

Stories Fuel Our World:

Evidence-Based Considerations for Literacy-Based Practices

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Let's Get in Formation:

- Analyze the research and power of stories in shaping identity, supporting self-advocacy, and contributing to students' academic outcomes.
- Apply narrative-based approaches to obtain meaningful intake information during the assessment process.
- Identify and demonstrate literacy-based assessment and intervention practices that support the comprehensive communication needs of students.
- Describe considerations for implementing narrative-based practices with low-incidence populations.

Humanity Anchors

Humanity anchors are the fundamental aspects of being human that ground us in connection, communication, and community. These anchors serve as touchpoints that remind us of our shared experiences, emotions, and needs, keeping us tethered to what truly matters in our interactions with others.

Per ASHA, evidence-based practice consists of three equally important components: external scientific evidence, professional expertise, and the perspectives of the family, student, or client.

- "Transformation happens when it's relational—not transactional." – Aiko Bethea
- "No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship." – Dr. James Comer

Literacy-Based Love

What's the Research?

It's authentic. It's a functional context—which yields connection. It's a kaleidoscope of language processing, social-pragmatic support, and socio-emotional learning (Brinton & Fujiki, 2019).

What happens to the brain when it hears a story? (Zak, 2015)

- Oxytocin is released.
- Neural activity increases fivefold, including language processing, language comprehension, motor cortices, visual image processing, and emotion (Gillam et al., 2011).
- Neurons fire and wire together, increasing what is recalled.

Literacy supports communication and self-determination.

- Literacy supports receptive language, expressive language, written expression, social support, and advocacy.
- Teaching students with language-based learning needs self-determination skills empowers positive post-school outcomes (Collins et al., 2018).
- Literacy-based interventions promote autonomy, relatedness, competence, and motivation while addressing language-based literacy needs (Collins et al., 2018).
- Producing personal narratives positively impacts academic performance, social and psychological well-being, social identity, and self-determination (Westby & Culatta, 2016).
- Stories help students develop identity, community engagement, and a sense of place. Language and identity should be nurtured, preserved, and embedded within school climate and curriculum (F. Guajardo et al., 2012).

Literacy is already aligned with the grade-level curriculum ([Arkansas Standards](#)).

Receptive Language	Expressive Language	Writing
PK: Follow directions	PK: Ask & answer questions	PK: Drawing & emergent writing
K: Retell stories	K: Participate in discussions	K: Opinion, informational, & narrative writing
5: Infer & integrate information	5: Summarize & present ideas	5: Organized writing with evidence
8: Analyze evidence	8: Support claims in discussions	8: Argumentative & informational writing
11: Synthesize multiple sources	11: Adapt communication for audience	11: Sustained, evidence-based writing

Tier 2 Vocabulary

- High-utility academic words that support literacy and academic success.

What books/stories do I choose?

- Align fiction and nonfiction with the general education curriculum.
- Consider books and stories that are personally meaningful to you.
- Choose books that reflect meaningful student narratives and origin stories.

Books provide: (Bishop, 1990)

- **Mirror:** See yourself.
- **Window:** Learn about others.
- **Sliding Glass Door:** Step into another person's world through empathy and imagination.

Consider wordless picture books

- Foster language production.
- Increase instructional support.
- Improve feedback during shared reading (Chaparro-Moreno et al., 2015).
- Enhance literacy for language learners (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015).
- Support inferencing, vocabulary, and oral language without the demands of decoding.

Session Set-Up

- Check in with student feelings
- Inaugural Session
 - Student strengths & interests
 - SLP interests, roles, & responsibilities
 - Session expectations ("looks like" & "sounds like")
 - Student communication goals
 - Family narrative

