Creating a living history through the stories we share: tales from an early childhood classroom.

This presentation examines how project-based narrative practices in a preschool inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach, foster inclusive communities. These practices weave child-generated stories into a living history that spans multiple cohorts, showing how preserving and passing stories between groups of children strengthens belonging, and creates a shared identity in early childhood literacy environments.

In this classroom, storytelling is a sustained pedagogical thread rather than an isolated activity. Children collaboratively create books, digital texts, and project documentation that capture their inquiries, relationships, and evolving understandings. These texts are intentionally preserved and reintroduced to future cohorts, allowing new learners to encounter the voices and ideas of those who came before them. As children read, revisit, and extend these stories, they step into a narrative lineage that affirms their place within a broader community.

This approach positions every child as an author whose work matters beyond the moment of creation. The living history that emerges honours diverse cultural backgrounds, communication styles, and ways of meaning-making. Each contribution becomes part of the collective memory of the classroom, ensuring that every child's voice is valued and visible across time. Newcomers enter a space already rich with shared narratives, enabling them to feel immediately connected and capable of contributing to an ongoing story. Project-based learning structures support this continuity by providing long-term contexts in which stories can evolve, accumulate, and be passed forward.

The presentation will illustrate how educators curate and revisit these stories across multiple formats, and how these practices strengthen literacy engagement, identity formation, and inclusive community building. By demonstrating the power of evolving narratives in early childhood settings, this session offers a practical, research-informed model for cultivating belonging through the stories children create and carry forward.

Jo Stratton