



# SALSA NEWS

Supporting the Advancement of Learning Stories in America

## In this issue:

- Reflections from NZ
- Writing Anxiety
- News Briefs
- For More Information

## Reflections from New Zealand

Having been in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care in Hawai'i for over 25 years has me questioning and reflecting often on how we go about doing the work we do with children and families. One of the biggest questions I have had over time is, "How do we create, promote, and advocate for systems which reflect what is *pono* (balanced, right, or righteous in the Hawaiian language) for the youngest of our citizens?" It feels as if our current system is a bit like a broken Humpty Dumpty, and the pieces are strewn across a wide expanse of various attempts to put it all together.

The Learning Story Intensive tour to Aotearoa (New Zealand) helped to put the pieces we struggle with at home into focus, and to some degree, helped to clarify where the work to put things together could begin.

The Learning Stories viewed on this tour painted vivid pictures of true interest and value for the individual. There was such deep respect reflected in every thought expressed, and through every connection to teacher research done in relation to learning. The fact that teachers themselves utilize Learning Stories as a way to reflect on being learners alongside children is remarkable. Their willingness to be transparent and vulnerable only increases the connections within the programs which they work. Families are engaged meaningfully through the sharing of and responding to Learning Stories, and this results in there being very little separation between family and school. In practice, it is apparent that school is family and family is school.

To embark on putting Humpty Dumpty together will take many hands and many minds. Looking through the lens of all that has been accomplished in Aotearoa to create a socio-cultural early childhood curriculum as well as a formative, narrative, strengths-based assessment approach, inspires me to begin the work at home.

*Reflections from Janina Martin, Assistant Professor in the Early Childhood Education Department at Honolulu Community College, Oahu, Hawai'i*



2019 Learning Stories Intensive Study Tour participants visiting Mangere Bridge Kindergarten, Auckland, NZ. Photo courtesy of Dr. Annie White

### 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

Board of Directors- Regan Bynder, Chris Carducci, Isauro M. Escamilla, Jeannette Mulhern, Annette Muse, Lorena Ramos, Lindsey Shafer, Joyce Stone, and Annie White

## Documentation, Writing, and Riding the Wave of Writing

### Anxiety to the Shores of Storytelling by Zach J. Bernstein

Joachim screamed when his mom dropped him off on the first day of the school year and cried for the first two hours of the day. The second day was the same...as was the third and fourth and so on. One day, Joachim crawled onto my lap while I helped some other children remove the popsicle sticks glued to the scissors. Without warning, I felt Joachim's hand creep up the side of my head and rub the velvety stubble. (I had recently buzzed my hair to support my mother during her chemotherapy. Earlier in the week, I had told my students why my hair was so short. Most of the kids laughed at the idea that their preschool teacher had a mother. Joachim, however, did not laugh. He simply looked me in the eye. It was one of the first times he made eye contact with me.) Neither one of us said anything as he rubbed my head. I kept separating sticks from scissors. When he had his fill, Joachim slid under my gluey hands and off my lap and went to build San Francisco with Legos.

*Editor's note: Due to space limitations, we are able to include only the beginning of this compelling story. To read the entire article go to:*

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NFihJyJ6Ay5jydWNhBTcHgA2ysCWeQx/view?usp=sharing>

*Zach is Lead Teacher at the North Campus Children's Center, University of Michigan*

*The graphic at right represents the "Progressive Filter" as it relates to Learning Stories documentation, provided courtesy of Wendy Lee, Educational Leadership Project Ltd, New Zealand*



## SALSA News Briefs

### 'Inspire' Professional Learning for Teachers Tour March 2020

Would you like to learn more about the New Zealand Early Childhood Context and how Learning Stories became the primary assessment tool used to support teachers and families in their search to engage with children? A new group of educators will be visiting New Zealand from March 29 to April 5, 2020. Even though applications were due on October 31, there might still be room for more participants. Please check the website for additional information: <https://hilltopcc.com/institute/nzstudytour/>

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### A Maori World View: Bicultural Practices of Te Tiriti O Waitangi

The Center for Multicultural Engagement and the School of Education of California State University Channel Islands, are pleased to sponsor this event with presenters Wendy Lee and Brenda Soutar from New Zealand. The event will be held Monday November 25, 2019, from 6 to 8 pm in the Grand Salon. The campus is located at 1 University Drive, Camarillo, CA. For more information email Dr. Annie White at [annie.white@csuci.edu](mailto:annie.white@csuci.edu)

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### Call for Presenters for National Learning Stories Conference

The 2<sup>nd</sup> National Learning Stories Conference will be held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on May 30, 2020. Watch for more information in the next issue of our newsletter, or you may contact Julia Koumbassa at

If you are interested in presenting, please complete the proposal form at this link: <https://forms.gle/Ra25ou2ud6zZs1sMA>

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### For More Information...

The Editor would like to thank all of the contributors to this newsletter. Please watch for our next issue coming in March 2020. If you are interested in receiving more information about SALSA, upcoming events, or any of the items mentioned in this newsletter, please email us at: [SALSA.USA10@gmail.com](mailto:SALSA.USA10@gmail.com)