Beginning with Stories - Intake and Assessments

STORIES WITHIN IEP PROCESS



Gather Info	Pre-Assessment	Assessment	Report	IEP Meeting
Obtain Family Input with Heritage Language Supports (Strengths, Interests, Needs)	Meet with Interpreter to Dialogue about:	Test in English Do Not Report Scores	Report Language History	Invite Interpreter
Obtain Teacher Input (Strengths & Needs)	Goals of Assessment	-and- Test with Interpreter Do Not Report Scores	Describe Multilingual Framework	Speak Directly to Family
Obtain Student Input (Strengths, Interests, Needs)	Roles and Responsibilities	-or- Test in English with Consideration to Heritage Language Influences Do Not Report Scores	Describe Teacher Concerns, Family Concerns, Student Concerns	Honor Family's Frame of Reference
Obtain Heritage Language Info (Syntax & Sounds)	Interpretation Process	Conduct Qualitative Assessment(s)	Describe Strengths & Needs for Both Languages	State Info in Interpreter-Friendly Manner
<u>Gather Team</u> Multilingual Assessment Provider or Monolingual SLP with Multilingual Training (and possibly) Trained Interpreter	Review Heritage Language Influences	Dynamic Testing (Test-Retest-Test)	Include Outcomes Influenced by Heritage Language	Reiterate Benefits of Family's Heritage Language Supports at Home
	Practice Interpretation	Review Assessment with Interpreter	Report Dynamic Assessment Outcomes	Develop Goals with Consideration to Heritage Language
	Interpreter Reviews Assessment & Protocols		Include Needs Demonstrated in Both Languages	Provide Time to Review Assessment & Develop IEP in Entirety with Interpreter
				Provide Recording to Family

Every evaluation begins with two essential sources of information.

- Family stories: lived experiences, priorities, strengths, concerns, culture, and daily demands
- SLP knowledge: quantitative and qualitative data, educational impact, clinical reasoning, and SLP education/experience

Neither is sufficient on its own. Together, they create meaningful, educationally relevant recommendations.

Families often carry demands that extend beyond communication.

- Physical and emotional demands
- Understanding disability
- Navigating systems and resources
- Coordinating professionals
- Advocacy responsibilities
- Family priorities and hopes

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- Appropriate evaluation
- Caregiver participation
- Procedural safeguards
- Access to the general education curriculum
- Least restrictive environment

Build Trust:

- Know the whole child.
- Seek meaningful family input.
- Consider family perspectives when making recommendations.
- Show families how their stories informed the evaluation. Trust is earned when families recognize their story within the evaluation.

Include the Student's Voice

- Ask about strengths, goals, and priorities.
- Understand how the student experiences communication.

Write Reports That Tell the Story

- Integrate family, teacher, and student perspectives.
- Describe educational strengths and needs.
- Explain recommendations using evidence and educational impact.

Literacy-Based Interventions

There is no rule stating that a book must be completed within one therapy session.

Effective Strategies to Grow Narrative Skills (Pico et al., 2021)

- Use a manualized and/or scripted curriculum.
- Explicitly teach story grammar.

The book *Buoy* by Phuong Lien Palafox will be used as an example in the following section.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Engage students by discussing themes and key vocabulary.
- Activate background knowledge (Marzano, 2004; Fisher et al., 2012).
- Make predictions using visuals.
- Ask questions:
 - What do you think *buoy* means?
 - What do you know about refugees or families moving to new places?
 - Have you ever heard a story about your family's past?
- Preview vocabulary by introducing key words that will appear in the book:
 - Resilient - able to recover from difficulty
 - Scarce - not enough of something
 - Barter - to trade without money
 - Legacy - something passed down through generations

Reading Activities: Encouraging Engagement & Discussion

Dialogic Reading: Have a conversation as you read. Engage readers in deep thinking, personal connections, and vocabulary development through interactive questioning.

- Give students opportunities to share their thoughts about the book and honor their responses.
- Expand responses by rephrasing and adding information.
- Pause at key points to ask open-ended questions.
 - Early in the Story (Setting & Characters)
 - What do we learn about Má and Bàbá from the first stanzas?
 - How does Bàbá's second job demonstrate his sacrifices for the family?
 - Midway (Conflict & Survival)
 - Why do you think the family had to leave their home?
 - What emotions do you think Má felt while telling this story?
 - How does the whale "buoying" the boat connect to the title?
 - Toward the End (Resolution & Themes)
 - How did the family's journey shape their future?
 - What does "understanding the past earned us more" mean?

