The High-Performing Preschool: Story Acting in Head Start Classrooms

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The High-Performing Preschool takes readers into the lives of three- and four-year-old Head Start students during their first year of school and focuses on the centerpiece of their school day: story acting. In this activity, students act out stories from high-quality children's literature as well as stories dictated by their peers. Drawing on a unique pair of thinkers—Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and renowned American teacher and educational writer Vivian G. Paley—Gillian Dowley McNamee elucidates the ways, and reasons, this activity is so successful. She shows how story acting offers a larger blueprint for curricula that helps ensure all preschools—not just those for society's well-to-do—are excellent.

McNamee outlines how story acting cultivates children's oral and written language skills. She shows how it creates a crucial opportunity for teachers to guide children inside the interior logic and premises of an idea, and how it fosters the creation of a literary community. Starting with Vygotsky and Paley, McNamee paints a detailed portrait of high-quality preschool teaching, showing how educators can deliver on the promise of Head Start and provide a setting for all young children to become articulate, thoughtful, and literate learners.

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