

## **“Story-ify It”**

### **Overview:**

As a way to process new content in any subject area, students weave it together into a story form. Stories are universal and our brain is inherently wired to receive, process, and remember them. The use of stories also taps into the oral traditions of many African American, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian communities.

### **Purpose:**

Asking students to “story-ify” their learning helps them to integrate prior knowledge with new learning and make connections between concepts. The brain has a difficult time holding on to a list of facts, but it is wired to remember stories. According to Hammond (2015), “‘story-ifying’ will help students work through the four cognitive routines: *identifying similarities and differences, finding relationships, noticing how things fit together whole-to-part in a system, and recognizing point of view.*

### **Application: When and where can I use it?**

Stories are not just for language arts classes. Students can story-ify their learning in any discipline as a strategy to help them see relationships between concepts, hold on to the meaning of new vocabulary, remember the sequence of steps for a process in math, science, physical education, music or any other subject area.

### **Getting Started: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?**

When we listen to, or tell, a story not only are the language processing parts of the brain activated, but so too are other processing parts of the brain as if our body is actually involved in the story being told. The more we can get students' brains engaged, the better the chances of them learning for meaning and transfer. The story telling format allows the brain to take big ideas, abstract concepts, new vocabulary, and facts and transform them together into something we can remember.

To get started, you may want to give your students a list of terms, concepts, steps in a sequence, or vocabulary terms and ask them to put them together into the form of a coherent story. Students can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups to develop their story and then share it with others in the class. Encourage the students to make their stories meaningful to them by connecting them with their own lived experiences, as appropriate.

Depending on the age level, you may want to ask students to write out their story, illustrate their story (adding the visual, nonlinguistic representation further activates the brain's processing centers), and/or act it out for others (motor processing).

**Read more about this Instructional Move:**

[The value of storytelling in learning | Wharton Interactive \(upenn.edu\)](#)

**References:**

Hammond, Z. Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain. Thousand Oaks: Corwin, 2015