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Effects of Storytelling on Emotional Development

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Effects of Storytelling on Emotional Development
An Action Research Report
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Abstract

This action research project was completed to test the effects of storytelling on the emotional development of three to six-year-old children in a Montessori primary (PreK-K) environment. The setting was a rural school, and this study took place in an environment with 28 children who are predominantly Caucasian and come from upper-middle-class families. Data was collected using a tally sheet, observational field notes, a small group discussion rubric and an observational rubric. Storytelling took place each day and stories centered around emotions like anger, sadness, and frustration. The adult would share a story first, then invite the children to share stories. After, there would be a small group discussion about the way the particular emotion might feel or look. The results concluded that storytelling did help children with their emotional development by giving them the language they would need to be able to express themselves. The action plan implications conclude that the study could be conducted using different methods of discussing emotions.

Keywords: Emotional Development, Storytelling, and Preschool

Stories of harvests, wars, famine, survival, and family have been shared from generation to generation. The tradition of storytelling lives on today. It is a means by which people can share their ideas, hopes, and fears. It is a tool that binds people together and helps build communities. Through the tradition of sharing stories by word of mouth, communities have been built, and others have fallen apart. By listening to and sharing stories people can gain better insight into those around them and themselves. Telling a story allows a person to reflect on their thoughts and express them with an emotion attached.

Through reflection, a storyteller can gain deeper insight into one's self. Storytelling is one way in which people better understand the events that have happened in their lives (Lawrence & Paige 2013). By listening to a story, children begin to understand sequence, their vocabulary becomes enriched, and they begin to know that they have stories to tell (Ashiabi, 2000; Berkowitz 2011; Pekdoğan 2016; Willis & Schiller 2011). The practice of storytelling allows them to grow and for the community to take root.

Children are not born with a set vocabulary, yet it is something that they can acquire and build within themselves. Montessori (1936/2009) stated, "The baby absorbs speech it hears spoken around it and with it says a word it says it because it has learned it by hearing it, and holds it present in the memory. It uses it according to its need of the moment," (p.66). Young children behave in a similar manner. When children absorb language, they become better equipped to articulate thoughts and experiences. Children can express themselves more clearly. Precise language can render children independent in their ability to express her needs and emotions. It can help the child navigate social situations and advocate for herself and others.

Children become successful in communicating their emotions and become aware of the emotions of others is through storytelling. Storytelling assists the child in gaining language that helps children understand their emotions (Peterson &Biggs 2001; Tayler 2015; Whorrall & Cabell 2016). Through this development of language, children have a better ability to live in the community (Berkowitz 2011;

Pekdoğan 2016; Willis & Schiller 2011; Wright, Diener, & Kemp 2012). Children who are given a lot of vocabulary to describe their emotions and the world around them and can express themselves clearly and precisely have a better understanding of their emotions and the emotions of others. The language that they gain comes in many forms, and storytelling is one of them.

In the early years of a child's development, it is essential that the child is exposed to rich language, this is a vocabulary that is precise and descriptive. This exposure will prepare the child for later work in writing and reading. When adults provide a greater number of high-quality word-learning opportunities, children are more likely to have a larger vocabulary (Tayler 2015). Listening to rich language and being given the opportunity to use similar vocabulary in context helps the child's vocabulary grow. It also helps deepen the child's understanding. Words that describe emotions provide a great vocabulary for children. Children come to understand and value feelings through conversation (Dettore 2002). When children are offered the opportunity to listen to and share stories about emotions they gain a deeper insight into their feelings and learn to value the emotions of others.

Storytelling is used in the Montessori environment as a small group activity. The children are invited to gather and listen to a story first told by the adult and then the children are invited to tell the same story or stories of their own. In general, these stories are true stories. Sometimes the stories can tend toward fiction, but that is not where the adult starts. The goal of this activity is to provide rich language while also providing context for an experience. Storytelling could help the children think of similar experiences that they can talk about, and maybe someday write about. Through the act of sitting in a small group listening to and telling stories the children are engaged in shared community experience. Through this experience, the children can build a stronger community and express more compassion for one another.

The purpose of this research was to determine how daily storytelling would affect the ability of children in a Montessori primary environment to express their emotions and comprehend the feelings of others. Each child in the community expresses their needs differently. In many cases this led to a conflict that would then be settled through shouting, punching, hitting or kicking. Observations revealed that

many conflicts in the environment arose from feelings of frustration, anger and sadness. The children did not know how to express that these were the things they were feeling and thus responded to the situation in a way that made the most sense to them.

Daily storytelling gave the children language regarding the situations they were finding themselves in every day. It provided a space for the children to share stories about times they may have felt the same or similar emotions, but more than anything it offered the children a way in which to become closer as a community.

This research was conducted in a classroom at a private Montessori school in a suburban/rural setting. The classroom included 28 children, 13 males and 15 females between the ages of three and six years old. There were three adults in the room, myself; I am the guide (the Montessori trained teacher) and my two assistants.

Review of Literature

Storytelling has been a means of communicating with others for many centuries. It is not only a way to discuss important events, but also a way to entertain one another (Lawrence & Paige, 2013). Through listening to others tell stories and sharing stories of one's own, people can become more connected. Telling stories is one way in which people come to better understand events that have happened in their lives (Lawrence & Paige 2013). Children are not born with a set vocabulary, yet it is something that they can acquire and build within themselves. Language is something that the child absorbs (Montessori 1936/2009). As the child absorbs language, she also comes to better articulate her thoughts and experiences. One can effectively guide children to the language they need to be successful in communicating their emotions and understanding the emotions of others through storytelling.

Research has shown that one way to aid children in successfully communicating their emotions and become aware of the emotions of others is through storytelling. It is a collaborative and participatory way of creating and sharing information and knowledge (Lawrence & Paige 2013). Storytelling assists the child in gaining language (Peterson &Biggs 2001; Tayler 2015; Whorrall & Cabell 2016). It has also been found that storytelling assists the child in building emotional literacy (Ashiabi 2000; Denham et al. 2003;

Dettore 2002; Figueroa-Sánchez 2008). This development of language and emotional literacy has led children to have a better ability to live in the community (Berkowitz 2011; Pekdoğan 2016; Willis & Schiller 2011; Wright, Diener, & Kemp 2012). These studies indicate that language development and emotional development lead children to have better success living in the community.

