



# Blog

*Story telling through Tales Toolkit*  
**‘At Tales Toolkit we think that the best way to create a good story is to make it up as you go along.’**  
*Kate Shelley and Rhys Bevan*



**Kate Shelley** is passionate about the power of story, Kate created Tales Toolkit, award winning, research-based training and resources proven by Goldsmiths University to impact across the curriculum. Kate’s worked in various early years roles from Deputy Head in a Nursery School to Locality Lead for Play in Children’s Centres.



**Rhys Bevan** a story guru who runs the operations side of Tales Toolkit. Rhys came in as Kate’s ‘Deputy Boss of Everything’ in 2020 and was soon thrust into the limelight when Kate went on mat leave. Luckily, Rhys is no stranger to performing under pressure. Having trained as an actor, Rhys has juggled life on stage, screen and radio, and still pops up occasionally as Toby in the Archers.



*“Little pony, he do-es, he play. He play with his friends.”*

*“A elephant eat grass. Sleeping in black grass. A cat will scare him RAAAAAAA. Elephant wake up. A dinosaur he can scare the cat. He going to run away. The elephant sleeping cause the cat is gone.”*

These stories are by Raheemah, aged 3. Raheemah told the first story in one of first Tales Toolkit sessions and the second after just one term of using Tales Toolkit’s approach to storytelling.

“Tales Toolkit offers a framework for supporting children’s first steps in making up stories, imaginative play, putting ideas together and into sequences. This framework can be hugely helpful for children taking their first steps in this area and gives them the [scaffolding](#) they need.” Dr Julian Grenier.

***“Why use a framework?”***

Allowing children to play without a framework can yield brilliant results. However, it can also mean that while some children come into the setting ready to play, others who need more help might lose out. We address this by offering them a structure.

We use clear imagery and tactile props to support and guide the children’s imaginative play. Tales Toolkit is about involving *every* child in the storytelling process, giving each of them a voice.

You can read more about the basics of Tales Toolkit [here](#).

***The advantages of storytelling using Tales Toolkit***

We work on the premise that the difference between story, and *storytelling*, is that storytelling can be more child centred. Tales Toolkit offers a structure that enables children to be central to their stories. Stories begin (and continue) with the children’s interests.

Anything and anyone that grabs the children’s attention can be included in a story:

- family members
- favourite toys
- props from different homes and cultures
- idiosyncratic items like a tea towel, a leaf, or a cup

The list could go on!

Each story is unique. The only given is the basic framework that guides the story’s development – this can help children to feel comfortable and reassured.

Tales Toolkit enables young children to express themselves and, significantly, to share their story within the context of a small group. They often get excited about the twists and turns a story can take due to its collaborative (and the ‘make it up as you go along’) nature.

The fact that anything can be a story also means that any story can be told from any point of view. For example, the baddie can become the goodie for the retelling. The collaborative nature of Tales Toolkit is designed to encourage different viewpoints and perspectives.

***Collaborative Talk through Storytelling***

In a Tales Toolkit story, anything can happen, so children and adults need to incorporate each other’s points of view, compromise to reach a consensus, delegate, solve problems and find solutions.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) refers to ‘creating a community of collaborative learners’ in their section on [Self-regulation and Executive Function](#). Collaborative talk is integral to Tales Toolkit.

***Encouraging quality back and forth interactions***

- Powerful back and forth interactions are at the heart of storytelling. Tales Toolkit provides opportunities for these by:
- creating story together
  - coming up with ideas and bouncing ideas off each other
  - adapting ideas to involve everyone
  - all the great stuff that happens with sustained shared thinking.

[A Report from Goldsmith’s University, London](#) suggests that Tales Toolkit’s ability to promote quality interactions and storytelling is positively impacting literacy, communication and language, and socio-emotional development. It is also contributing to closing the gap between boys and girls across literacy, maths, and EAD.

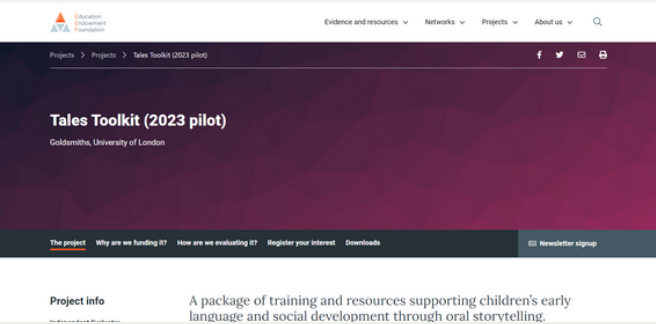
***Children are inheriting an unknowable future, for better and worse. They are going to have to be creative and collaborative problem solvers.***

***Tales Toolkit may help to get them started!***

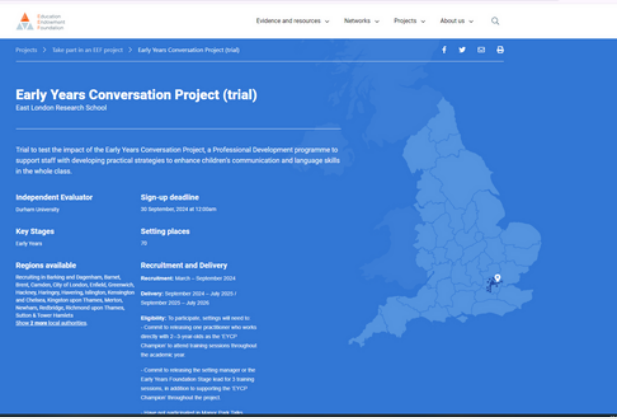
**By Kate Shelley and Rhys Bevans**

**Relevant information:**

[Tales Toolkit Pilot:](#) Education Endowment Fund (2023)



[Early years conversation project:](#) East London Research School



[The ShREC approach:](#) 4 evidence informed strategies to promote high quality interactions with young children

