

Spellbinder Storytellers

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



Spellbinders Storytellers mission is to use the art of oral storytelling to enhance literacy, encourage character development, and build intergenerational community. DPS' Storytelling program brings together young and old to create connections, advance literacy, and enrich the lives of children and volunteers alike.

In 1988, to promote intergenerational programs, a group of senior citizens from the community trained in the art of storytelling by professional storytellers and told stories in elementary school classrooms. DPS Volunteer Services sponsors monthly professional development workshops to train new and existing volunteer storytellers to enhance their storytelling skills. In 1997, Spellbinders became a Colorado non-profit corporation with the goal of establishing Spellbinders volunteer storytelling "chapters" around the country.

Oral storytellers volunteer in classrooms – telling, not reading stories. Tellers provide 20 to 40-minute storytelling sessions based on the needs of the teacher. Tellers return each month so that children form long-term relationships with caring community members. Storytellers offer a fun, engaging, and effective tool for literacy skill building.



Become Part of
Denver Spellbinders

Listening and speaking are core skills that cross all content areas. Oral storytelling requires students to visualize and imagine. This supports reading comprehension and evokes critical thinking skills which are essential to all higher learning. Stories include tales from around the world that expand a child's worldview. Fables and folktales that evoke grit, resiliency, and perseverance as they show dragons can indeed be slain and that heroes and heroines can come from the most unlikely places.



The program is evaluated by surveying teachers at the end of the school year. Approximately 98% of teachers report that having a Spellbinders storyteller in the classroom helps students achieve academic goals. Almost 90% of teachers also agree that Spellbinder storytellers help students build key skills in vocabulary, listening, imagination, creativity, and expand students' worldview and improve

reading scores.

Volunteers attend a series of four, 3-hour trainings. Attendance at all four sessions is required to gain certification as a Spellbinders Storyteller. Recruiting new storytellers willing to commit to the lengthy training has proved to be challenging. The program is one of our most popular, impactful programs with educators and volunteers in the district. It's worth the time and effort!