

USING STORYTELLING TO STRENGTHEN A PEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR NEW BOYS AT WOODBERRY FOREST SCHOOL

Jacob Geiger

Woodberry Forest School, Woodberry Forest, Virginia, United States of America

Abstract

This action research project focused on Grade 11 peer leaders at Woodberry Forest School. The project was designed around a belief that these peer leaders, each of whom was working with five or six new students, would be able to more effectively share important information about school culture, rules, and expectations if they worked to improve their skills as storytellers. This belief informed the research question: How does personal storytelling strengthen the peer leadership skills of Grade 11 boys?

After an initial training workshop, as well as a follow-up session three weeks into the school year, data were collected through surveys, field observations, and interviews with individual peer leaders. Peer leaders began using stories almost immediately in their sessions, and while they did not use stories each time they met, observations and survey responses yielded consistent evidence that they regularly used stories to convey important information. Grade 9 boys, whose groups had been observed, completed a short survey to provide an additional data point on whether or not peer leaders were using stories in meetings.

This research makes clear that storytelling skills are a valuable tool for a peer leader. While a story does not work in every situation or meeting, training the peer leaders in how to effectively use stories gave them another way to connect with their younger peers. Their confidence in stories also grew over time. Stories by peer leaders also led new boys to share their own stories, strengthening the bond between new student and peer leader.

Introduction

Each year Woodberry Forest School welcomes about 120 new boys to the school, with roughly three-quarters of those boys entering Grade 9. New boys are assigned to one of 25 peer leaders,

most of whom are in Grade 11, with a few are in Grade 12. Each peer leader works with a group of five or six new boys. They meet their new boys on the opening day of school and hold meetings with the group generally once a week. The peer leaders are a resource for the new boys and help them adapt to life at Woodberry.

During this research project, I served as the school's Director of Strategic Communications, an administrative role. I also taught journalism, served as an advisor to the student broadcasting network, and helped coach junior varsity baseball. I lived in a house on campus and did evening duty weekly on a Grade 10 dormitory.

I conducted a storytelling training session with the peer leaders a few days before the new boys arrived. After teaching the boys about the dramatic structure of storytelling and showing them an example — a Budweiser beer commercial available on YouTube — I asked them to run the lessons they would be sharing through the lens of personal storytelling. Instead of saying that a one-on-one consultation with a teacher was valuable, could the peer leader share an example from his own academic career?

Woodberry's culture is filled with tradition and ritual. As boys are learning to live away from home for the first time, they are tackling an academic course load that for most of them is far more difficult than anything they have previously attempted. They have a lot to learn about Woodberry, and they have got to learn it quickly. Peer leaders are a key part of a new boy's integration into the larger student body and school culture.

Literature Review

Storytelling is the ultimate human concept. Every group and society on Earth tells stories and has done so for thousands of years. Stories are the foundation for religions, nations, schools, and families. In *Sapiens* (2014), Yuval Noah Harari says the cognitive developments roughly 70,000 years ago that allowed homo sapiens to become the dominant species on the planet also gave rise to storytelling, which became one of the key skills that helped homo sapiens organize themselves into increasingly complex societies. Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), identified through comparative mythology, a series of common themes in religious storytelling, whether the belief system is monotheistic, polytheistic, or animistic. Though

Campbell's work is now 70 years old, it remains hugely important in both academia and popular culture, influencing authors, playwrights, and moviemakers. Audiences often do not even realize the work they're reading or viewing is based on Campbell's work; Seastrom (2015) notes that "myth is often something experienced unconsciously by a collective" (para. 10).

Because storytelling is at the heart of modern marketing and almost all English and History curricula, it can be used by teenage boys in a wide range of formats. Quesenberry and Coolson (2014) examine the most-viewed stories in America — Super Bowl commercials. They found "that average consumer ratings were higher for commercials that followed a five-act dramatic form" (p. 437) and that narrative theory impacts consumer response. Monarth (2014), writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, built on the work of Quesenberry and Coolson to show that even a 60-second commercial can follow the five-act dramatic structure known as Freytag's Pyramid. Gustav Freytag (1894) highlighted the plays of William Shakespeare as the classic example of a story that moves through five acts: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement. Artists ranging from Shakespeare to George Lucas unfold these acts over two or three hours and thousands of words, but Monarth examines a 2014 Super Bowl commercial by Budweiser, America's largest brewer, to show the five-act structure can also occur in 60 seconds without any dialogue between the commercial's "characters": a man, woman, puppy, and several Clydesdale horses.