However, not every child that comes to the school has exposure to the experiences of language or the skills of navigating emotions, which makes living in the classroom community a difficult task. The task of giving and navigating these experiences then falls on the shoulders of the teacher. In some studies, storytelling has led children to a higher level of language development. Tayler (2015) states, "Adults who provided a greater number of high-quality word-learning opportunities produced better vocabulary outcomes for their children," (p. 168). Whorrall & Cabell (2016) found that children benefitted from multi-turn conversations stating, "conversations during centers and meal times that include more scaffolding from the adult allowing the child to expand his or her knowledge and thoughts, including the use of sophisticated vocabulary," (p. 136). In other research, storytelling led children to have better understandings of emotions Dettore (2002) states that children come to understand and value feelings through conversations, (p.281). In one study that had inconclusive findings regarding language and emotional development, the researcher found that storytelling was, in fact, an activity that brought the children together in community, (Boris, 2017).

While there are many ways to help children discuss their feelings and thoughts; Storytelling is one of them. Storytelling can take many forms. It can be as simple as sharing a personal experience (Boris 2017), or it can be as elaborate as putting on plays (Berkowitz 2011). There is some space in between for songs, poems, and reading books. Using children's literature as a way to aid children in communicating about their experiences is another way to aid children in their language and social-emotional development (Harper 2016).

Language Development

. Childhood language developmental research has shown that telling stories can facilitate language development, (Berkowitz, 2011; Denham et al., 2003; Peterson & Biggs 2001, Whorrall

&Cabell, 2016) As children hear language spoken all around them they absorb vocabulary. They can then use the vocabulary to express themselves. In one study it was found that preschool-aged girls were more likely to use emotion words to describe their feelings than boys (Peterson & Biggs 2001). Even after listening to stories regarding emotions and emotional situations boys were more likely to use evaluative devices to describe emotional events (Peterson & Biggs 2001).

In another study, Tayler (2015) found that vocabulary is dependent on the input that is received by the child. Furthermore, researchers stated that expressive language made it easier for children to have opportunities to connect with others and communicate thoughts and ideas (Tayler 2015). It was also found that the type of environment the child was in while learning the language and experiencing the social-emotional situations also had an impact on how children learned and were able to express themselves according to Tayler (2015). When teachers engaged with children in meaningful interactions it supported the language development of the child (Whorrall & Cabell 2016). Children benefited from multi-turn conversations during mealtimes or unstructured playtimes (Whorrall &Cabell 2016).

Methods for language development other than storytelling

While oral storytelling and acting out stories is a significant way to pass along language and emotional information, findings state that high-quality children's books can do the same thing. It has been found that picture books can provide a space for children to learn about empathy, tolerance and friendship. High-quality literature can help validate the feelings of a child while also giving vocabulary to help the child express how she might be feeling (Harper 2016). High-quality children's literature can also offer children role models outside of the adults that they see every day to help them cope with emotions that they may be struggling to identify or express (Harper 2016). It has been found that when children read about other children who face similar problems to theirs, the children can identify and maybe even mimic the character's coping models (Harper 2016). Children's books can serve to allow children to explore their feelings without being as vulnerable as they might be when telling or listening to a personal story of someone they know.

According to Berkowitz (2008), language and emotional understanding can be passed on is through fingerplays, songs, poems, and rhymes. Children who hear the stories within the songs and rhymes can help children not only identify their feelings but also explore the issues and build on their understanding. Literacy-focused activities give children the tools that they need to understand themselves and how to be a part of their community.

With songs, fingerplays, poems, and stories, facial expressions can be an integral part. The facial expression of the leader or storyteller can set the mood for the activity. In another study, researchers examined children's ability to recognize facial expressions. The study by Camras (1980) was conducted by telling a story, and then the children looked at pictures of a child making a face representing that emotion and matched it to the story that was recounted. The study concluded that children could accurately discriminate facial expressions (Camras 1980). Since facial expressions are sometimes an inherent part of storytelling and interpersonal communication, it is essential that children can decipher them. Becoming aware of the facial expressions of themselves and others is an integral part of the emotional development of the child.

Emotional Development

According to Figueroa-Sánchez (2008), storytelling is a way that allows children to listen to the emotions of another and interpret it (Figueroa- Sánchez 2008). Children do not always have the words they need to express their emotions and thoughts, and storytelling is one way that supports them in building that emotional understanding (Dettore 2002, Figueroa- Sánchez 2008). One way that emotional growth can be fostered is through encouraged discussion between children and adults. Adults can help children navigate and value their feelings and guide children to have a clearer understanding of themselves (Dettore 2002).

In one study that was conducted researchers looked at the ways that adults influenced the emotional development of preschool-aged children. This study found that because children have verbal limitations due to their vocabulary that emotions became an important social signal for other children.

Ashiabi (2000) found that it was important for adults to recognize the relationship between emotional development and social development and how the one affects the other (Ashiabi 2000).

Denham et al. (2003) found that some children were able to identify the expressions of their peers' faces in sensitive situations and were thus able to help their peers work through the emotional situation. The peers who were able to navigate the emotionally tense moments were able to do so using emotion language (Denham et al. 2003). Emotional knowledge would have been gained before the emotional encounter thus showing that children with an emotional vocabulary are more likely to be in tune with the emotions of themselves and others (Denham et al. 2003).

Boris (2017) conducted a study in which preschool-aged children were told stories about emotional conflicts and then were invited to tell stories about times that they felt that particular emotion. The researcher was hoping to find that through this language development children would be more capable or managing conflict. The researcher's findings proved to be inconclusive. However, the importance of language acquisition by the children was witnessed by the researcher (Boris 2017).