Intentionally Teach/Reteach New Vocabulary

- Show a visual or act it out.
- Reflect: How does the word connect to the student's background?
- Engage the five senses.
- Teach an advocacy strategy: "I don't know this word. What does it mean?"
- Student documents (e.g., story grammar organizers or words with targeted speech sounds)

Post-Reading Activities: Deepening Understanding

- Make Personal Connections
 - What is a challenge you or someone in your family has faced?
 - What does the word *home* mean to you?
 - How do you honor your family's legacy?
- Story Retell (verbally, visually, or gesturally)
- Wrap-Up Reflection
 - If you could ask the author one question, what would it be?
 - What will you remember most about this story?
- Theme-Related Activity

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) + Stories

What are the Functions of Communication? (Communication Matrix)

1. Request
2. Deny
3. Seek Information
4. Socialize

Core vocabulary words, comprising 80-90% of the words we use, are high frequency, reusable, generic words. Core Vocabulary promotes generative language that fulfills all functions of communication: requesting, denying, seeking information and socializing. Core vocabulary words can be used across a variety of settings and events throughout a person's daily functional activities.

Fringe vocabulary words, contrastively, are a set of low-frequency words that are specific to a person or activity.

Considerations

- Include Personal and Fringe Words
- Access to the SAME communication system 24/7
- Model, model, MODEL
- Support multimodal, whole communication
- Verbal children have been exposed to 4,380 hours of oral language at a rate of 8 hours/day from birth. Children requiring AAC have the right to the same amount of language exposure.

AAC/AT Considerations for Families & Teachers

- Embed vocabulary in everyday, functional school and home activities.
- Concentrate on specific core vocabulary. Share with teachers and families.
- Share what it "looks like" and "sounds like" to model using the device.
- Have a no-tech option.

Literacy Considerations (Soto, 2023):

- Non-speaking students have a right to literacy
- Incorporate AAC/Assistive Technology (AT)
- Bring in the 5 senses (e.g., removable characters/objects using Velcro, smelly stickers, play sounds, taste food associated with book)
- Adapting books (e.g., foam piece to turn page)

Literacy and investing in stories can be woven into daily routines and lived experiences.

Resources:

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Pico, D. L., Hessling Prah, A., Biel, C. H., Peterson, A. K., Biel, E. J., Woods, C., & Contesse, V. A. (2021). Interventions Designed to Improve Narrative Language in School-Age Children: A Systematic Review with Meta-Analyses. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 52(4), 1109-1126.

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Creativity + Stories

The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) shares the following [definition of communication](#):

Communication is the active process of exchanging information and ideas. Communication involves both understanding and expression. Forms of expression may include personalized movements, gestures, objects, vocalizations, verbalizations, signs, pictures, symbols, printed words, and output from augmentative and alternative (AAC) devices. Bottom line: When individuals communicate effectively, they are able to express needs, wants, feelings, and preferences that others can understand (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013).

Communicative Offers are Social Actions that Include: smiling, sharing objects, spoken words, gestures, increased proximity, eye gaze, and physical contact. This supports overall communicative intent and competence (DeThorne et al., 2015).

What is the intention and goal of speech-language therapy? Making effective communication, a human right, accessible and achievable for all.

What does communication require (Barnlund, 2017)?

- Two or more communicators (both receiving and sending)
- Medium (e.g., personalized movements, gestures, objects, vocalizations, verbalizations, signs, pictures, symbols, printed words, and output from AAC devices)
- Context (e.g., location, emotions, lived experiences, languages, etc.)

What is creativity and why does it matter to SLPs? (Craig & Killick, 2011)

- Making process involved
- Enjoyable
- Expressive
- Outcome = Admiration + Celebration

Art increases engagement, communication and increased self-rated quality of life (Jeppson, Nudo, & Mayer, 2022).

Interest + Engagement + Creativity = Increased Communication (Richard, 2017).

Art is a medium of communication.

Art is expression through multiple senses. The goal is to provide opportunities to express through multiple senses (e.g., rhythm, sound, image, movement, enactment, gesture, and vocalizations) (Malchiodi, 2023).

Considerations:

- These are valid forms of communication.
- Opportunities and access are provided.

Research indicates that contextualized language interventions (CLI)—which embed language learning within meaningful, real-life contexts—are more effective than decontextualized language interventions in promoting language development (Gillam et al., 2012).

