



BranchED



Once Upon a Summit: Telling the Story for Deeper Learning

Fall Summit 2025

October 14, 2025



Welcome



BranchED



Agenda



BranchED

Day 1

- Welcome, Framing, and Connector
- Autobiographical Storytelling
- The Science Behind Storytelling
- Guest Speakers: Storytelling in Action
- 3x3x3 Drill
- Closing



Designed by www.flaticon.com



Who We Are



BranchED is a professional services organization and a collective of education leaders advancing educational excellence by expanding individual capacity, enabling supportive relationships, boosting institutional effectiveness in the classroom in both school districts and higher educational institutions, and collaborating with communities.



We Believe



BranchED

EVERY STUDENT

deserves access to
caring, adaptive, and
well-prepared teachers.

EVERY TEACHER

deserves preparation
that fuses quality with
diversity.

EVERY PERSON

benefits when we create
a higher standard of
education together.



Norms of Engagement



- Be Present in the Moment
- Be Vulnerable
- Assume Positive Intent
- Honor the Collective
- Be Bold
- Have FUN!



Consider...



BranchED

Wisdom without
Application is
worthless!



BranchED Tre

- Poetry Sl
- ... as
- Superheroes
- Children's Books
- It's All About the Data
- EBP Cheers
- Songs of the Summit: AI Edition
- Data News Network
- Fall 2025????

SURPRISE



BranchED

Chapter Zero





Learning Objectives



1

Design opportunities for learners to craft and share their own stories as a means of meaning-making and identity development.

2

Understand the cognitive and emotional benefits of storytelling in educational settings, including its impact on memory, empathy, and student engagement.

3

Apply storytelling design to learning experiences that make complex ideas accessible and relevant across disciplines and grade levels.

4

Integrate narrative techniques into instruction, coaching, or leadership to enhance communication, build relationships, and promote culturally responsive practices.

5

Reflect on how storytelling can support inclusive and equity-centered approaches in their educational context.



IACET CEUs

International Association for Continuing Education and Training



International Accrediting Body

- Indicator of accomplishment that can be shared with your networks
- Aligned to specific competencies
- Requires completion of a deliverable



Materials and Resources



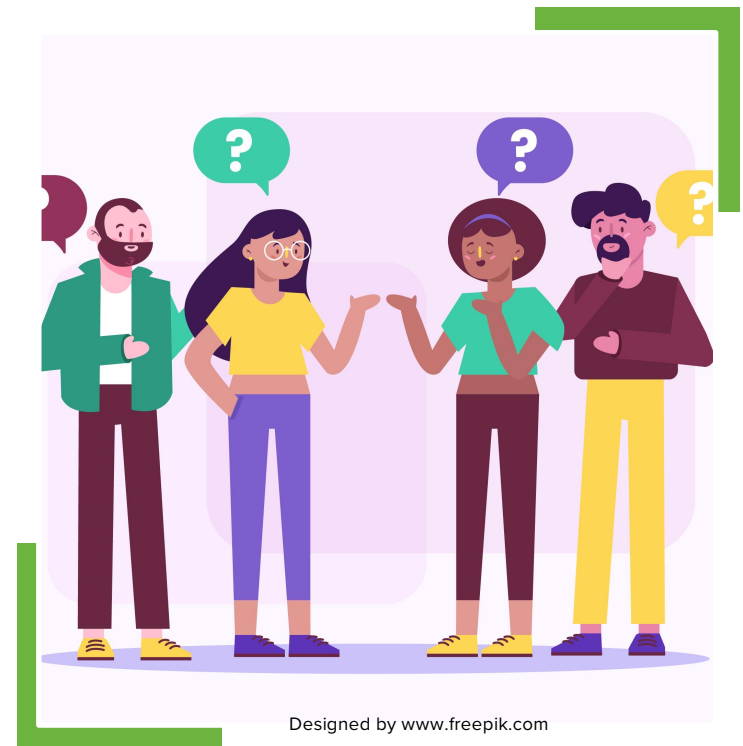


Connector

Getting to know
each other!



