



# ANNE FRANK PROJECT

BUFFALO STATE • The State University of New York

## ***Story-Based Learning*** **Process Overview** [www.annefrankproject.com](http://www.annefrankproject.com)

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### **Introduction**

***Tell me and I forget.***  
***Teach me and I remember.***  
***Involve me and I learn.***  
-Chinese Proverb

Contemporary education research suggests that experiential learning is a primary component of academic success. School campuses around the globe (elementary-university) are abuzz with terms like *collaborative development*, *project-based learning* and *kinesthetic processes*. The common denominators:

- A universal desire to place students into *Actively Doing vs. Passively Knowing* learning environments
- A universal frustration as to how to implement structured programming

Today's students are from a different world than the knowledge-based education systems of yesterday. With multiple sources of information at their fingertips (literally), today's students are craving lessons in the *application* of their knowledge. This marks a crucially important moment in the history of western education: Educators are now required to be *facilitators of learning* in addition to *distributors of knowledge*. The dissemination of knowledge remains important—but not nearly as important as collaborating with students to apply their knowledge to their lives, their worlds, their communities, their families and their future vocations.

Traditional methods of fact memorization must be replaced with strategies for *conflict resolution*; passive in-class listening must be replaced with innovations in *community building*; independent study preferences must be replaced with multi-cultural *identity exploration*. We must prepare the next generation for the world they are entering rather than the world we lived in decades ago. We must not merely work “outside the box,” we must break the box! We must provide tools for moving the knowledge from the head to the heart. We must provide students with the vocabulary to ***tell their stories*** for this is what will be required of them at every personal and professional crossroad of their lives. They must learn to tell their

stories well if they are to positively impact their lives and the worlds they live in. The best way to learn how to do this is from the source: Stories and their components.

## Telling Stories

***There is no greater agony  
than bearing an untold story inside you.***

-Maya Angelou

The educational power of storytelling through performance can address crucial areas of learning. From the shaman of Mesopotamia 7,000 years ago using chanted stories to communicate survival strategies to their tribes, to the masked chorus of Greek tragedies in 6th century B.C. who translated the complexities of the gods to eager Athenians, to the soul stirring Intore dance of Rwanda where Ignuma drums bring century old rituals to us today—Storytelling remains at the heart of who we are, how we communicate and what moves us forward. Storytelling through performance helps us to process huge events into tangible entities--the indescribable becomes understood and the overwhelming becomes manageable. *Storytelling is the universal processing vocabulary of the human race.*

The skillset used to create original stories is identical to those necessary for *conflict resolution, community building and identity exploration*. While current education trends may provide knowledge of how systems operate, they rarely provide tangible tools for students to navigate the complexities of their lives—the AFP story-building curriculum teaches tangible skills and enhanced vocabulary that will impact the lives of students, their families and communities. In short, instead of focusing on what they *know*, our methods focus on what students can *do* with what they know. This creative and collaborative process engages students in specific action steps that directly transfer to their lives as they build *their stories*.

Research, compromise, collaboration, discipline, creativity, compassion, innovation and critical thinking are the core skills students develop. *We would never ask students to build a house without a hammer; we should never ask students to build their stories without the tools of story building.*

This curriculum is of particular relevance in our conflict-heavy global community and applicable to every subject and discipline. Whether a student is adapting to the emotional complexities of transitioning to a new country or navigating the terrifying mountain of social peer pressure, they are in desperate need of an expanded tool set to process their conflicted worlds in healthy, productive ways. The impact of conflict and struggle is not relegated to particular social classes, geographic locations or specific school subjects—the affluent and poor, the western and non-western, the sciences, arts and humanities are all slowed by our increasingly conflicted world. This forced consumption is entering the minds of our students without a processing vocabulary thus creating huge obstacles in their ability to learn, grow and

contribute. As future generations are provided with tools and vocabulary for story-building they are fueled to discover, define and share their identities. Multiple defined identities create strong families, communities and countries.

As new generations transition from knowledge-based communities to self-reflective, action-based communities the conviction that every human being, no matter how submerged in conflict, is capable of looking critically at their world in a dialogical encounter with others, and that provided with the proper tools for such encounter they can gradually perceive their personal and social realities. *When individuals participate in this sort of educational experience they come to a new awareness of self, a new sense of dignity; they are stirred by new hope.*

### **How it Works**

***A good head and good heart are always a formidable combination.  
But when you add to that a literate tongue,  
then you have something very special.***