Emotional Development outside of storytelling: Community Development.

Storytelling is a community activity. There is usually at least one listener and one storyteller. However, in community, it is likely that turns are taken in telling stories. This idea of language development and emotional development leading to social development and the building of a community has been researched by many. It has been found that when children thread a sequence together, predict what is going to happen, and consider human behavior they gain a deeper insight into themselves (Berkowitz 2011). This understanding then allows them to build and become a part of their community. Furthermore, children who can express themselves are more likely to feel a sense of self-worth (Berkowitz 2011, Willis & Schiller 2011). One study that examined the effects of a story-based social skills training program on the social skill development of five and six-year-old children found that the training program had a significant impact on the children's ability to express themselves (Pekdoğan 2016). The program allowed children to express themselves and to work through their issues using methods of

problem-solving. The result is that children who had participated in the story-based social skills training were more capable of navigating difficult situations verbally and emotionally (Pekdoğan 2016).

In another study by Wright, Diener, and Kemp (2013) that was observing how storytelling dramas affect the community of an early childhood classroom researchers found that storytelling not only allowed children to expand their vocabulary and build emotional literacy, it also allowed them to explore being the director of stories and to be an audience listening to the story. These experiences proved to be meaningful. It was found that the sharing of intense emotions had the potential to build the community relations and the dramas helped the children learn emotional regulation strategies. (Wright, Diener, & Kemp 2013). The study concluded that storytelling dramas could enhance language and emotional literacy skills while also allowing the children to build meaningful relationships (Wright, Diener, & Kemp 2013). Current research on the effects of storytelling on a child's social-emotional development indicates that storytelling does guide children to have a better understanding of themselves and the people in their community (Berkowitz 2011, Pekdoğan 2016, Willis & Schiller 2011, Wright, Diener, & Kemp 2012).

Methodology

This study was conducted over a series of five weeks. The environment in which this study was conducted has 28 children 13 males and 15 females between the ages of three years old and six years three months old. There were three adults present in the room during the data collection period. Data collection took place during the morning work cycle (8:30am-11: 30 am), and stories were told once a day to small groups of children. Each child had the opportunity to participate each week. The groups were chosen based on the availability of the children, and my availability and responsibilities as the guide.

The first week was a four-day week and was spent collecting baseline data. I would observe from 10 am to 10:15 am each day and tally the number of emotional outbursts throughout the period, and how many times adults had to intervene in the incidents. This time was chosen as the time to observe because it is the halfway mark in the morning work cycle, at which time false fatigue set in.

The tally sheet (Appendix A) has a list of the twenty-eight children in the environment in order

by age from oldest to youngest. Each time there was an incident of shouting, unkind words, i.e. "You're not invited to my birthday party", hitting (or other physical aggression) a tally was placed next to the age of the child who had the incident, and a note was made about what kind of conflict occurred and if there was adult intervention. During the baseline collection period, the observational rubric (Appendix B) was used as well. This rubric measured the percentage of the environment that was, or was not, having conflict throughout the morning, and if emotions were being discussed amongst the children.

In the following weeks where the intervention took place, the tally sheets were still used to collect data from 10 am to 10:15 am. Again, when an incident occurred a tally was placed, and a note was made describing the event. The observational rubric was also used during the intervention period.

In weeks two through five observations would take place from 10 am to 10:15 am and the tally sheet would be used to tally incidents. Afterwards, a group of children would be gathered, and a personal story would be shared about a time I felt sad, frustrated, or angry. The children would listen to the story and then they would be invited to share their own stories about times that they felt similar emotions or were in similar situations. At this point, I would fill out the observational field notes (Appendix C). These notes reflected on the mood of the environment before the story, where and what time the story was presented, and asked if the children were engaged in the story and if they shared stories of their own.

The stories that were shared were prepared beforehand (Appendix E). Each day a story was shared with the children. The story was related to frustration, sadness or anger. I told stories about times I experienced these feelings as a child, and I shared stories of events that happened even during the period of research. Each story was told with some dramatic emphasis on facial expression and tone of voice. The end of each story had a resolution. I would either share how I resolved the issue with words or how, with some time and space, I was able to overcome the emotion I had experienced.

The stories opened the small groups to discussions about feelings. When each child finished sharing a story, we would discuss it. I would ask questions like, "what does your body feel like when you're angry?" or "What does your face look like when you are frustrated?" and "How can you tell someone is sad?" Through these group discussions that occurred during the storytelling intervention, I

was able to fill out the small group discussion rubrics (Appendix D). The small group discussion rubric gauged how the children understood emotions and how they understood adults and each other talking about feelings. The rubric also acknowledged if children had independent answers from their peers or if they were repeating something someone else had said during the group discussion. When children were not able to be a part of the group discussion independently, there was an option to meet with the individual child and discuss emotions and the storytelling without the pressure of being with peers in a one on one conversation.

In week five of the intervention I did not tell stories. I filled out the data collection tools as usual, and I gathered the children to share stories, but instead of being a storyteller I became just a listener. The fifth week is where the post intervention data was collected.

Baseline Data

The first week of this project was dedicated to collecting baseline data. This data was collected during a four-day school week. To do this, a tally sheet was used (Appendix A). The tally sheet was used each day. The tally sheet had children listed by age from oldest to youngest. The tally sheet was designed in this way to count the number of incidents and to be able to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. At least one child was missing each day throughout the baseline week due to illness or unforeseen circumstances. The tally sheets were used to count the number of incidents, note what kind of incidents, and tally how many adult interventions occurred each day.
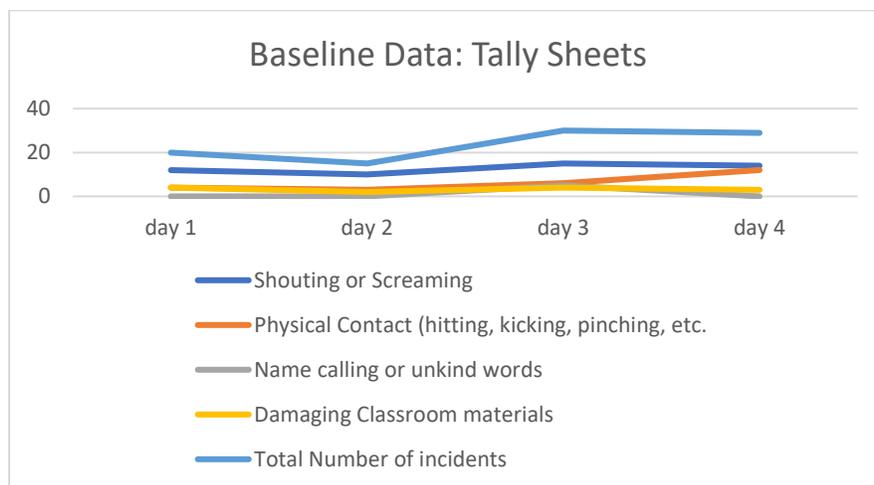