BranchED

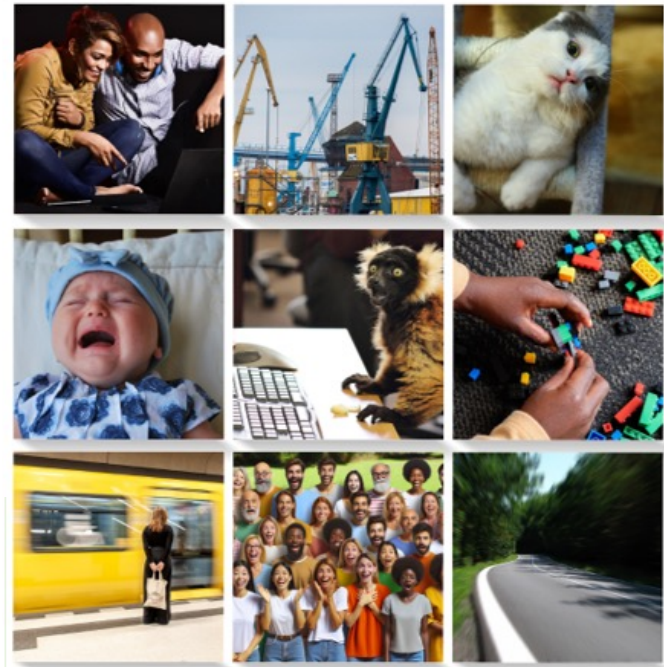


Designed by www.freepik.com



Connector: Picture This

- Choose a story card that represents a highlight, reflection, or meaningful moment in your life.
- When prompted, connect with someone you don't know and share why you chose that card and what the moment meant to you.
- Repeat 2 more times.





Share Out

Introduce Your Partner

Shared one thing you learned that intrigued you, moved you, or sparked your curiosity to know more.



Designed by www.freepik.com



Stephen Brookfield

We Teach to
Change the
World.

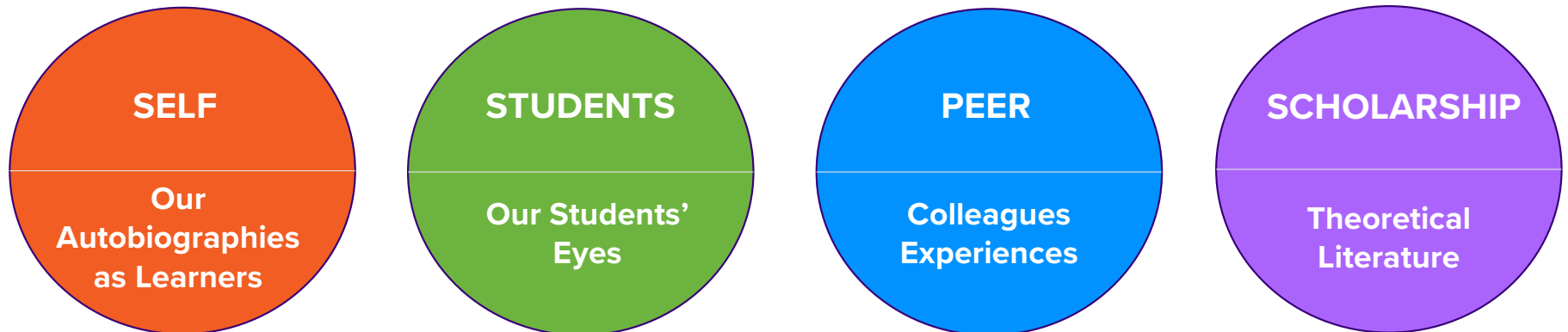




Critically Reflective Practice



Lenses



(Brookfield, 1995)



Autobiographical Storytelling



- A form of self-expression allowing us to share our life experiences and reflections with the world.
- Offers a unique window into the human condition.
- Involves introspection, selection, and storytelling, where you transform memories and experiences into a coherent and engaging narrative.
- Making connections and building bridges.



