

Ethical Principles

The following have been adapted from ethical principles originally developed by StoryCenter (storycenter.org). We are grateful for StoryCenter's 20+ years of experience leading digital storytelling workshops and we have adopted and adapted their principles to reflect the context of our workshops. We invite you to read these principles and let us know if you have any questions or ideas about how best to ensure the safety and dignity of storytellers and listeners –in classrooms and beyond.

Principle 1: Storyteller wellbeing.

Storytellers' wellbeing -- physical, emotional, and social-- is our first priority.

Story Works, story coaches, and teachers will:

- Commit to an approach which views the process of creating stories to be as important as the end products –the stories.
- Be attentive to the potential impact of culture and work from a stance of humility, sensitivity, and openness to learning.
- Commit to gaining awareness of and combating unconscious and conscious bias and strive to communicate in a way that is free of bias and assumptions –about students and others.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries while remaining open to processes of listening and understanding.

Note: All story coaches commit to reading and following local school district adult-student boundary protocols and will have no intentional post-workshop contact with student storytellers.

Story Works will work with teachers to ensure that students are never pushed to tell stories and that the wellbeing of potentially vulnerable participants is carefully considered (i.e. personal storytelling is generally not appropriate for individuals currently experiencing strong symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Additionally, teachers will communicate in advance with school counselors regarding possible concerns and will let counselors know workshop schedules so they can be prepared in the event that a student's needs emotional support.

If student storytellers choose to share stories about especially challenging life experiences, Story Works, story coaches, and teachers will support those individuals in approaching their narratives from a position of strength rather than from a vantage point that reinforces victimization. Story Works and story

coaches also commit to post-workshop debriefing with teachers to allow for appropriate reporting whenever a concern for storyteller wellbeing arises.

Principle 2: Informed consent.

Story Works and teachers will:

- Provide student storytellers with the information they need to make informed choices about participation, content, potential recording, and use of their work.
- Make it clear to student storytellers that they have the right to withdraw their stories from public circulation at any time (recognizing the constraints of withdrawal from Internet forms of distribution).
- Offer guidance in these decision-making processes in a way that protects the dignity and safety of storytellers and does not pressure storytellers to record and publically post or tell their stories.

Principle 3: Storyteller autonomy and ownership.

Storytellers have the right to freedom of expression in representing themselves, in their stories. Recognizing this, Story Works, story coaches, and teachers will:

- Provide storytellers with the space and flexibility to describe what they have experienced, within the parameters and thematic concerns of their workshop assignment, without being coerced or censored.
- Assist storytellers in determining whether or not they wish to share their story with a larger group (in class or beyond, through live or recorded performances).
- Agree to maintain confidentiality about information and materials that are revealed in a workshop and may not make it into publicly circulated stories.
- Help storytellers find a way to share their stories in a way that minimizes the possibility of future disturbance. (i.e. attention to issues involving the telling of others' stories, digital afterlife, and revealing of personal information)
- Speak of stories and story coaching only in a context that supports the storytellers and avoids reinforcement of stereotypes and/or bias.
- Agree not to contact students or follow up on stories in any way --beyond sharing potential concerns with teachers.

Note: If and when possible and appropriate, Story Works will work to support storytellers in sharing stories in the languages of their choice, through the involvement of skilled interpreters and translators.

Principle 4: Supporting the learning environment.

Story Works, story coaches, and teachers will:

- Work collaboratively to support students as they develop and tell the stories that matter to them. (Lessons and activities will be designed to best support student learning and students will be given ample time to prepare and practice stories. When students have not had adequate time to prepare or otherwise do not feel prepared, teachers and Story Works will be careful not to pressure them to share an unprepared story.)
- Offer story coaching that, most importantly, supports storytellers' wellbeing and their relationships to their own stories. (i.e. Storytellers will be encouraged to consider the guidelines of their academic assignment but will also be recognized as experts on their own stories.)
- Work with students to develop class norms, explore storytellers' concerns, and support a safe environment for telling and listening.
- Remind storytellers and listeners that they can step away from storytelling at any time, should they become overwhelmed.

Principle 5: Ethical story distribution.

Story distribution strategies will consider the needs of and benefits to storytellers and their immediate communities, rather than only serving the agendas of possible audience members and/or project funders. Storytellers will be provided with copies of their finished stories and must complete a media release form before those stories are distributed or displayed in any setting.

Recorded stories (or live example stories) about highly sensitive topics will be shared with a plan to prepare and debrief audiences, discuss responses, and provide referrals to support services, if necessary. When sensitive stories are shared online, Story Works will indicate those stories it considers to contain sensitive content.

Principle 6: Ethical engagement.

Ongoing dialogue between storytellers, teachers, Story Works, and story coaches is key to ethical practice. This includes the development of: project goals and objectives, story coach training, anti-bias guidelines, storyteller preparation strategies, privacy guidelines, strategies to ensure emotional support for storytellers during and following workshops, and story distribution approaches.

Volunteer commitment to support ethical practice:

Please sign and date below if you feel prepared to work in support of these ethical principles.

I, _____(First and Last Name), have read and am committed to supporting the above principles and am open to reflecting on my practice. I also commit to sharing my comments, concerns, ideas, and questions as they arise.

_____(Signature)

_____ (Date)

Storyteller's Bill of Rights

Adapted from: StoryCenter's Ethical Practice Guidelines, storycenter.org

In relation to a workshop, each storyteller has ...

- The right to know from the outset why a workshop is being carried out.
- The right to assistance in deciding whether you are ready to produce a story.
- The right to understand what is involved in the process of producing a story.
- The right to know (and decide) who might listen to a recorded story, after the storytelling workshop.
- The right to decide whether or not to participate in a workshop.
- The right to ask questions at any stage of the workshop, before, during, or after.
- The right to ask for teaching instructions to be repeated or made clearer.
- The right to skilled emotional support, if your experience of making a story is emotionally challenging.
- The right to tell your story in the way you want, within the limits of the workshop.
- The right to decide whether or not to reveal private or personal information to fellow participants and instructors, at the workshop. (Note this applies to one's own information, not the private information of others.)
- The right to advice about whether revealing your identity or other personal details about your life, in your story, may place you at risk of harm or unwated judgement.
- The right to leave out identifying information (of self and of others), out of your final story.