

Connections from

primordial soup

(day DREAMS)

lead to "serendipitous collisions of

CREATIVE INSIGHT"

Pr oblem

Solving

WHY IRRESISTIBLE CHALLENGES MATTER



by *Rodd Lucier*

What is the most irresistible challenge you've ever encountered?

The most compelling problems lead participants to collaborate as members of a team in the design of innovative solutions. When such collaboration draws upon the varied expertise of all learners, the results can be dramatic, memorable, and noteworthy.

Learning in parallel with our students, authentic and compelling challenges hold the key to our personal and professional growth. As project-based learners, we thrive on the challenge of creating. We find intellectual nourishment through the process of collaboration. The most potent artifacts of our learning are the things we create with others.

As a culminating experience, UnPlug'd is the organic result of a year-long collaborative project. Passion-based learning, shared discovery, and face-to-face networking came to life because key collaborators were willing to risk participation in the creative process, donating their time and talent to bring this event to life. When highly networked teacher-learners from across Canada engaged in the process, we re-invented professional development and brought to life a modern learning community.

Which endeavors sustain your attention? Might the creation of new experiences enrich the learning of students and teachers? Why not see a problem as an irresistible challenge? If you find co-creators willing to push in the same direction, you might just do something that's never been done before.

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Printed in Canada

First Printing: August 2011