Silent Walk

Goal: To explore who we are as learners and how past experiences have shaped this sense of ourselves.

- Imagine that a publisher has invited you to write your story as a learner in three chapters. What would the titles be?
- Is there a metaphor or central theme that runs throughout your story?
- What early learning experience stands out to you, and how did it shape the way you see yourself as a learner?
- Who influenced your learning journey the most?
- When have you felt most engaged, curious, or alive as a learner? What conditions made that possible?
- How did stories play a role in your learning?
- How has your sense of yourself as a learner changed over the years?



BranchED



Designed by pixabay.com



Share Out and Debrief



SAW IT?



FELT IT?



Break Time!



Why Tell Stories?

Think-Pair-Share

- Communication and Knowledge Sharing
- Fostering Empathy and Connection
- Cognitive and Evolutionary Aspects
- Social Cohesion and Cultural Transmission



(Gardenfors, P., 2024; Smith, D., 2017)



“

*“Stories have always
existed because humans,
unlike other life forms,
need meaning.”*

(Garmston, R.J., & Dolcemascolo, M. n.d.)



Why Stories Are Influential



- Natural Way of Learning
- Personal Connection
- Awaken Intuitive Knowledge
- Tap the Unconscious
- Transcend Facts to Personal Knowledge
- Cultural Connection
- Activate the Brain

(Garmston, 2015).



Cognitive Benefits

Why Stories Stick in the Brain



Dual Coding

Brain processes information through two channels: verbal (words) + non-verbal (images)
Stories activate both channels (enhances comprehension)



Story Structures

Narrative Arcs provide built-in schemas



Hooks and Attention

Dopamine released
Keeps individuals focused

Images designed by www.freepik.com

(Garmston, 2015; Zak, 2015)



Emotional Benefits

Why Stories Move Us



Empathy Building

Allows individuals to step into the shoes of others and understand their feelings, experiences, and perspectives



Human Connections

Lowers defense and builds trust
Strengthens relationships



Memory + Emotional Link

People may forget content, but they remember how a story made them feel
Feelings become anchors for learning



Brain Chemistry of Storytelling



Neuroscience

- **Empathy Activated:** Storytelling activates mirror neurons and emotional processing regions, allowing listeners to feel what others feel.
- **Oxytocin Release:** Increases trust, empathy, and connection.
- **Sustained Attention:** Stories engage curiosity and emotion, making them more memorable than facts. The amygdala heightens attention and motivation.
- **Multisensory Processing:** Stories light up multiple sensory regions of the brain (visual, auditory, tactile, even olfactory), simulating real experiences and deepening comprehension.

(Garmston, 2015; Zak, 2015)





Brain Chemistry of Storytelling



- **Both Hemispheres Activated:** The left hemisphere processes structure and language, while the right hemisphere processes imagery and emotion.
- **Transderivational Search:** A subconscious process in which listeners project their own meanings, experiences, and emotions onto the story, creating personal relevance. The hippocampus strengthens memory by pairing emotion with experience.
- **Full Focus:** Attention is not fully under conscious control. Stories naturally capture and sustain focus by triggering emotion and curiosity.

(Garmston, 2015; Zak, 2015)



Guest Speakers

Story Telling in Action

- Dr. Youmna Deiri
Assistant Professor, College of Education, Texas A&M International University
- Mrs. Victoria Camacho, Ed.S.
Early Childhood Dean at Laredo Independent School District
- Maleny Martinez, *My Abuelita's House*
Teacher Candidate
- Ximena Vidal, *Not Another Baseball Game*
Teacher Candidate



BranchED







The Martians Have Landed



In the parking lot...

- They are eager to learn about your job
- Explain it by using icons, schematic drawings, timelines or anything that can make it clear.
- Do not use any words.

