

The Reasons Children Need Show and Tell in the Classroom: Communication Skills

By Laurie Patsalides



The Show Must Go On

In today's competitive school system, sadly many teachers are omitting show and tell from their Kindergarten or primary curriculum, because they view the process as a waste of valuable learning time that could otherwise be spent on reading and writing. As an experienced Kindergarten teacher, I agree that time is spent on the process of show and tell, but rationalize its benefits to student learning. In this article I will reason the need for teachers to continue to do show and tell.

The English Language Art Standards for Kindergarten

The New York Department of Education's [English Language Arts Standards](#) are clear and non-negotiable:

In summary then, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of listening and speaking skills for effective communication. In Kindergarten, the student must learn to speak clearly, guide a listener to understand important ideas, describe people, places, things and locations, increase vocabulary, speak in complete sentences, follow and create a sequence, and paraphrase what they have heard. I would argue that show and tell helps to meet these standards, and then some.

Meeting the Standards

Let's list the possible gains that students can receive from show and tell:

- Learn to speak and listen.
- Learn how to be an audience and introduce themselves.
- Learn how to ask inquiry based questions.
- Learn to make connections between student responses.
- Anticipate and observe.
- Practice critical reasoning skills.
- Practice storytelling.
- Learn same and different.

- Use vocabulary- doll, computer, toy car, puppet.
- Use descriptive language.
- Say thank you.
- Increase confidence.

Isn't this somewhat similar to what great doctors, scientists, lawyers and even teachers may practice on a daily basis?

The Argument for Show And Tell

The latest push in teaching writing is to teach what is called, "show not tell." Let's explore how show and tell, and show not tell might relate. Show not tell is basically showing with words in writing what is happening or has happened. In other words, "It was a rainy day." versus, "The cold rain poured on me in buckets, down to my toes," (the latter being an example of show not tell). When students are frequently provided an opportunity to learn to describe an object, an experience, or a location in this way, show not tell in writing will come naturally to them.

Follow these guidelines to teach show and tell:

- Every object that a student brings into class for show and tell has a story. Make it a part of your plan to reach the story.
- Ask for descriptive words and proper vocabulary.
- Model how to ask inquiry based questions.
- Ask about "the why." ("Why do you think that is?")
- Allow students to discuss and make connections.
- Model how to introduce yourself.
- Model how to be a good audience.
- Always thank the student for sharing.