Elements of Effective Storytelling

**A Good Story:**

**Is the one you love to tell!**  Think about the stories you have told your family and friends. What point are you trying to make? What examples can you use to explain why your point is important? What facts or incidents help build an emotional connection between your audience and your cause?

**Captures a central idea**. Do not try to cover too many incidents in one story. Focus on one issue and use real-life details to make it come alive.

**Has a main character that people want to help**. The more your audience knows about you or your student/teachers as individuals, the stronger the emotional connection and the more likely you’ll be able to affect positive resolution.

**Presents a conflict, challenge, or positive outcome**. Conflict is a struggle between two incompatible needs, wants, or situations. When presenting with the purpose of advocating change, a good story will reflect the struggle. When presenting to raise awareness, your story may focus more on challenges and positive outcomes. Both situations warrant attention to the strengths and needs of any given situation as well as goals or outcomes.

**Has a climax or high point.** A good story captures the audience. It may build up suspense by relating challenges that have been met with great success. It may capture your listeners by reflecting absurdity or enormous unfairness. It may move your audience to tears and it may move them to take action.

**Contains vivid images**. Use words to draw mental pictures that help listeners connect to your story at an emotional level. Don’t be afraid of using strong words. Remember, word power!

**Is detailed**. Use details and images that relate to the story you are telling. The more details you can provide, the better people can understand and sympathize with your position or cause.

**Addresses “4 W’s and an H”.** Who, what, when, where, and how **all** belong in a good story.

**Has a beginning, middle, and an end**. Let your story unfold. Identify the characters, build up to the issue or challenge, identify the conflict, and relate success or ideas on how to resolve the issue.

**Is short and to the point**. Define the time frame in which you will be presenting. Opportunities to make your case may be very limited in time and rely upon you to present in only 5 minutes. Still, you must be prepared to elaborate when you have captured interest!

**Remember: Your story must engage the audience and garner their willingness to help achieve your goal.**