Baseline Data: Tally Sheets

Legend:
- Shouting or Screaming
- Physical Contact (hitting, kicking, pinching, etc.
- Name calling or unkind words
- Damaging Classroom materials
- Total Number of incidents

Figure 1. Baseline Data from Tally Sheets

This chart shows the number of incidents that occurred during the baseline observation week. The line at the top shows the total number of instances each day. The first two days there were fewer incidents than in the second two days. On average there were 23.5 incidents each day during the baseline period.

Along with the tally sheet, an observational rubric (Appendix B) was used throughout the baseline data period. This rubric measured the percent of children who were managing their emotions without using unkind words or physical aggression. When looking at the observational notes using a rubric, percentages were converted into a Likert scale. For the sake of simplicity, the percentages were converted to numbers one, two, and three. Three meaning that higher percentage of children were able to handle conflicts and emotions without unkind words or physical aggression, and one meaning that lower percentages of children were handling conflict and emotions with unkind words and physical aggression.
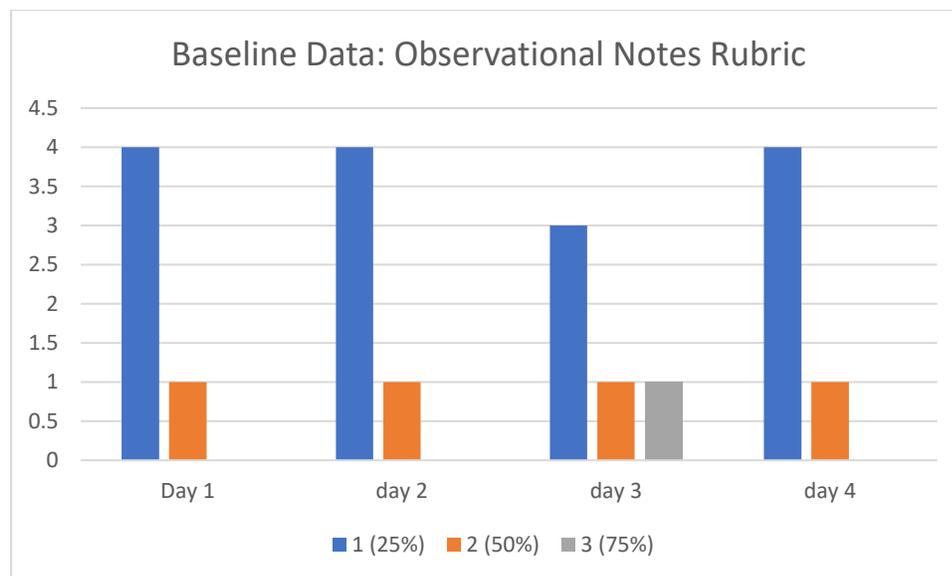

Figure 2. Baseline Data from Observational Notes Rubric

During the baseline observation period children usually fell toward the bottom of the scale. It was clear that the children in the community were struggling to communicate their emotions and work through conflict without hurtful words, physical aggression, and adult intervention.

Data Analysis

Data was collected using the tally sheets during the intervention and during the post intervention. The intervention lasted three weeks, and the post intervention lasted one week.
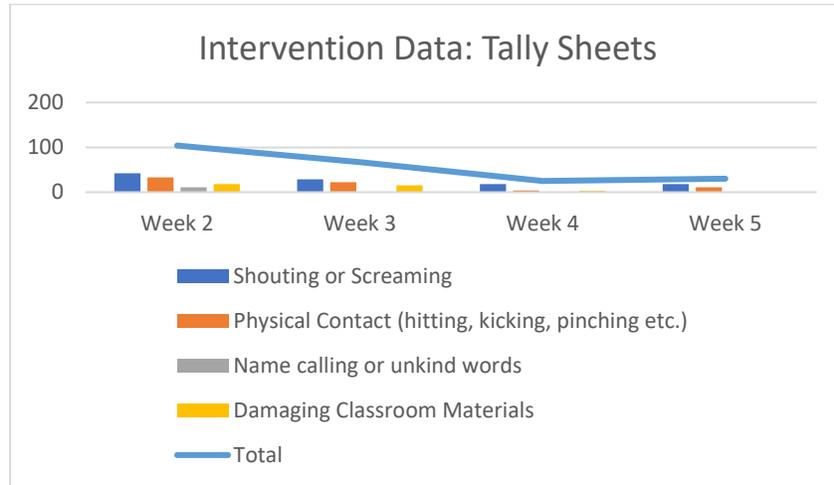

Figure 3. Intervention Data from Tally Sheets

This chart shows that in the weeks in which the storytelling intervention took place there were fewer incidents between 10am and 10:15 am. Weeks two, three, and four, mark the intervention, and week five is the week of post intervention. In weeks two through four the number of incidents went down steadily. In week two there were 104 incidents, averaging out to 20.8 incidents per day. In week three there were 67 incidents, averaging out to 13.4 per day. In week four there were 25 incidents total for the whole week. This averages out to be five incidents per day. Week five was a four-day week, and there were 30 incidents averaging out to 7.5 per day. This is a slight rise in incidents from week four to week five. However, all these averages are lower than the baseline data average of 23.5 incidents per day.

