



SALSA NEWS

Supporting the Advancement of Learning Stories in America

Register NOW for the 3rd National Learning Stories Conference!

In this issue:

- 2021 Conference
- Join the Napcast
- Director Profile
- Learning Stories Book
- News Briefs
- For more information

The past year has been marked with civil unrest, unfair and inhumane treatment, and a heightened awareness of the injustices our field and our world are facing. Who else is better equipped to examine, challenge, and find disruptive solutions to the issues facing our world than Early Childhood Professionals?

Join the 3rd Annual Learning Stories Conference, a virtual gathering hosted by Hilltop Children’s Center and Educator Institute in Seattle, WA (Duwamish Territory) features over 25 workshops spread out over 3 months. With presenters from Hawaii, Michigan, Boston, New Orleans, Toronto Canada and more, you’ll be challenged to find creative solutions to the issues facing our field, be inspired and empowered to advocate for a new way of working in partnership with children and families,

embrace the values and contributions of individuals from marginalized groups, and encourage reflection and responsiveness in our work. There are workshops specifically geared for coaches and consultants, administrators, program leaders, college professors, college students, policy-makers, and educators working with all ages of children! Learn all you need to know about the conference (and don’t forget to share with a friend) by visiting www.hilltopcc.com/institute/lsc21

SALSA offers a \$5 discount on registration for new members. To access it:

Visit www.hilltopcc.com/conference; On the right hand side click on “tickets”; Select any date; On the top left hand corner select “promo code” and type in the code – salsa; Fill out the info and you’re set!

If you can’t attend all of the sessions, they will be recorded and available for viewing until the end of June as part of your registration fee.



Listen up! Join this Napcast on race, culture and identity

Napcast is a podcast co-hosted by two male early childhood educators of color. Nick is a Mexican-Native American former toddler educator turned director working at Daybreak Star Preschool in Seattle, WA. Mike is an Afro-Caribbean, Sr. Community Engagement Manager for Hilltop Children’s Center and Educator Institute in Seattle, WA and is the host of this year’s Learning Stories Conference. In each episode they chat about things such as race, culture, identity and other issues affecting the field today.

With increased pressure on demonstrating school readiness in standardized, deficit-oriented, checklist models, educators in the USA are often challenged in making authentic connections to marginalized children and caregivers. Most assessments in the USA take the joy out of sharing children’s learning and success. Learning Stories, however, provide an alternative. In this Napcast, Mike Nick chat with Karen Virta from the American School in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, to discuss how Learning Stories can connect and engage caregivers; strengthen educators’ observation and writing skills; and most importantly, support children in establishing their identity, cultural humility, and sense of belonging in this world.

Listen on Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5Th7rEJ8F2Br9c2u257CAF> or

Apple Podcasts: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/napcast-ep23-learning-stories/id1510152615?i=1000515786045>

Mission

SALSA, Supporting the Advancement of Learning Stories in America, advocates for the Learning Stories approach that enhances intentional teaching, reflective practices, and advances equity and diversity by acknowledging early childhood educators, families, and children as both learners and teachers.

Vision

SALSA represents children’s learning with integrity and respect, recognizing their individual value and competencies. We advance Learning Stories in the United States as an authentic narrative approach to bring joy into teachers’ work of documentation, observation, and assessment.

Board of Directors

Regan Bynder, Chris Carducci, Isauro M. Escamilla, Jeannette Mulhern, Lorena Ramos, Lindsey Shafer, Joyce Stone, Haley Winters, and Annie White.