Art builds confidence.

Neurodiversity-affirming art therapy can be a valuable approach in empowering autistic individuals, fostering self-expression, and enhancing emotional well-being (Malchiodi, 2023):

- Prioritizes capacity and ability over pathology
- Strengths- and interests-based

Power of Zines

Zine: A noncommercial, self-published, often homemade, or online publication, usually devoted to specialized and often unconventional subject matter (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). It is a way to reclaim power when your needs are not recognized.

Zine history:

- 1930s: Fanzines began among fans of science fiction
- 1960s: Roots in underground publications focused on activism
- 1970s: Popular on the punk rock circuit
- 1990s: Punk scene propelled the medium
- 2020s: Resurgence, marked by both digital and physical forms, in creative, activist, and niche communities. Evolution marked by both digital and physical forms. Tool for self-expression, advocacy, and community building.

Zines have:

- Supported student identity (Hall, 2014)
- Supported collective agency (Poo & Pinto, 2021)
- Supported learning (Mack & Rosenfeld, 2021)
- Supported visual and verbal communication (Heiss, 2020)

[Make Zine from One Piece of Paper](#) by Austin Kleon

Resources:

Cartwright, J. (2019). Build speech-language skills through creative writing: Have your students write poems or short stories to improve generalization of their speech and language skills while also cultivating a positive attitude about writing. The ASHA Leader.

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Service Delivery Considerations

Legal Expectations (per IDEA):

- Least Restrictive Environment: This means that students should spend as much time as possible with peers who do not receive special education services.
- Access to the General Education Curriculum: This means that students with disabilities have access to be involved in and show progress in the general education curriculum.

How are we currently providing services:

Workload versus Caseload per ASHA: Caseload refers to the number of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), and 504 plans served by school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and other professionals through direct and/or indirect service delivery options. Workload refers to all activities required and performed by school-based SLPs to support students' education programs, implement best practices for school speech-language services, and ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004) and other mandates.

[ASHA Caseload and Workload Characteristics Report](#)

Prime Duties (per Tammy Qualls, SLP) are all activities that fall under SLP roles and responsibilities.

From 2008 to 2022, most SLPs (77.5%-82%) indicated that a caseload approach, as opposed to a workload approach, was used to determine the number of students they served (ASHA).

Between 2010-2016 approximately 20% of services were classroom-based and 70-80% were pull-out services.

A survey finds that 30-minute speech-language sessions once or twice a week remain the norm (Brandel and Frome Loeb, 2012).

Why is this so hard?

Caseload size (and not individualized student) influence SLPs' recommendations regarding which service delivery models to use (Brandel & Loeb, 2011).

While SLPs report the benefits of inclusive services, the following considerations impact implementation of such services: training in the inclusion model, teacher "buy-in," planning time, and administrative support (Green et al., 2019)

A 2021 study conducted by Pfeiffer et al. demonstrated low percentages of school-based SLPs engaging in interprofessional collaborative practices (IPP). Three factors predicted use of IPP in schools: prior training in collaboration, years of experience, and educational setting. Cited barriers to interprofessional collaboration included: time constraints/scheduling (48%), resistance from other professionals (23%), and lack of support from employers/administration (11%).

Traditional Pull-Out: A service delivery model employed for over 100 years, children typically receive 20- or 30-min treatment sessions once or twice weekly, individually or in small groups, outside the regular classroom (Brandel & Loeb, 2011).

Inclusion/Classroom-Based: A service delivery model, grounded in the SLP and teacher working collaboratively, results in the SLP providing services within the general education setting.

Classroom-Based Life Skills Classroom:

[Listening and Following Directions](#)

[Choice Time](#)

[Asking Questions](#)

[Teach Independence in Conversations](#)

[Feelings](#)

[Relax and Retain Information](#)

3 to 1 Model: This is a service delivery model in which one week per month is an 'indirect service' week. Activities during the indirect week support generalization of student skills. Services could include, but are not limited to: classroom observation, teacher collaboration, program planning, preparation of materials, progress notes, and collaboration with and training of staff who work with the student (Schraeder, 2019).