Innovation Lab





Surprise

Brain

for the Bands

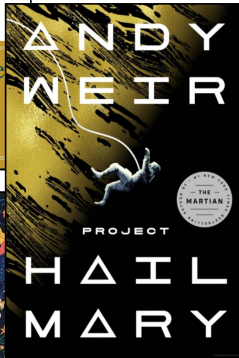
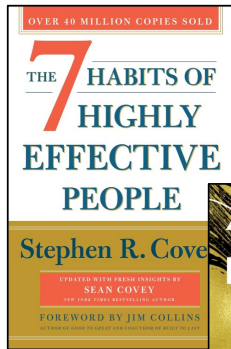
Math Superheroes

- Children's Books
- It's All About the Data
- EBP Cheers
- Songs of the Summit: AI Edition
- Data News Network
- Fall 2025????



BranchED

Summit Stories: Voices That Moved Us



Action

Fantasy

Horror

Mystery

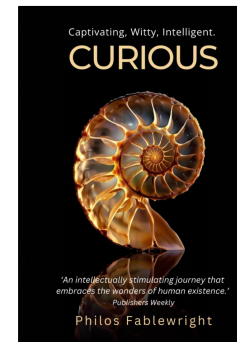
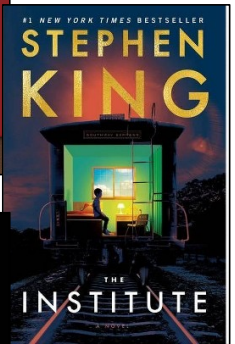
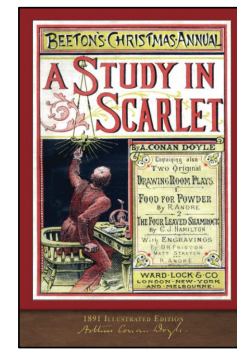
Adventure

Suspense

Drama

Fairy Tale

Humor



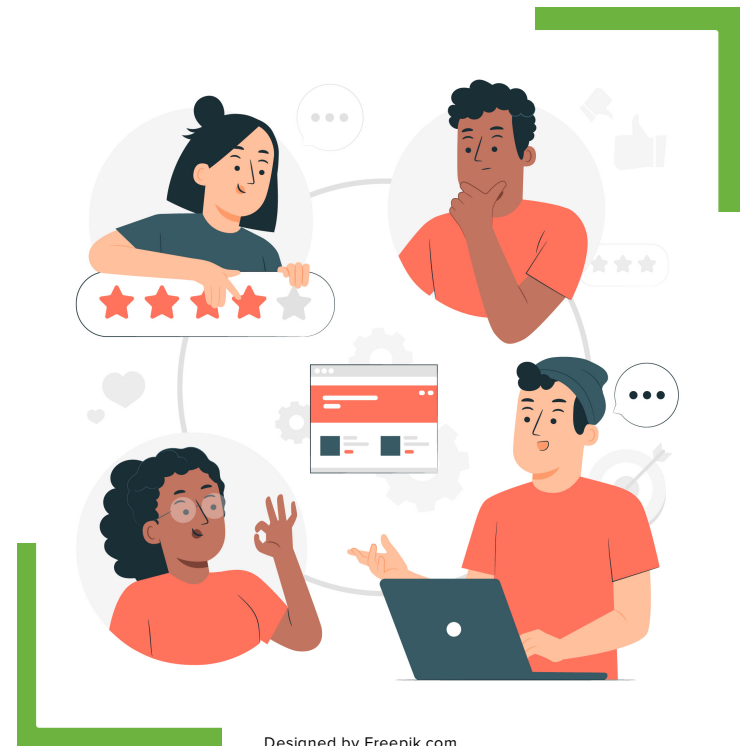


Closing

Your Feedback is Important to Us!



BranchED



Designed by Freepik.com



Tonight



6:00-7:00 PM Reception

7:00-9:00 PM Dinner