The observational notes rubric showed similar findings. It showed that overall children were more capable of avoiding unkind words and physical aggression during the storytelling intervention.
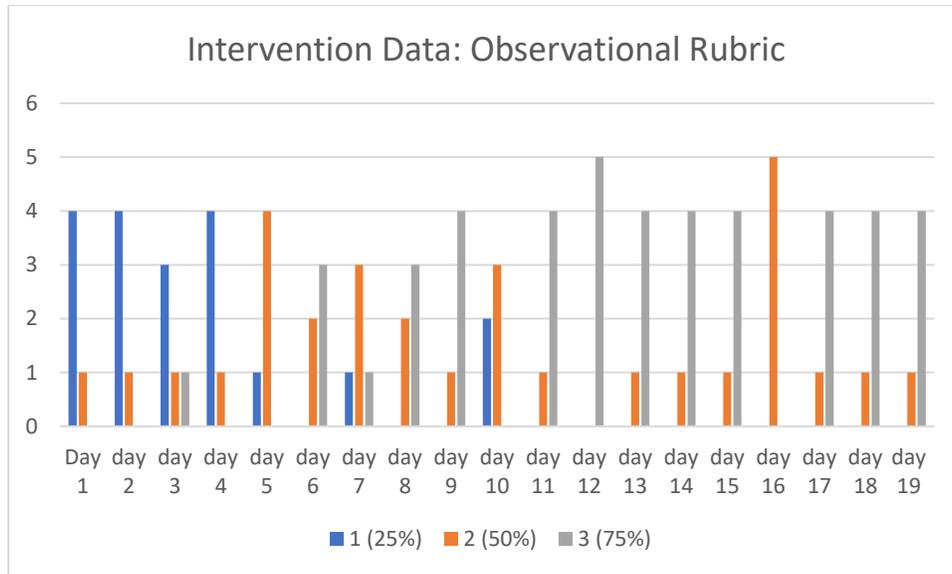
Figure 4. Intervention Data from Observational Rubric

When looking at the observational rubrics over the course of the next few weeks, the percentage of the children that were able to navigate conflict and emotions without unkind words and without physical aggression went up. Except on day sixteen, there was at least a small portion of children who struggled. Overall children were able to score in the higher percentage of being able to manage emotions, discuss emotions, and navigate conflict after the intervention.

The post intervention analysis of the observational rubrics shows that children were much more capable of being in control. The class scored in the 75% range each day being able to use kind words and restrain themselves from physical aggression.
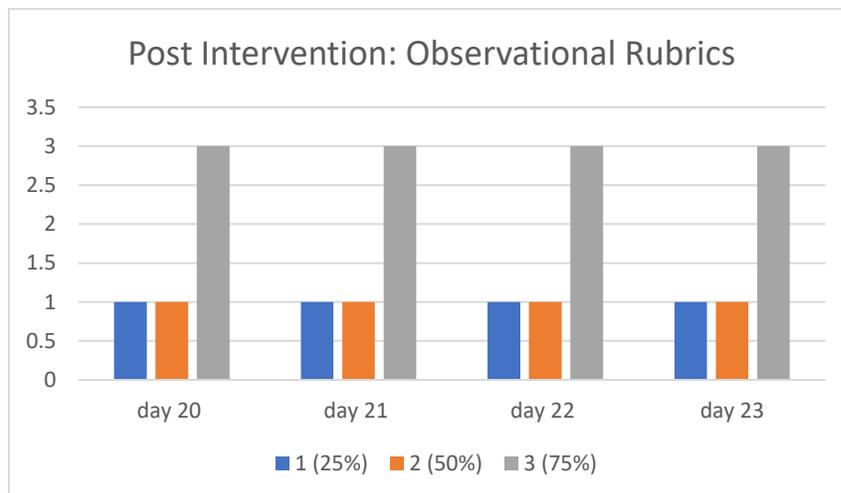
Figure 5. Post Intervention Data from Observational Rubrics

In analyzing the data from the observational field notes it was concluded that all children who were invited to join a small gathering to hear a story accepted the invitation. In each group the individual children all participated by partaking in the small group discussion after the story.
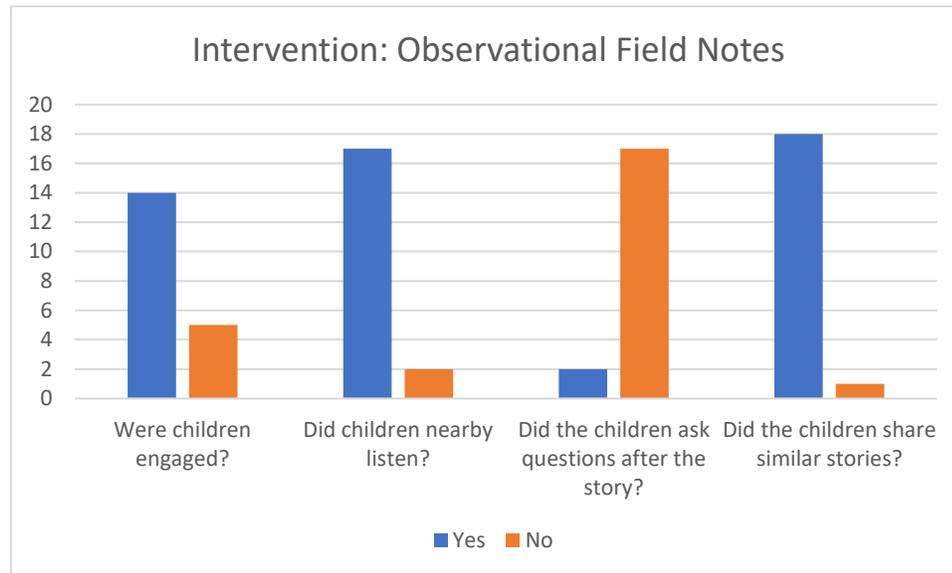

Intervention: Observational Field Notes

Figure 6. Intervention Data from Observational Field Notes

Throughout the study most children were engaged in the stories begin told. On all but two days children who were working near the small group stopped what they were doing and listened to the stories as well. For all except one day the children who listened to stories shared stories of their own. There was one occasion in which the children struggled to make it through the story that was being told so after the short discussion they were dismissed directly to work. Only twice did children ask questions about the stories. Otherwise, they were eager to tell their own or to listen to their peers share stories.