-Nelson Mandela

The story building process is based on principles of Devised Theater--theater that begins without a script. The script gets “written” as the rehearsal process takes place through a series of improvisations, collaborations, explorations and research projects. The story is created by a group of artists (the collaborative team) who become the actors, musicians, writers and directors—this collaborative team explores a given topic through an active creative process which is continuously opened and edited, expanded and defined on its journey from idea to the public sharing of story. *This rhythm of ‘opening out’ and ‘collecting in’ is crucial to the story building process.* The ‘collaborative village’ is the creative engine of the story where team ownership must be experienced at every step of the process. *What is best for the story must take precedence over all personal and individual goals.*

At its core, the story building process is flexible. This is the primary advantage over business-based team building and brainstorming methods. Each new process must conform to the unique needs of the issue, story, ensemble and community whose story is being told as well as the community the story is being created for—the audience. *There is a freedom of possibilities for all those involved to discover; an emphasis on a way of working that supports innovation, creativity, and the accumulation of ideas.*

### **The Circle:**

All collaborative work sessions begin with a kinesthetic warm-up with the collaborators on their feet in a circle. This involves engaging the body, breath and voice in the active process of story-building. By shifting the emphasis from the head (thinking) to the body (doing) essential messages are sent to the central nervous system preparing the student for experiential learning. Enhanced circulation and

oxygen flow biologically contribute to a sharpened awareness and preparation for the work ahead. The warm-up also provides the important and crucial ritual of establishing community, thus shifting the point of view from **Me** to **We**.

## **Story-Building**

The following categories are listed to communicate the general process. The model is dependent on modifications from all collaborative partners based on the specific needs of the institution, discipline, leadership and students. Story-building is always new and always tailored to the needs of the present project's objectives.

Once the warm-up routine is learned and community building embraced, the ensemble will invest intentionally in the process of building their original story. This story is developed in three distinct stages:

### **1. Theme**

Through the use of research, improvisation and collaborative decision-making, the ensemble will select a theme for their story. This theme will be the touchstone for every future decision. Only ideas and elements that directly support the communication of the theme will be included.

*Theme is **What** the story is about.*

#### Common Core Connection

Researching a Theme: Information and Technology Literacy

Choosing a Theme: Communication, Collaboration, Compromise

### **2. Structure**

Through the use of research, improvisation and collaborative decision-making, the ensemble will select a storytelling structure to craft the script. This structure will support the story from start to finish and supply the form by which the story is created (climactic, episodic, ritual, etc.). The structure will act as the internal 'blueprint' by which the story is built.

*Structure is the **Who, Where, Why** of the story.*

#### Common Core Connection

Composing Scenes: Creativity and Innovation

### **3. Style**

Through the use of research, improvisation and collaborative decision-making, the ensemble will select a story style to deliver the story. This style will act as the *way* the story is told. Performance styles from around the world will be analyzed to find the most effective means of sharing the story with the future audience.

*Style is **How** the story is delivered to the audience.*

Common Core Connection

Choosing Performance Style: Social, Cultural, Historical Context

Rehearsal and Performance: Productivity, Accountability and Self-Direction

**Story-Building Process “Village” Rules:**

(Based on the work of Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*)

- We agree that we respect each other as collaborators and as people. We agree to show that respect in word and action.
- We agree that our intention is to help each other tell the best possible story together as a community.
- We agree that our intention is to support each other’s creativity.
- We agree to respect each other’s rehearsal time.
- We agree to send messages and requests through appropriate channels.
- We agree not to re-write or re-do another’s work. If there is a problem, we agree to discuss it with the original collaborator.
- We agree to criticize each other by asking questions whenever possible, rather than making conclusions or delivering orders.
- We agree to criticize and discuss changes in ways that are respectful and encourage creative thinking.
- We agree to consider anything for five minutes.
- We agree to present a unified, supportive leadership to the entire community.
- We agree to discuss our differences with each other in private.
- We agree that we cannot do it alone. We agree that we need each other.
- We agree that Story is first.

**Student/Educator Learning Outcomes**

*How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment  
before starting to improve the world.*

*-Anne Frank*

By the successful completion of the AFP Story-Building training, students and educators will be able to:

- Demonstrate a foundational ability to physically, psychologically and intellectually prepare for the story-building process
- Articulate the vocabulary necessary to define ideas based on the needs of a story and its intended audience (Conflict Resolution)
- Demonstrate a foundational ability to collaboratively use story-based learning in the classroom (Community Building)
- Demonstrate the ability to utilize the tools of personal, community and cultural research (Identity Exploration)

- Articulate the use of story-building for personal, community and social justice applications.

