

Reaching and Teaching All Learners through the Telus Cybertales[®] Educational Program

To learn:

- One must *recognize* information, ideas, and concepts
- One must be able to *apply strategies* to process the information
- One must *be engaged*

Vygotsky

Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, developed the theory of the [Zone of Proximal Development](#). He believed there are three prerequisites for learning and, of these three, engagement is the most important. Current [PET scan research](#) on the three brain networks (recognition, strategic, and affective) parallels and provides supporting evidence for Vygotsky's work.

Engaging students, reaching them, before trying to teach them is key. The reality is today's students are digital natives and one way to more effectively reach and teach them is to use technology and the Internet. This is where **Telus Cybertales[®]** comes in. It can help teachers reach students and get them to take risks with their creative writing; setting their imaginations free, by helping create the opportunity for them to be authors with an audience and linking writing mini-lessons to authentic writing events.

Cybertales Elements that get Students Engaged:

- ✓ computer and technology for writing (both as a way to engage them and provide assistive technology for learning to help remove barriers to students expressing themselves creatively)
- ✓ recognized author/actor as a 'mentor' (Sandy Cooke)
- ✓ field trip to the one-man-play presentation of the story as a culminating activity (for those schools travelling distance from the St. Albert International Children's Festival)
- ✓ publication of the story they helped write

Teachers can use **Telus Cybertales[®]** as the vehicle to create a motivating and safe environment for taking risks with creative writing. Real-world connections and questioning (What does a good author do?) for authentic reasons engages students. Using a [Double Bubble Map](#) to compare and contrast submissions allows students to identify their areas of need for class mini-lessons in writing and strategy instruction. Current research shows well-designed and 'just in time' strategy instruction can produce *substantial* gains in writing quality for struggling writers. Collaboration among students, by participating in **Telus Cybertales[®]**, helps them gain a deeper understanding of how to use strategies to help them write creatively.