



Storytelling Clubs in Taiwan

The project Storytelling Club was introduced to Taiwan in late 2018. In the next ten months, we trained the initial group of teachers and adapted the program to local needs. In the end, we kept eight units (150-180 minutes each) under five subjects in the original handout, in order to design a suitable structure for children in Taiwan. In response to specific groups and needs, the Club can be conducted over eight weeks, or in four whole days.

In the localization process, we have made some adaptations. Children in Taiwan are more used to describing incidents directly than expressing their feelings. In their descriptions, though, they are often worried to be different from others, or they speculate what adults may like to hear. Therefore, warm-up periods in each session are very important. Physical games can bring children closer and increase their trust on each other. Based on different subjects, each session will offer different materials for the hands-on creative process. These activities encourage participation, and help describe feelings. Step by step, students can practice to speak up in public. Demonstrations and personal stories by instructors are encouraging to children in Taiwan as well. Each session ends with “feedback time”, so children practice to see merits in each other, and express gratitude to group members.

Creative media for five subjects

Main lesson	Medium	Description
When I was able to solve a problem	B4 drawing paper and pastels	Children in Taiwan are used to drawing on B4-size paper, so we choose paper and pastels they are familiar with to record their first story.
When I was able to help others	B4 drawing paper and pastels, color pens	Use four-frame comics format to record more details in their life stories, and enrich drawings with words.
My merit hand (When I realized what I am able to do/ When other people noticed my strength)	A4 pastel paper in various colors, pastels and color pens	Children can choose papers in different colors for left and right hands for more creative ideas.

When I was clever in the face of danger	B4 tracing paper, color pens and pastels	<p>Use color pens to draw out the story on one side of the tracing paper, and use pastels to draw their feelings then on the other side. Under the light, children will see how these two sides overlap. Encourage children to rub tracing paper and increase textures in their drawings.</p> <p>Children in Taiwan rarely use drastic ways to create, as they often believe good works should be clean and realistic. This is an opportunity to take adventures.</p>
When I overcame my fear	B3 watercolor paper, materials in different textures, and watercolor in RGB three colors only	<p>Different textures will create different feelings. Instead of drawing pens, use materials in different textures (such as cotton, filter, and scouring pad) to create new experiences. These textures also accompany children to experience fearful memories again, and generate new presentations. Children will learn how fearful experiences can become beautiful artworks.</p>

After creating all different stories, children will produce a handmade storybook of courage. We offer kraft paper for book covers and envelopes, and provide other paper materials, tape, multi-sensory materials for collage in these unique storybooks.

In eight units we attempt various ways for children to have fun and express freely. By playing with kids, instructors practice to “see children”, identify their courage and minor improvements (even if it is just more willing to participate), embrace different reactions from children, learn to replace requests with invitations, and allow children to join the group in their own rhythm.

Unit	Content	Objective
Unit 1	Creative physical games	Facilitate with various creative physical games, so children can learn to complete challenges together with others
	Class convention	Specify what is allowed, instead of what’s not allowed. Facilitate children to discuss group protocols from a different perspective.
	Second identity	Choose a new name to introduce yourself, and speak out the image in your mind.
	Produce story envelope	Make a story envelope by hand as the first work belongs to yourself.

Unit 2	Leading activity 1: Illustration story	<p>Arrange two leading activities before the first main lesson:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with children in telling illustration stories. Discuss with children about how to process troubles encountered by the main character. 2. Invite children to write down troubles they have encountered on post-it notes, and post them on the wall.
	Leading activity 2: Oops! Trouble wall	
	Main lesson: When I was able to solve a problem	<p>Invite children to draw their life stories for the first time, and talk about them in a circle, so everyone can listen clearly to each other.</p>

Unit 3	<p>My merit hand (When I realized what I am able to do/ When other people noticed my strength)</p>	<p>Education in Taiwan often emphasizes on “how to improve for the better next time”. Drawbacks are more often pointed out than merits, and merits are often about academic achievements. By drawing their strong hands, children learn to see their own merits. They also draw the other hands, and collect other merits from friends and family, so children will be able to see their merits from other perspectives.</p>
	Change! Change! Change!	<p>Create different objects and scenes with their bodies, so children can practice to perform on stage via teamwork.</p>
	Physical illustration	<p>Based on the “story to resolve troubles”, children create scenes with their bodies, so sharing stories on stage becomes a fun task.</p>

Unit 4	Talk about merit hand	Talk about merits from friends and family, and choose your favorite merit.
	Main lesson: When I was able to help others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stories that children tell are often too short, so we adopt the four-frame comic format. With multiple frames and words, we encourage children to record more details in the story, such as who, what, when and where. 2. As this is the first time for some children to tell a story with pictures on stage, another student should take the picture for him/her on the stage as a company.

Unit 5	Short film: "Lessons learnt from the sea"	Watch the short film, and use life stories from other countries in discussions. When the main character encounters dangers, what decisions does he make to help himself in the crisis?
	Leading activity: Crisis management expert	Expand discussions about "facing dangers". After discussions in groups, children practice to speak out loudly.
	Main lesson: When I was clever in the face of danger	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage students to rub their tracing papers, as a way to take adventures. 2. Encourage students to talk about their feelings when dangers emerge. What decisions did they make? 3. Children practice to tell their stories alone on stage.

Unit 6	Short film: A little bit of light	Watch life stories from other countries. Discuss about how to accompany ourselves when we are afraid.
	Leading activity: Meditation	The whole class sits down for a breathing meditation. This practice offers another way for children to accompany themselves.

	Main lesson: When I overcame my fear	Use materials in different texture to accompany children, as they recall those fearful stories.
	Abstract art museum	Post the works on the classroom wall, and tell their stories one after another. Children will see how fearful experiences can become beautiful artworks.

Unit 7	Make your own storybook of courage	Every piece of the storybook (including cover) gives an opportunity for children to create. Children also learn to think about how to tell their stories, and introduce themselves to other people in different ways.
	Launch event rehearsal	During rehearsals, children work together to complete every step in the event.

Unit 8	Book launch event	Use personal performance, group theater, and book display to tell their stories in front of more people. In the process, kids accompany each other to express themselves bravely, and storytelling becomes a new collective experience.
	Practice the “like” bottom	Children participate with their friends and family to give away praises as gifts

The Storytelling Clubs in Taiwan encounter several challenges. Education in Taiwan is more utilitarian, and lessons often define specific learning indicators. Capabilities, such as expression and listening, are often overlooked. Without sufficient listening and expressing experiences, it is more difficult for instructors to confess their authentic feelings. Instead, they tend to rely on old habits and lead children in a more controlling way. Being nervous themselves, instructors are likely to push too much pressure on children, and overlook ideas or messages behind children’s stories. They are also unlikely to discover the power of children from details in their drawings. To help instructors “face themselves honestly” in front of children, it is important to continuously offer positive personal experiences during the training process. Instructors should be confident to embrace variety, trust themselves, give themselves and children some time/space, and replace requests with invitations, so they move forward together. Instructors need to truly see the changes in children (and themselves). Besides encouragement, they should identify and express clearly and substantially, so every improvement can empower children.

These two video clips give an impressions of Storytelling Clubs in Taiwan:

<https://youtu.be/kt-fhOEQfeo>

<https://youtu.be/GeBaM5gJD9Y>

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