

Highland Magnet School at Kenwood

The Scottish Storyline Method

The Storyline Method is based on the theory that knowledge is complex and multilayered, that learning is guided by one's prior knowledge and experience and that learners construct their own meaning through action and experience.

Storyline creates a context for learning with active involvement of the child. It provides tasks that arise from within the context which the child sees as significant and meaningful. Storyline gives the child opportunities to develop understanding, as well as learn and reinforce basic skills in the support of a real-world context. Opportunities are provided for students to meet state benchmarks through meaningful activities that provide for authentic assessment.

For example: with a Civil War Storyline, some students' characters go off to war while others stay behind on the farm and worry about loved ones in the battles of Bull Run and Gettysburg. Teaching and learning about history, literature, science, art, music, math, and more, arises from this context.

Carefully planned episodes engage students in actual practice of the Storyline. Up-to-date technology is used for relevant research. A process of activity and reflection generated from the Storyline motivates pupils to extend those skills and refine them for life after school.

The critical elements of Storyline are:

- Scene or setting in a particular time and place which is often a frieze (large 2-dimensional mural) or a 3-dimensional display
- People and/or animals that the students take on as characters
- A way of life to investigate that requires research and exploration
- Real problems to be solved that are presented through a variety of incidents or events
- A celebration or culminating activity that provides a way for students to share their knowledge and talents with others; often through a presentation for parents/students, a field trip, or community outreach
- Reflection and assessment opportunities where students are given the time to reflect and demonstrate what they have learned; often a collection of their work (topic book) is created

"We experience the story of Huk-Tooht (a fifth grade Storyline study of the ecology and politics involved in the issue of dwindling salmon in the Pacific Northwest) as a community of learners, and our memories were a fertile mix of our own imagination and the facts we had sought out. The important processes and pieces of information that I, as a teacher, had wanted the children to learn were internalized because they were needed to make the story come alive. People do not remember disembodied facts. They remember experiences that they care about. We internalize the learning because we want to remember and savor the experience. In other words learning, to be memorable, must be meaningful."

- Jeff Creswell, *Creating Worlds, Constructing Meaning*, Heinemann, 1997.



History of Highland Magnet School

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. -- Confucius

Kenwood School opened in the fall of 1919 as a new elementary school for the young city of Bend, Oregon. Over the years, Kenwood School has housed elementary and middle school grades, preschool programs, and special needs programs. Kenwood is now the home of Highland Elementary School, a Scottish Storyline Magnet School. The enchanting brick building is the oldest in the Bend-La Pine School District in continuous use as a school (for more than 100 years).

The Scottish Storyline teaching method was developed in Scotland in the 1960s by Sallie Harkness, Steve Bell, and Fred Rendell. The Storyline method became the proposed umbrella for the developing Highland Magnet School, providing the basis and structure for a holistic, interactive, and engaging learning environment.

The original proposal for the creation of Highland Magnet School was submitted to Bend-La Pine Schools in 1997 by Highland founders Elaine Smith and Colleen Vallerga. Their application proposed a school “based on a caring community of students, parents, and teachers who work, play, and learn together to create responsible, caring, well-educated new members of our community.”

Highland opened in 1999 at Thompson School in Bend with three Storyline classrooms. Highland moved to Kenwood School in 2000 and started with six Storyline classrooms. Starting in 2006, due to continued expansion and increased interest in Storyline, all fifteen classrooms became Storyline classrooms. The current configuration of classes at Highland:

- ✓ Three sections of full-day kindergarten
- ✓ Three sections of grade 1
- ✓ Five sections of grade 2/grade 3 blend
- ✓ Four sections of grade 4/grade 5 blend

Highland became the first school outside of Scotland to fully embrace the Storyline method, where all teachers are trained in Storyline and there are active Storylines in every classroom throughout the school year. Highland is an inspiration and a model for other schools that acknowledge the inherent educational value of the Scottish Storyline teaching method and are working to implement Storyline in their own classrooms.

All of us have moments in our childhood where we come alive for the first time. And we go back to those moments and think, This is when I became myself. – Rita Dove, Poet Laureate