



Getting Started: Learning Stories



A learning story is first and foremost a story that matters. It tells a tale of important moments to the child, to the family, to guests, and to ourselves, as educators of children. Learning stories are one form of pedagogical documentation and there is not one “right” way to do it. For those just starting out, we have provided a basic outline and guide below as a launching point. We encourage you to practice and experiment within your centre team to find ways to write learning stories that reflect who you are and who the families and children are.

Learning stories (Carr and Lee, 2012) are most often based on everyday happenings. They are a “snapshot” that captures positive moments and helps bring your image of the child into view, as strong and capable—a mighty learner and citizen. Used as avenues for pedagogical discussion, learning stories can highlight

what we “see” and in turn, value. When we capture moments with children that matter, we are offered an opportunity to reflect on our practice. An engaging learning story may leave us with many unanswered questions that motivate us to think further.

“This can be our intention in our documentation practice: to pay attention, to bear witness, and to tell the stories of what we see and experience in ways that invite others to have the sense of wonder that we have, to see the things anew, to stand with us in our reverberant regard for children and childhood” (Pelo & Carter, 2018, p. 260).



Learning stories can help educators:

- Highlight the uniqueness of children's individual and social learning and development
- Notice, name and nurture children's learning dispositions
- Reveal the early childhood setting as a learning community
- Raise questions about taken for granted notions of young children
- Describe the value of the children's play experiences more clearly
- Reflect further on our role as co-learner, co-researcher and co-imaginer of possibilities

As you begin, consider a format that makes sense for you. Learning stories are professionally presented to showcase what children are doing. Remember to follow program photo policy and share photos that you have consent for.



Learning stories outline: Let's get started

There are typically three parts to a learning story as outlined below:

Part A: Observing and describing

Begin with a positive moment that draws you to notice a child's play or interactions. What is the child doing that has captured your attention?

Describe the child's play. Use a first person perspective, "I saw you...". As an observer you bring a perspective that is essential to and part of the story. With specific, detailed and interesting language, describe what the child does and says from your perspective and as someone who cares and is listening closely to discover what is happening. Your retelling is not totally objective; you are present with your heart and with your mind.

Like every good story, give your learning story a title.

Part B: Interpreting and reflecting

In your next paragraph, consider what your observations mean to you and the significance of what you saw by describing the learning that took place in the child's play.

For example, ask yourself: What does this child notice and care about, think about and pursue? What is the child trying to figure out or achieve? What new insights arise for me from this play or interaction? This meaning-making is best done in a dialogue with other educators. Many perspectives can be included here, including the holistic goals and descriptors and/or dispositions to learn from *Flight*. For example, "When the child _____ (the observation you made), the goal of _____ (name of the goal/facet) describes this as _____ (descriptor).

As well, you might draw on other sources of information to support your interpretation.

Part C: Next steps

Conclude your learning story by describing what you can do next as you build on and extend the child's play.

What additional play opportunities can you offer the child to extend play possibilities? What changes to the environment can you make? What time, space, materials and participation will you provide? Are there others in your community who could participate? What other resources will you draw on to inform yourself more fully?

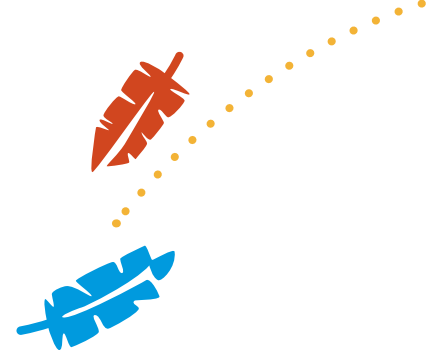
Two sample learning stories have been selected to illustrate the educator's unique style and voice when telling important stories of children's play and learning.

These learning story samples can be found on pages 4 and 5 of this document.

Reference

- Carr, M. & Lee, W. (2012). *Learning stories: Constructing learner identities in early education*. London, UK: Sage Publishing.
- Makovichuk, L., Hewes, J., Lirette, P., & Thomas, N. (2014). *Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework*. flightframework.ca
- Pelo, A. & Carter, M. (2018). *From teaching to thinking: A pedagogy for reimagining our work*. Lincoln, NE: Exchange Press.

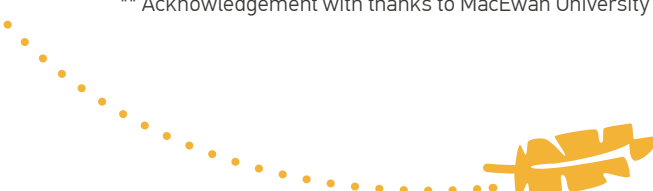
Learning Story Guide



Use the table below to assess your learning stories for yourself or share your learning story with a colleague and have them give you feedback based on the questions provided. Is there additional criteria that you would add to this list?