The rubric also asked if the same story was shared by the children. For example, did the children take the original words of my story and put themselves inside it making it their story? In general, the children did not. There was one such occasion in which a child made the story its own and told it just as if it had happened to her. For all the other instances, children shared stories that were unique to them.

The small group discussion rubrics were a way of measuring how children were generally able to express and understand emotions. After I told a story they were invited to also share stories and we

discussed how emotions felt and what faces people might make if they were feeling angry, sad, or frustrated. Children were never forced to speak at the small group discussions or gatherings. If they chose not to, their input would be taken individually away from the rest of the group. The rubric is set up in such a way that a score of one means that the children were not able to accurately name an emotion, describe the emotion, or tell a story that matched the emotion. A score of two meant that the children were sometimes able to accurately define and describe emotions, or choose stories related to the emotion. A score of three meant that the children could successfully come up with stories related to the same emotion, describe it, and make (or see) a facial expression that expressed the same emotion.

To analyze the small group discussion rubrics, they were first sorted by each story that was told, frustrated, angry, or sad. Then category was analyzed individually. The scores were tallied for each of the stories and then put into the graph.
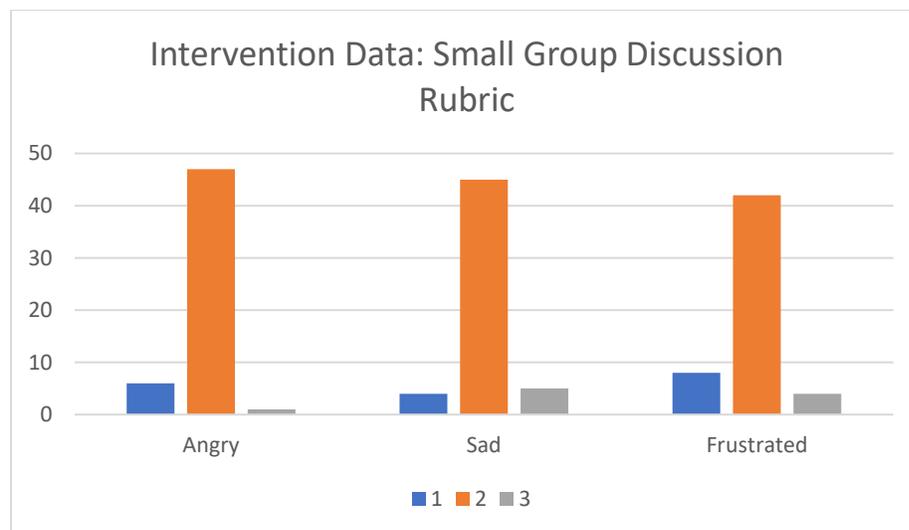

Figure 7. Intervention Data from Small Group Discussion Rubrics

This chart shows that children still struggled to match each emotion to a story, facial expression, or a physical feeling. More children were able to understand sad than frustrated or angry. Sad seemed to be the emotion that was most easily expressed through story and facial expression.
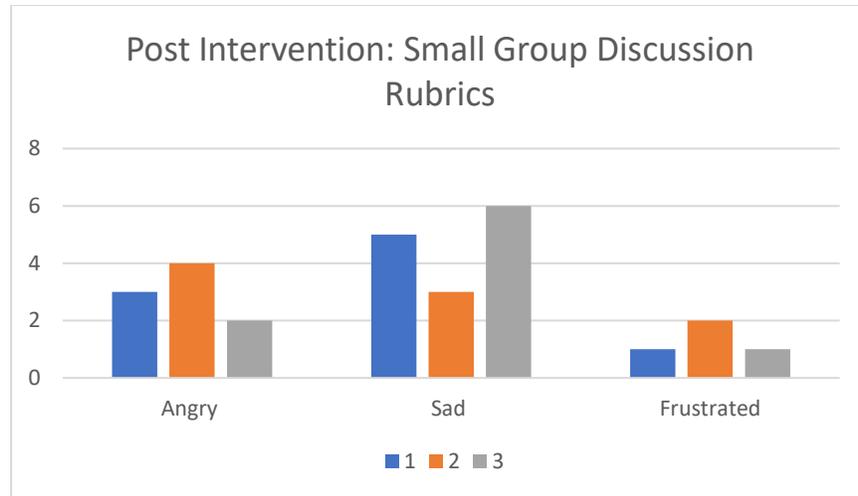
Figure 8. Post Intervention Data from Small Group Discussion Rubrics

The children were free to tell their own stories in the post intervention week, but I still tried to guide them to the emotions that we had been discussing in previous weeks. Through their discussions it was evident that sad and angry were the easiest emotions to recognize and act out. Many of the children were able to share stories about times that they felt those emotions as well.

After implementing the storytelling intervention in the Montessori primary environment, it seems that children are more capable of expressing their emotions and understanding the emotions of others when they can hear stories about feelings and discuss them. The storytelling intervention gave the children an opportunity to discuss their feelings in a neutral situation. The children were able to listen to adult share stories about emotions and then were invited to share similar stories. This allowed each child to experience expressing themselves in a no pressure situation. The children were then able to discuss and identify emotions of others.

Children spent more time expressing their emotions through storytelling and in moments of conflict after the intervention. Storytelling empowered them to be able to recognize their own feelings and to communicate them more clearly. Frustration was still an emotion that the children struggled to identify in others and communicate on their own, but sadness and anger were emotions that children were able to express during storytelling and in moments of conflict in the classroom.

