

Writing stories about practice is a useful activity for teacher educators to carry out for reflection and self-discovery. The use of 'storying' of experience is increasing in the field of professional development (Jarvis, 2005). There is no mystery to writing stories as we all tell stories in our daily lives. Unconscious concerns, issues and dilemmas can be revealed through the descriptive process of story writing, raising awareness so they can be examined.



Write a brief story below of a specific challenge or dilemma you have faced in your recent practice (using pseudonyms). Include a beginning and a plot and an ending (if you had one!). You could start 'When I was ....'

- What was the real challenge for you?
  - Where did the challenge arise?
  - How did you deal with it?
  - How did that work?

Reading the example story overleaf may help you get started

You will probably find that 6-700 words are enough to capture the main things that you want to express in your story.



Jarvis, J. 2005. "Telling stories in class: an exploration of aspects of the use of narrative in a higher education context." *Journal for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching* 2 (1):6-13.

<http://uhra.herts.ac.uk/handle/2299/2582>



## Dirty Nora

Her brother from Group 6 drops her off, helps her with her coat, gives her the bag and as he walks to his own class he calls out, "I'll pick you up at 12:00". She stands shyly at the door. She is small, she looks around and then walks to the chair with her name: Nora. She is the first one.

"Hello Nora, good morning. Nice to see you." She looks at me, but says nothing.

"Don't you want to get a book? Go on then - pick one."

I get a few books from the pile and hand them to her noticing suddenly how dirty she is. Her clothes are full of stains, and her nose is runny. There is jam on her cheek and what looks like chocolate paste around her mouth. She looks at the books and chooses the top one. It's been ages since she washed her hands and there is snot on her right sleeve.

"Read out loud?" I hear her ask. I look at her and see two blue eyes with sleep in the corners. "Teacher, can you read to me?" she insists. There is no one in the classroom yet, only the two of us. What should I do? I try and get over my disgust and tell her: "Ok, I'll sit with you."

She beams. I sit next to her and suddenly smell her too. She stinks. You could smell her from a mile off. Suddenly she puts her face on my arm and as I pull it away, I notice her snot all over my white blouse. Nora is startled by my reaction.

In the meantime, other children start entering the classroom. I tell her to go and read to herself and then I will read out loud to her. I quickly go to the staff toilets and clean my blouse.

Yuck, that child is filthy!

When I return, Nora is at my desk with the book. "Are you going to read out loud now? May I sit next to you?" She gets up on my office chair and I can smell her clothes and feel sick. I just can't sit next to this dirty child!

Then Miss Marjan, the classroom teacher, walks in. "Hello, Nora. Did your brother bring you to school again? It's a bit difficult for him to manage getting you washed and dressed, huh? Come with me to the toilet and we'll get you a fresh pair of underpants. Miss Karin will start with circle time soon". My cheeks burn: I should have thought of this myself.