Criteria	Question
Part A	Observing and Describing
Description	Are the details specific and tell a story about the child? Are the ideas fully developed? Is there a beginning, middle and end to the story?
Focus	Are all the ideas clear? Does the writing sustain a single point of view?
Organization	Is there a definite sequence? Does each paragraph convey part of the story? Is there a logical sentence order and do transitions exist between paragraphs or ideas? Is the story clear?
Style	Are word choices effective and appropriate? Does the story have an interesting title? Is there a date near the title? Have you added your name as the author? Is the typing left aligned? Is the font appropriate and legible?
Conventions	Are spelling, punctuation and capitalization correct? If using direct quotes, have you used quotation marks/punctuation appropriately? Is there consistency in tense? Are all sentences complete?
Part B	Interpreting and Reflecting
Reflection and Interpretation	Have you identified and included the learning that you think took place within this experience? Have you aimed to describe why the events are significant to the child and describe why you think this experience was important for the child involved?
Image of the Child	Does your analysis reflect a strong and capable image of this child?
Conventions	Is there consistency in tense? Are you writing this to the child? Have you used the first person "I"? Example: Christopher, today I noticed that you...
Flight Connections	Have you made connections to <i>Flight</i> goal descriptors or learning dispositions? Have you referenced <i>Flight</i> ? Are there other sources of information to be referenced?
Part C	Next Steps
Planning and Taking Action	Have you described how you are planning to extend this play? Did you discuss the time, space, materials and participation will you provide? Are there others in your community who could participate? What other resources will you draw on to inform yourself more fully?
Sharing	Have you shared the story with the child and their family? With your colleagues?

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Wind

Brittany Aamot | Fall 2017



Alex and I were sitting together in the playground when several gusts of wind came through the trees. After the initial gust, I noticed Alex had a wide grin and I heard her giggle softly. Another breeze came and went and I asked Alex if she could feel air blowing to which she responded, “wind, ya, wind.”

Alex began to stand and turned her body towards the direction of the wind. I noticed her hair began to lift and dance as the wind blew. I commented, “Alex, your hair is blowing in the wind. My hair is blowing too.

I like how that feels.” Alex smiled and laughed, “Hair is blowing. Brittany’s hair is blowing.”

I could hear the trees rustling in the wind before I could feel it. I wondered if Alex was also aware of the correlation. I prompted, “I can hear the leaves moving in the trees. They sound beautiful.” Alex cheered, “The leaves are moving ya.” Each time the leaves would rustle Alex would cheer, “Wind, the wind.” When the breeze reached us Alex would clap her hands and excitedly laugh.

Curriculum Connections

In early learning and care we recognize children develop a sense of wonder and appreciation for the natural world through bringing all their senses to exploring nature. When I noticed Alex’s initial giggle, I took pause in wondering what sparked the laughter. I stilled my pace becoming attuned to the wind myself.

Under the curriculum goal of Diversity and Social Responsibility, Sustainable Futures, I am reminded that children’s affinity to nature, of which they are part, provides a basis for understanding and questioning the place of humankind in nature. Alex seemed curious and excited about feeling the wind blow, as she turned her body towards the direction of the wind, clapped her hands, and cheered. Alex shifted my experience with the wind; an element I often take for granted which felt new again.

Possibilities and Next Steps

In what ways can we create the breeze? My initial thought was using a fan, but I remember in the fitness studio Alex is hesitant to engage with the large fans. Perhaps we can bring in small hand-held fans, ones Alex can control. I also wonder about using scarves and other materials, such as cardboard, to wave and create a breeze. Different sizes and materials could create different sensations.



"Adrian, How Can I Help?"



Pam Gudmundson, Program Coordinator | May 2015



Adrian was sad one morning after Cayla left the room. Hannah, I noticed you go to Adrian to see if you could help. I noticed you asking him if he was sad, and if he needed a hug.

He nodded yes and you quickly moved to snuggle him to console him when he was feeling sad.

Hannah, you were so gentle and comforting to Adrian while he was sad. I really liked the way you were talking to him and asking him questions. "Adrian, does that make you feel better?" You validated his feelings.

After snuggling for a short while, you asked Adrian if he was ready to go play. He said he was, so you carried him to the light table and played with him there for a while.

What This Means

Hannah is a very caring and nurturing child, and has displayed these tendencies towards the other children, often. Hannah usually tries to comfort and make others feel better when they feel down. In her behavior towards Adrian and others, we see Hannah's disposition to care. The Alberta Curriculum Framework describes Hannah's learning through her caring for others.

The Well-being goal says that Hannah is developing a sense of other through supporting, encouraging and listening to others. Hannah will often take the time to support the other children through different experiences and challenges in the room. She helps other children when they're sad, and when they struggle to put on their shoes, or tidy their play spaces, etc.

The Belonging goal says that Hannah is building respectful, reciprocal, and responsive relationships through developing cherished as well as casual friendships. As well, she is building her awareness that her actions contribute to the welfare of others. When she played with Adrian at the light table, he had thrown a toy. She gently reminded him, "Adrian, you know better than that, that's not how we use the toys." She returned the toy to the table and engaged Adrian to use the toy differently. Hannah is very aware of how things are in the room, and maximizes opportunities to be helpful to the educators and other children.

I Wonder...

If Hannah was able to help in teaching others these skills of nurturing and caring, what would that look like in the room? Could she be one of our expert helpers?

If Hannah has similar experiences at home?

How Hannah would like to be consoled by others when she is feeling sad?

Next Steps

We can continue to support Hannah through many opportunities to nurture her caring skills. Perhaps we can describe the wonderful things that happen for others when she takes the time to help them succeed! We can also offer her different play experiences such as nurturing babies and small animals, etc.



 JASPER PLACE Family Resource Centre