Action Plan

Research on storytelling conducted in Montessori and other preschool settings (Ashiabi, 2000; Berkowitz, 2011; Boris, 2017; Camaras 1980; Denham et. al 2003; Pekdoğan, 2016; Whorrall & Cabell 2016; Willis &Schiller 2011) has shown that providing preschool aged children with language through storytelling can be beneficial. Children develop language by listening to others speak. This can be telling stories, reading books, singing songs, or reciting poems. All of these are ways in which language is passed to young children.

Daily oral storytelling did appear to help children regulate their emotions and work through conflict. It also provided the children with a shared community experience in which they could speak openly with each other and with the adult present. It proved to be an enjoyable experience that was also beneficial to the community. These findings conclude that storytelling can be a way of helping children name and manage their emotions.

When implementing storytelling as an action research project it is important to consider the children in your environment, how they will react to it, what kind of stories should be told, and how to collect data. It is also important to determine and define what would be an emotional outburst, this can be left to the researcher's discretion. The data tools must be created in such a way that they aid the researcher in collecting data about emotional outbursts and how children react during and after the storytelling intervention.

In a storytelling action research project, the researcher should also consider a symbol for storytelling. Boris (2017) wrote about the significance of using a shell to symbolize that storytelling was in progress. Boris (2017) also wrote about the pitfalls of having such an item. It seems that it may have been distracting. In this study, a symbol for storytelling was not used. There are benefits and downfalls to using one, it would be worth it to see if that in itself is a helpful factor how the children engage in the stories and in the time with the community.

The results of this research will change my practice in the sense that I will be sure to find a way for children to choose storytelling as an independent activity, but I will also partake in telling stories with

the children. The telling of stories, the sharing of information and emotions is what helped the children. I will also encourage my assistants to engage in stories with children during times when it is appropriate, like outside, at lunch, or in small groups in the classroom. Another thing that will change in my practice is I will introduce storytelling with a storytelling symbol. It seems that may be a way to have storytelling as an available activity for the children to participate in independently. Just like they would choose any other material off the shelf, they could choose to work on telling stories.

There are many ways this research could possibly impact student learning. Through a deeper understanding of how children gain and use language, adults can continue to provide language about emotions to help children work through some of their emotions. This could be beneficial for many reasons. Fewer emotional outbursts usually means that the environment is quieter and calmer and more conducive to children exploring with materials and having pleasant conversations. Another reason this is beneficial is that it allows children to communicate their feelings clearly. If children can state their needs clearly, then they can grow to become adults who can communicate their needs clearly. This is an important thing for future generations.

Another possible impact this could have on student learning is the ability for students to independently share stories within the environment. The oldest children can teach the youngest children how to participate and listen to the stories and then the youngest children can learn from their older peers. This would perpetuate a cycle of peer learning and render the children independent from the adults in the environment. This could help the children build a socially cohesive community.

Throughout this research there have been a few ideas for future action research investigations. One idea would be to use pictures of children making faces representing the emotion so that instead of each individual making the face the children can collectively look at the same picture and describe the features of that particular emotion. Another idea would be to use a positive emotion. Would results be the same if the stories were about sadness, anger, and joy? Some of the emotional outbursts that were witnessed could have been from joyous emotions.

      Telling stories with children benefitted them. It allowed the children the opportunity to hear about how someone else felt an emotion and dealt with it. The power of spoken language was alive throughout this project and continues to live on in the community. Storytelling has quickly become a popular choice for the children in the mornings. Their ability to grow from listening and having the opportunity to communicate in a neutral moment has been astounding to see. Furthermore, the community has become much closer as the children say to each other, and to the adults, "remember that one time you felt sad?" or "Can I tell you a story?"

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Appendix A

Tally Sheet: Tally marks are placed to count occurrences by each child involved in
- shouting or screaming,
- hitting, kicking, throwing things,
- name calling, unkind words ("you're not invited to my birthday")
- adult intervention.
- This is to be filled out at the same time each day. Observations will be 15 minutes long.

Child	Age	Tally	Total	Notes
1	6y 4m			
2	6y 3m			
3	6y			
4	6y			
5	5y 11m			
6	5y 9m			
7	5y			
8	5y			
9	4y 10m			
10	4y 10m			
11	4y 8m			
12	4y 7m			
13	4y 6m			
14	4y 6m			
15	4y 5m			
16	4y 3m			
17	4y 2m			
18	4y 2m			
19	4y 2m			
20	3y 11m			
21	3y 10m			
22	3y 8m			

23	3y 7m			
24	3y 6m			
25	3y 7m			
26	3y 4m			
27	3y 4m			
28	3y			

Appendix B

Observational Notes Rubric

Behaviors	25%	50%	75%	Notes
Children are hitting, kicking and throwing things to express themselves	This is true of most children most of the day.	This is true of some of the children some of the day.	This is only true for a few children once or twice during the day.	
Children are using their words to express themselves	This is only true for a few children.	This is true for some of the children.	This is true of most of the children.	
Children are resolving conflicts amongst themselves using words.	This is only true of a few children, and many others are resulting to physical reactions.	This is true of some of the children.	This is true of most of the children.	
Relationships and interactions				
Children are needing an adult to help guide through conflict.	This is true of many situations, most of the time.	This is true of some situations some of the time.	This is only happening occasionally. Usually children are working it out themselves.	
Children are discussing emotions with each other and the adults in the room.	These discussions have to be adult initiated, or they don't happen.	These discussions are happening occasionally.	These discussions are happening a few times throughout the day with no adult initiation.	

Appendix C

<u>Field Notes filled out before and after storytelling interventions:</u>
Date/Time:
Number of Children:
Before:
What is the general mood of the classroom?

Did any children decline the invitation to the story/presentation?

In which area of the room was the story presented?

During:
Were the children engaged in the story?

Did children nearby listen to the story?

Did the children ask questions after the story? If so, what kinds of questions?

Did the children share similar stories?

After:
Did the mood of the classroom change after the story?

What did the children do after the story? (Did they converse with each other? Were they directed towards work? Did they wander?)