[The 3:1 Model—One of Many Workload Solutions to Improve Students' Success](#)

Intensive Service Delivery: A service delivery model in which services are provided regularly throughout the school week.

Intensive Service Delivery vs. Twice Weekly (Gillam & Frome Loeb, 2010)

Participants: 216 school-age students in Texas, Kansas, and Iowa

Texas & Kansas

- Intensive daily schedule: 100 minutes/day, 5 days/week, for 6 weeks (50 total hours), followed by school-based intervention (average of 12 hours)
- Promoted active attention
- Provided immediate feedback
- Rewarded effort and success

Iowa

- Public school intervention twice weekly for 20-minute sessions over two years (approximately 48 total hours)

Results

- Students receiving intensive services demonstrated significantly greater gains in auditory processing, language, and phonological awareness immediately following treatment.
- Outcomes continued to improve for six months.
- Improvement was five times greater than that of students receiving twice-weekly intervention in Iowa.

Language LAB™: A Response to Intervention (RTI) program for students in kindergarten through fourth grade.

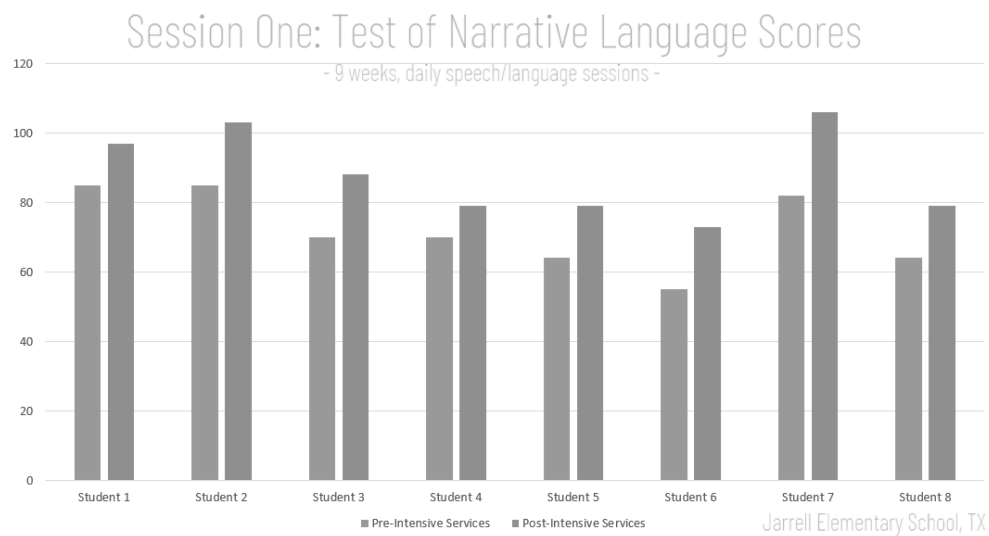
- Field-tested in a culturally diverse school district in the Houston, Texas, area.
- Within one semester of intervention, 81% of students (n = 26) exited or progressed at expected rates.
- Language LAB™ also identified students who required referrals for possible language and/or learning disabilities.

Participants: Jarrell ISD students

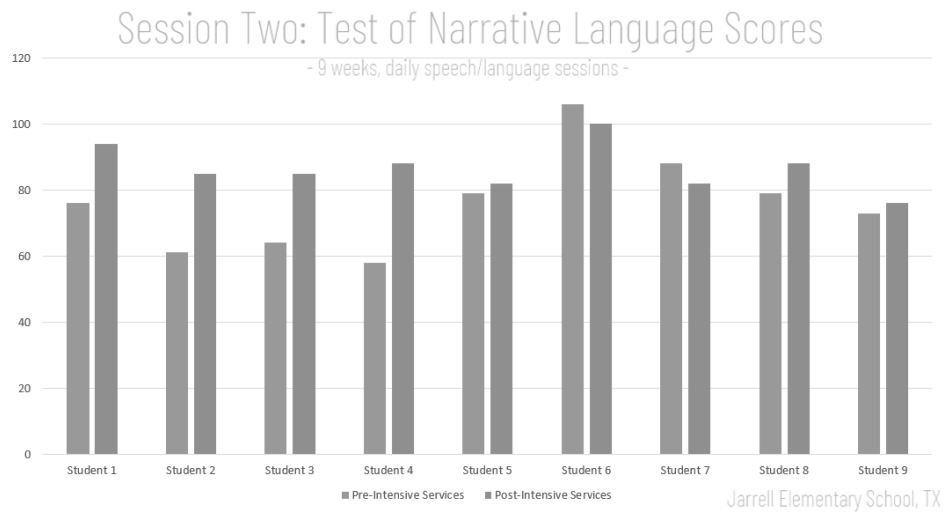
- Session 1 (9 weeks): 8 students
- Session 2 (9 weeks): 9 students

