

Digital Story Helps Dual Language Learner Connect with Classmates

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Diane Bales of the University of Georgia describes how preschool teacher Phillip Baumgarner at the Child Development Lab, a university-based early childhood program at The University of Georgia, supported one dual language learner to form meaningful connections with his peers.

A four-year-old boy, who spoke only Chinese, was having difficulty forming social connections with the other children in his class. The other children did not talk with him in the classroom and sometimes treated him as if he were much younger than he was, in part because they didn't know how to communicate with him.

The Plan



His teachers discussed ways to help him integrate into the classroom community and form connections with other the children. One solution was to help him create a digital story where he could share details about his home life with the other children. His teacher thought this could serve as a way for the children to open up and learn to relate to each other as they learn about each other's lives, communicate, interact, and form connections.

How This Approach Worked

The teacher loaned the boy and his family an iPad. He used the iPad to take pictures of his family, his home, his room, his toys, and his neighborhood. Back at school, his teacher and his English tutor worked with him to organize and narrate the photos to tell his family's story.

He described his toys, his apartment, his family, and shared his thoughts about a construction site he could see from his window. Some of the narration was in English, and some in Chinese. When the story was complete, he shared it with his classmates during group time.

When the other preschoolers heard his story in his own words (even though some of those words were in an unfamiliar language), they recognized that not only could he talk, but that he had a lot of interesting things to say. Some of the children particularly related to what he had to say about the construction site – a topic many preschoolers are passionate about.

With the connection of seeing and hearing about his home, the communication began to flow. The children worked together to find other ways to communicate, and the boy's English skills grew quickly.

This digital family story served a pivotal role in helping this child integrate into the classroom community and helped him to make meaningful connections with other children about shared topics of interest. It also helped him build his English language skills.

The Technology

The digital story was created with an iPad, using the built-in camera and the app StoryKit.

Audience: *Teacher*

Age: *Early Primary, Kindergarten, Preschool*

Topics: *Other Topics, Anti Bias, Dual Language Learners, Technology and Media, Digital Media*

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