Was the story repeated to other children by children?

Other notes

Appendix D

Small Group Discussion Rubric

Emotional and Social Discussion Topics	1	2	3	Other Notes:
Can name and describe emotions..	Cannot accurately name or describe emotions. Cannot describe when one may feel a certain emotion, and cannot describe what a certain emotion may feel or look like.	Can describe and name some emotions but not all emotions. Can sometimes describe what a certain emotion may feel or look like.	Can accurately name and describe emotions. Can easily describe what certain emotions may feel or look like.	
Can think of situations when one might feel certain emotions. Ex. "Think of a time you felt sad, let's talk about it."	Cannot describe scenarios that match the given emotion.	Can usually describe scenarios that match the given emotion	Can accurately and easily describe scenarios that match the given emotion.	
Can identify emotions of others by facial expressions (expressed by adults)	Cannot identify the emotion I'm trying to convey with my facial expression	Can sometimes identify the emotion I'm trying to convey with my facial expression.	Can always identify the emotion I'm trying to convey with my facial expression.	
Can Identify emotions of others by facial expressions (expressed by children.)	Cannot identify the emotion another child is trying to convey with his/her facial expression.	Can sometimes identify the emotion another child is trying to convey with his/her facial expression.	Can always identify the emotion another child is trying to convey with his/her facial expression.	
Can identify emotions of others by hearing a description of a certain feeing. (described by adult) (Ex. Tears came to my eyes and rolled down my cheeks, and my heart felt	Cannot identify the emotion of others by hearing the emotion verbalized by an adult.	Can sometimes identify the emotion of others by hearing the emotion verbalized by an adult.	Can always identify the emotion of others by hearing the emotion verbalized by an adult	

heavy, and as I cried by body began to shake.)				
Can identify emotions of others by hearing a description of certain feeling (described by a child)	Cannot identify the emotion of others by hearing the emotion verbalized by another child.	Can sometimes identify the emotion of others by hearing the emotion verbalized by another child.	Can always identify the emotion of others by hearing the emotion verbalized by another child.	
Can recall and share stories of certain emotions that go with certain scenarios. (Ex. Someone stole my bike, I was sad.)	Cannot accurately think of an emotion that matches a story.	Can sometimes think of an emotion that matches a story.	Can always think of an emotion that matches a story.	
Clearly articulates own emotions in the moment.	Cannot articulate own emotions in the moment. (May result in hitting, throwing, crying etc.)	Can sometimes articulate own emotions in the moment (rarely results in hitting, throwing, crying,)	Can usually articulate own emotions in the moment (never results in hitting, throwing, crying.)	
Withdrew from the discussion or began imitating answers of others.	Would not participate in the discussion OR began to imitate the answers of their peers.	Participated in the discussion independently for some of the discussion but then began to withdraw or imitate the answers of others.	Each individual participated in the whole conversation without imitating others.	

Appendix E

This is a true story of a time I felt frustrated.
When I was a child, I had spent some time making paper dragons for a school fundraiser. I had worked really hard on them, and I was really proud of my work. After the fundraiser, we were all told that we would have to bring our paper dragons home on Friday or they would be thrown away. That Friday I was supposed to spend the night with my grandpa, and I was so excited! When the bell rang at the end of the school day, I rushed to gather my things, and I walked over to grandpa's house as fast as I could!
We sat down for dinner, and we started to talk about what each of us had done that day. That's when I remembered that I had forgotten to collect my paper dragons. I was very frustrated. My stomach started to hurt, I felt myself get really tense, and I started to cry. I tried to explain to my grandpa why I was upset, but he didn't understand me when I was crying, which was even more frustrating! My grandpa suggested that I take a few really deep breaths to calm down, he even did the deep breaths with me. He asked me again why I was so upset, and I told him. I told him that I was really frustrated that I had worked really hard on the dragons and that I forgot them at school.
He understood my frustration, but there was nothing we could do about it at that point.
My grandpa got us some colored paper, and he let me show him how to make paper dragons, and that was fun.

This is a true story of a time I felt sad.
When I was a child, my grandfather gave me a ring. It was a gold ring with garnets in the shape of a flower and a very small diamond in the middle. It was very special to me, and I would wear it sometimes. Usually, however, I kept it in my jewelry box.
One day I put the ring on. I looked at my hand, and I admired my ring, and then I went about my day. Later that day I realized the ring was not on my finger! It was missing! I was sad! It was something my grandfather had given me, and it meant to me, and now it was missing. I cried. I cried a lot. I looked everywhere I thought I might have taken it off. I looked on the floor and on the ground. I looked everywhere, and I couldn't find it. I was very sad and very upset.
I went to my mom, and I told her what had happened. She was disappointed in me, but then she reminded me it was just a ring. I was sad, but it was just a ring.

This is a true story of a time I felt angry.
When I was a child, about nine or ten years old, my grandmother gave me a jewelry box. I still have it. It is white on the outside with pink roses, ribbons, and ballet shoes painted on. When you open it there is a ballerina, and the inside is pink, and it has a couple of different space to hold jewelry. This box is very special because it was something I thought I had always wanted, but also because my grandmother gave it to me. I took very good care of my jewelry box.
One night, I noticed a black mark on my jewelry box. I had not put it there! I thought the box was beautiful as it was. I took a closer look, and I found that the black mark was ink. My other grandmother had sent us stamps for return addresses for letters. I took a very close look at my jewelry box. The stamp was my name, but I had not placed the stamp on my jewelry box. I looked for my address stamp, and I found it in my brother's room. My brother, Charlie, had put my stamp on my jewelry box!
I tried to wash it off, but the ink wouldn't come off without washing away the beautiful paint! I was so angry. I felt myself getting really tense. I felt myself start to cry and to yell. I yelled at Charlie. I told him I was really angry at what he had done. My parents were mad at him too; then they were mad at me for yelling at him. My feelings were hurt, and I was very angry that my jewelry box had a big ugly black stamp on it and would have the stamp on it forever.