Profile of a SALSA Board Member: Haley Winters



- **How and when did you first become involve with Learning Stories?** I became familiar with Learning Stories in 2015 when I attended CSU Channel Islands. Learning Stories were used as an assessment tool throughout my undergraduate program in Early Childhood Studies.
- **What makes Learning Stories such a compelling choice for assessing children's learning?** I love Learning Stories because I feel they offer sincere and insightful ways of observing and assessing a child's development. I think it is so much easier to understand a child's learning through a painted picture or story rather than checkboxes saying if they've met a developmental milestone or not. I also think that it is unique and encouraging to include different voices in the observations (multiple teachers or family members), and a "What's Next" area provides endless possibilities.
- **What is your current professional position: your title and responsibilities?** My current position is Senior Administrative Coordinator at Loyola Marymount University Children's Center. The LMUCC is a NAEYC accredited early childhood center in Los Angeles that serves LMU affiliated families and community members with children ages six weeks to five years old, while also serving as a lab school for LMU students. My position requires wearing a magnitude of hats, but mainly I coordinate the day-to-day schedule at the Center, which involves training teachers and student teachers, enrollment, coordinating teacher schedules, maintaining licensing and accreditation requirements, overseeing curriculum to maintain high quality, and being a resource for teachers and families.
- **How do you incorporate the use of Learning Stories in your daily work?** The teachers I work with use "journals," which encompass the same principals as Learning Stories by observing and telling a story to provide feedback to the children and families. It is my hope to introduce the Learning Stories as a resource for our teachers at my Center soon.
- **What can early learning educators do to help promote Learning Stories?** I think the best thing that early educators can do to promote Learning Stories is to share their own Learning Stories with one another. It is easy to discuss the beauty of Learning Stories, but it is a powerful statement when a teacher provides a self-written Learning Story as an example that they are proud of. It is very encouraging to see fellow educators use Learning Stories to empower the child, family and themselves. Plus, I think it is **very** motivating for teachers to see how easy and helpful Learning Stories are when working with DRDPs. (Ed. Note: DRDP is the Desired Results Developmental Profile, an assessment tool required for use by state-funded programs in California.)
- **Is there anything else you would like our readers to know?** In addition to being a Learning Stories advocate, I also work closely with the California Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC). I serve on the local Ventura County CAEYC Board, where we create and share learning opportunities, workshops and trainings for early educators within Ventura County. I am also currently finishing up my M.A. in Educational Studies at Loyola Marymount University. When I am not working, volunteering or in school – I enjoy being outdoors, spending time with family and bird watching.

SALSA News Briefs

Learning Stories & Teacher Inquiry Groups

The new book, *Learning Stories & Teacher Inquiry Groups: Re-Imagining Teaching & Assessment in Early Childhood Education*, will be released soon by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Two of the authors, SALSA Board Members Isauro M. Escamilla and Dr. Annie White, along with their colleagues Dr. Linda R. Kroll and Dr. Daniel Meier, have created a practical text focused on how ECE practitioners can establish teacher inquiry groups and integrate Learning Stories to strengthen their assessment, teaching practices, and knowledge of child development.

The book contains the following six chapters plus a study guide:

- Chapter 1: Linking Inquiry, Documentation, and Reflection: The Power of Teacher Inquiry Groups
- Chapter 2: The Role of Narrative in Learning Stories as Authentic Assessment and Critical Pedagogy
- Chapter 3: Identifying and Creating Learning Stories
- Chapter 4: Integrating Inquiry and Learning Stories: A Focus on Socialization, Play, and Language
- Chapter 5: Integrating Inquiry and Learning Stories: A Focus on Equitable Learning Opportunities
- Chapter 6: Family Engagement and Learning Stories: Inclusion of Diverse Voices

Look for the book at NAEYC.org/store or it can be pre-ordered on Amazon.

Educa Hosts Webinar on *Learning Stories & Teacher Inquiry Groups* Book

On April 13, 2021, the authors of the new book, *Learning Stories & Teacher Inquiry Groups*, held a free webinar hosted by our partners at Educa. This is the first in a series of webinars scheduled for 2021 that will review the book, chapter by chapter, hosted by one of the authors. In this first webinar, the group reviewed the book and talked about the current state of teaching and assessment in ECE, and why they felt this book needed to be written. You can still register to hear for this recorded webinar at: <https://www.geteduca.com/webinars/>

The next webinar will be held May 25 and you can register for that at the above link.

For More Information...

The Editor would like to thank all of the contributors to this newsletter. If you are interested in receiving more information about SALSA, upcoming events, or any of the items mentioned in this newsletter, please email us: SALSA.USA10@gmail.com or visit our website: www.salsa-global.org