

Moral Action through Story Telling: Stories to Light our Way

A project of Wisdom Thinkers Network (New York)– <http://www.wisdomthinkers.org/>

The Wisdom Thinkers Network is a 501c(3) organization based in central NY. The agency seeks to connect people and ideas to create a positive impact on individuals and communities through educational workshops, high profile roundtables, and grass-roots conversations to transform our culture for the common good. Wisdom is defined on the agency’s website, as the “glue that holds both a person and culture together”. Story telling is the key agency strategy and has led the agency Founder and President, Ralph Singh to develop the *Stories to Light our Way* project where students are taught wisdom stories compiled by Mr. Singh and encouraged to use the stories to communicate and pursue wisdom within their own community. The following summary of a service-learning project that resulted from the *Stories to Light our Way* project is adapted from the WisdomThinkers website.

Stories to Light Our Way in collaboration with others trained staff from the Huntington Family Centers (Syracuse, NY) who work directly with enrichment and after hours’ programs for children from the Syracuse City School District.



Wisdom Puppet Theater in action! From Wisdom Thinkers Network <http://www.wisdomthinkers.org/>

The *Stories to Light Our Way* process combines the universal message of wisdom from the world’s sacred and secular traditions, with the power of live story telling. Using the *Stories to Light Our Way*, *Journey to the World of Good*, CD and the accompanying study guide, Ralph Singh shared the power of using the stories to both change individual behavior and a community’s culture, and overcome prejudice. *Stories to Light Our Way*, recently received a coveted Parents’ Choice Recommended Award, and has been endorsed by Charles Haynes, the

leading authority in 1st Amendment issues relating to education as “an educationally and constitutionally sound way for public schools to

build good character and encourage cross-cultural understanding.”

Just two months after beginning to teach *Stories to Light our Way*, students – ages 6 to 12 – at the Huntington Family Center hosted the Wisdom Puppet Show for their peers and other guests. The students had not only learned the stories, but internalized the messages to the extent that they were able to create and perform their own plays on some of the key themes. Based on four of their favorite stories from *Stories to Light our Way*, the students wrote their own adaptations to be preformed by hand puppets. The stories and moral themes adapted by the students included: *The Kingdom of How to be Good*, which relates a story on making the world a better place, *The Turtle Who Couldn’t Keep His Mouth Shut*, that describes the theme of self control, *Shifting Sands*, is a



Wisdom Puppet Theater audience from Wisdom Thinkers Network <http://www.wisdomthinkers.org/>



Wisdom Puppet Theater participants with Wisdom Thinkers Network Founder and President Ralph Singh
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story that focuses on forgiveness, and *The True Bargain*, which develops the theme of sharing.

Participants created their own Wisdom Puppet Theater and hosted Mr. Singh, the agency staff, and fellow students to experience the wisdom stories through the student's own story telling with puppets.

“The stories have helped the children quickly internalize behavioral messages that have otherwise been difficult to teach. It has not only benefited the children but helped change the atmosphere here.” noted Terra Royal, Youth Director, Huntington Family Centers. “They

will carry these stories with them the rest of their lives.”

The wisdom story telling strategy of the Wisdom Thinkers Network is highlighted here as an excellent service-learning strategy to explicitly integrate character and wisdom lessons into lessons for reading, reading comprehension and oral presentation skill instruction.