

“Tell me a story...and put me in it.”

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I saw a *Family Circus* cartoon a few months ago that struck me as representing the heart of a dialogue approach to teaching and learning. The little boy is getting tucked into bed by his mom. He looks up at her and says, “tell me a story, mommy, and put *me* in it.” And I thought, AH HA!! That’s it – that’s what we are trying to do when we design for dialogue. The design is essentially a story and we place our learners in it. When we do a learning needs resource assessment, when we ground the topic in the lives of our learners, when we feature open questions and “what are your questions?” we are putting our learners in the story. On my birthday, my mom calls and says, “Let me tell you the story about the day you were born. You see, I was just coming out of the ether when your daddy...” And I hang on every word, and I’m 55 years old! When I work with folks who are taking their first steps to shift from their voice to their learners’ voices, I ask many times... How have you placed your learners in this story?

No wonder a dialogue approach creates enough energy to light the room!