

PLANNING A STORYLINE

Storyline provides a structure for designing integrated topic work.

The story has three elements – people (the characters), time (past, present or future) and setting (place or situation) The story can start with either the setting or with the characters.

In order to be effective it is necessary to involve the learners regularly so that the 'red thread' is maintained. If the gaps in the participation become too long or if there is digression from the main line the thread can be broken. It is then very difficult to return to the story.

A Storyline is planned using key questions which provide a sequence called episodes (chapters)

The story is always chosen with curricular targets in mind. Why am I teaching this story?

Here are the elements to be considered. It can be started either with the characters OR the setting (place).

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| 1 Where will the story be set? | How will we create a visual to set the scene?
A three-dimensional model or frieze is designed. |
| 2. Who are the people we need for the story?

How do they live? | The characters are created by the learners.

Appropriate clothing is provided and roles, jobs and relationships are developed. |
| 3. What are their daily patterns? | Busy and quiet rhythms are discussed and learners use a variety of media to communicate their stories. |
| 4. What incidents interfere with the routine? | Learners suggest incidents – happy & sad. There are many opportunities to develop these incidents through drama, role play, story writing, drawing, music making etc.. |
| 5. What is the climax or conclusion? | A good story ends with a 'high point'. Usually, in a Storyline, it would be a celebration or a visit to a place of interest or a visit to the classroom by an expert witness. |
| 6. What have we learned? | Every Storyline ends with a review which takes the form of a brainstorm about what we have achieved and what we feel we still have to learn about the theme. |

The topic title you choose is very important.

Good topics start small and expand into a more general study – for example, the Trucking topic starts with making a visual of a truck and develops into the study of a European Trucking Company.

Examine the design features above and think of a typical topic - a farm, a shop, a playpark etc..

Then try to develop it through the use of key questioning.

Think about the optimum group size for any activity. That is very important to its success. What resources will be needed? Will any special material or equipment be required?

It is wise to plan the topic well in advance but the detail of each episode will emerge in short term planning. This allows for flexibility and a positive response to children's ideas and suggestions.