***This document is intended for review purpose only***

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## **AFP SBL Teacher Training Phase I-IV Sequence**

### **Phase I:**

Introduction to the work (performance, workshop, presentation)

### **Phase II:**

Intensive professional development with targeted teachers and AFP staff  
(10-15 hours)

### **Phase III:**

In-class application/observation. AFP staff observes/assists teachers applying SBL  
in their classrooms and schools. (once/week, full semester)

### **Phase IV (aka: IV ever):**

AFP SBL certified teachers open their classrooms as observation laboratories in  
their schools; train future teachers

We spend an entire semester facilitating Phase II-III. There is fee flexibility for this  
training—we are amenable to working through existing grants.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

In order to authentically train the teachers in the work and culture of AFP's story-  
based learning, **consistent and uninterrupted** time and scheduling are required.  
We are flexible on our fee structure; we are inflexible in the area of time, scheduling  
and commitment. *This non-traditional approach cannot be squeezed into traditional  
education professional development structures.*

To schedule a meeting to discuss future AFP SBL training at your institution please  
contact the Anne Frank Project at 716-878-5553 or [kahnaj@buffalostate.edu](mailto:kahnaj@buffalostate.edu)

To learn more about SUNY Buffalo State visit: [suny.buffalostate.edu](http://suny.buffalostate.edu)

To learn more about SUNY Buffalo State's Anne Frank Project:  
[annefrankproject.com](http://annefrankproject.com)



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## Story-Based Learning

### Selected Resources, Connections and Inspirations

#### **Books**

Angelou, M. (1969). *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. New York: Random House.

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- Jackson, Anthony, Vine, Chris (2013). *Learning Through Theatre*. London/New York: Routledge.

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- William J. B. (2012). *The Science of Yoga: the Risks and the Rewards*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
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Zinn, Howard (2005). *A People's History of the United States*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

### **Research/Scholarship/Data (Collections, Journals)**

[American Theatre in Higher Education](#)

[The Arts in Society](#)

[Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance](#)

[PAJ: Journal of Performance Art](#)

[Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal](#)

[Theatre Journal](#)

[T-Theatre Topics](#)

[\\*Additional Related Theater Journals](#)

### **Research/Scholarship/Data (Individual Articles)**

[Studies Show How Attending Theater Benefits Children's Development](#)

[Vivian Paley—Storytelling Education Pioneer](#)

[A New Push for Play-Based Learning](#)

[Can Art Heal a Broken Society?](#)

[Young People Healing Trauma Using Musical Theater](#)

[Investigating Causal Effects of Arts Education Experiences \(Rice University\)](#)

[Extra arts education boosts students' writing scores — and their compassion](#)

[Activating Student Engagement Through Drama-Based Instruction](#)

[Engaging in Drama: Using Arts-based Research to Explore a Social Justice Project in Teacher Education](#)

[Body and Language: Intercultural Learning Through Drama](#)

[Effects of Drama-Based Geometry Instruction on Student Achievement, Attitudes, and Thinking](#)

[The Effect of Drama-Based Pedagogy on PreK–16 Outcomes](#)

[When Achievement Data Meet Drama and Arts Integration](#)

[A Review of Creative Drama Studies in Math Education: Aim, Data Collection, Data Analyses, Sample and Conclusions of Studies](#)

[Relationships in Educational Drama](#)

[The Journey of Making Meaning in Drama: A Case Study in a Metropolitan Priority School](#)

[Drama in L2 \(ELL\) Learning: A Research Synthesis](#)

[Drama Based Instruction-University of Texas](#)

[Improving Elementary Students' Reading Comprehension With Drama Techniques](#)

[Contributions of Drama Based Strategies \(4th and 5th Grade\)](#)

[Your Brain on Story—Psychology Today](#)

[How Stories Change the Brain](#)

## **Films/Videos**

[NPR/Ted Talk: How Can Playing A Game Make You More Empathetic?](#)

[NPR/Ted Talk: How Does Play Shape Our Development?](#)

[NPR/Ted Talk: What Can Bonobos Teach Us About Play?](#)

[Born To Learn](#)

[Empathy, Neurochemistry and the Dramatic Arc](#)

[Forgiving Dr. Mengele\(2005\). First Run Features.](#)

[Ghosts of Rwanda \(2005\). Burbank, CA: Frontline Entertainment.](#)

[Sometimes in April \(2005\). HBO Films.](#)

[Ken Robinson: Changing Education Paradigms.](#)

[Sarah-Jane Blakemore: The Adolescent Brain.](#)

[Brene' Brown on Empathy](#)

[Mindfulness and How the Brain Works](#)

## **Websites**

[SUNY Buffalo State's Anne Frank Project](#)

[Center for Applied Theatre](#)

[Center for Community Dialogue and Change](#)

[Contemplative Practices in Higher Education](#)

[Facing History and Ourselves](#)

[Museum of Tolerance](#)

[Panzi Foundation \(DR Congo\)](#)

[Partners for Collaborative Change](#)

[Rethinking Schools](#)

[Teaching Tolerance](#)

[The Anne Frank Center USA](#)

[Theatre of the Oppressed](#)

[United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)