

Narrative Intervention: Principles to Practice

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Who should read this?

School leaders, teachers, Speech Pathologists

What?

This research article aims to provide information about the importance of narratives and narrative intervention and offer recommendations about how to maximise narrative intervention in school settings. Narratives are the telling or retelling of real or imaginary events. They are goal directed with causal links (e.g., “He was late because he missed the bus”) and temporal links (e.g., first, next, last).

Key principles for targeting narratives include: **building a story structure** by explicitly teaching story grammar elements (e.g., characters, setting, problem, feelings, plan, actions, resolution), **using a variety of examples** so students can identify narrative structure across different stories, **breaking down stories and reconstructing them** to support comprehension of narratives and emphasise narrative structure, **using story visuals and icons** to represent story grammar elements, **providing immediate feedback** to students and **differentiating teaching** depending on student’s level of skill, **using real-life contexts** to help students practice and generalise their skills, and **involving students and keeping it fun**.

So What?

Why is this important?

Narrative skills are foundational for academic achievement and are strong predictors of reading comprehension, written expression and oral language development. Supporting student’s oral narrative skills can also improve their written narratives. Narrative intervention provides a meaningful and context-rich way to target multiple language skills (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, sequencing and inferencing).

Narratives also serve a social purpose, helping students connect, relate and share experiences. For example, sharing with their friends about something fun that happened on the holidays or retelling an incident that happened in the school yard. Teachers and Speech Pathologists can use narratives as a way to promote language in a natural, engaging way, aligned with the Australian Curriculum, especially through the study of English, where students are expected to understand, create, and respond to narrative texts using key features such as characters, settings, and sequenced events.

Now What?

What can I take away from this?

Supporting student's narrative language skills has been shown to positively impact academic learning and social development. Several practical strategies can be taken from the article that teachers and Speech Pathologists can implement, including:

- Embedding narrative intervention into the classroom through shared book reading, storytelling and retelling activities.
- Explicitly teaching story grammar elements (character, setting, problem, action, resolution), with accompanying visuals of these elements, helps students to identify and then use these elements in their narratives to support their understanding and use of narrative structure.
- Collaborating across roles - teachers and speech pathologists can plan together and align on narrative-based teaching and intervention to maximise impact on student learning.
- Regularly monitor progress using simple narrative assessment tools and differentiate instruction based on student needs.
- Using images or stories that are of interest to students or are from their lives (e.g., a picture from the weekend) can help to foster engagement and make it fun.

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