Schedule

- Intensive daily schedule: 30-45-minute sessions, 5 days/week, for 9 weeks.



	Pre-Intensive Interventions	Post-Intensive Interventions
Student 1	85	97
Student 2	85	103
Student 3	70	88
Student 4	70	79
Student 5	64	79
Student 6	55	73
Student 7	82	106
Student 8	64	79



	Pre-Intensive Interventions	Post-Intensive Interventions
Student 1	76	94
Student 2	61	85
Student 3	64	85
Student 4	58	88
Student 5	79	82
Student 6	106	100
Student 7	88	82
Student 8	79	88
Student 9	73	76

Students 6-9 received intensive services during both sessions. Although their post-intervention scores were lower after the second nine-week session, all students demonstrated overall improvement across the cumulative 18 weeks of intervention.

Outcomes:

- Story Retells contained more story grammar components
- Improved Writing: more details, more organization
- Increased scores on district reading assessments

FIFTH GRADER WRITING SAMPLES

Some two days are going
camping.
They saw a bear in the way
of the bridge.
Then the days run up the
tree
And the big bear fell
asleep beside the tree
And the boy speak down the
tree quietly.
Then the became happy
in camp.

Jarrell Elementary School, TX

Once there was a gorilla
his dream was to be
in a horse race, but no
body would let him all
what he would do is
to clean. But one time
there was a commision at
there was going to be
a race. So he went to the
city and he was going
to sign up but a guard
came up and said "no
animals, but the gorilla
boss got surprise. never
seen a gorilla that want
to be in a race so the
boss let him in to the race
when another guy came
us to the gorilla he was
starting to bully him.
on the next day he had
to practice for the race
then some guy came up
and start talking to
him. then the monkey
was crying, but he said
to him "don't worry, in the

the next day the guy
came up again and
making fun of him but
he gorilla just turned
him. The next day the
said "I sup the good
gorilla. The gorilla horse
is really fast. The next
day was the horse
race. The guy came up
again and said "it is
perill that he was going
to wear the champion
ship when the race
started the bully was
cheating but gorilla
was doing his best, but
the race stopped. The gorilla
boss saw the bully going
in the middle of the grass
land. But the bully was
cheating, so they they
didn't counted, but the
gorilla won first place
and everybody was cheer
for the gorilla. Then he
got the world's best trophy...

Language Expansion & Articulation Program (LEAP): An intensive service delivery program for 3-5-year-old students needing support with sound production and expressive language. The schedule is as follows:

- Morning Meeting (30 minutes): Calendar/weather, Sound Practice, Story Reading
- Rotations (60 minutes): Speech/Language Therapy, Auditory Bombardment, Art Activity (with embedded sound and/or language goals)
- Snack (20 minutes): Embedded sound and/or language goal
- Music (5 minutes): Embedded sound and/or language goal
- Grab Bag (5 minutes): Embedded sound and/or language goal

Resources:

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Educator Stories as a Tool

- Educator benefits include:
 - Validate teacher's own experiences and contribute to sense of purpose (Palmer, 2000)
 - Encourages teacher reflection (Schön, 2017)
- Student benefits include:
 - Increased learning and engagement (Harris, 2019; Landrum, Brakke, & McCarthy, 2019)
 - Increased understanding and retention (Demorest & Alexander, 2022)
- Creating SLP Libraries: Intentionally create libraries for SLPs
 - Choose specific books for monthly themes
 - Create lesson plans
 - Share lesson plans, activities, and resources with SLP peers

Resources

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Here's to the power of stories.

Love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phuong', written in a cursive style.