If storytelling is an elemental human concept, and if storytelling can be effective in snippets as short as 60-seconds, how might personal storytelling strengthen the peer leadership skills of Grade 11 boys? Freed (2010) says humans see stories as a way to "make a difference in our world; to broaden our perspective to see further than normal; to act beyond a story that may have imprisoned or enslaved us; to live more of our spiritual and earthly potential" (para. 2). Grade 11 boys at Woodberry Forest might not approach storytelling with Grade 9 boys from such an elevated perspective, but there is evidence a peer leader who shares stories about his own experiences can have a substantial impact on another student.

Shray, Russo, Egolf, Lademan, and Gelormo (2009) found that peer leaders improve college-level science classes. Having first used students who had successfully completed a chemistry course to lead groups of new students, Shray et al. then sought to identify "in-class peer leaders" taking

a course for the first time. The researchers found, "standard peer leaders teach more and have better control of the group, the former because they know more and the latter because they are not friends with their group" (p. 67). Woodberry's Grade 11 peer leaders are in many ways equivalent to the "standard peer leaders" studied by Shray et al. They are old boys who have been through the experience of being a new student at Woodberry and can now share what they know. Because they have been through the new boy experience just a year or two earlier, they can speak with authenticity, which Adam Cox (2018) notes in *Cracking the Boy Code* is critical in relating to boys. Furthermore, he notes that authenticity is shaped through practice and participation. If stories by peer leaders draw the new boys into the conversation, it helps them better understand themselves.

There are substantial opportunities for peer groupings, whether formal or informal, to shape school culture in powerful ways, for better or worse. According to Harper (as cited in Harris, Palmer & Struve, 2011), studies of black college students revealed that young men who formed a tight peer group have stronger and healthier ideas of what it means to be a man as, "high achievers conceptualized and expressed masculinities by pursuing academic excellence, assuming leadership in campus organizations, and serving Black communities" (p. 48). Martin and Harris III (2006) say black student-athletes who are also academically-driven build a set of expectations for themselves that stood at odds with the prevailing societal trends, both on their college campus and in the larger world of black American culture. These young men "expressed masculine conceptualizations that were inconsistent with established gendered norms for Black men. The participants associated masculinities with being accountable, displaying character, serving communities, and pursuing academic excellence" (p. 364).

The racial makeup of Woodberry's new boy class in 2018 was quite different from the all-black groups studied by Harper or Martin et al. About 65 percent of the new students in the new boy class were white Americans; 20 percent were black or Hispanic, and the remaining 15 percent were international students from a dozen countries. That said, the all-male peer groups studied by Martin et al. offer parallels to Woodberry's groups, even though the ages and racial makeup of the groups differed. Cox (2018) notes the importance of building strong communication patterns with teenage boys: "It is the form of communication that resonates deeply for boys....

This is Rule #1.... Your tone is 'louder' than your words. How you say things lingers longer than what you say" (p. 53). Cox also writes that teenage boys respond best to someone who speaks as a coach rather than a boss or drill sergeant. Peer leaders are, as their title suggests, peers rather than superiors to the new students. This might serve as a guiding principle for Woodberry Forest's peer leadership program.

Harris et al. (2011) sketch a path for the healthy development of masculine identity in young black men. They view peer leadership as part of a larger process that might "link undergraduate black men to older men who model appropriate ways of expressing masculinity, such as a faculty or staff member, a recent graduate, or a member of the local community for mentoring and role modeling" (p. 58). This might serve as a guiding principle for Woodberry Forest's peer leadership program.

Research Context

Woodberry Forest School is a boarding school that is home to 400 boys in Grades 9 through 12; 95 percent of faculty live on campus. Every year, 25 peer leaders are selected in a competitive application process; many of the Grade 11 peer leaders are selected as prefects the following year. The peer leaders meet each Sunday evening to plan for their next meeting. These planning sessions are generally run by the boys, with support and coaching from Ryan Alexander, who serves as Woodberry's director of residential life and oversees the peer leadership program. Peer leaders meet with their students about three times a month, usually on Thursday night. Peer leaders pick the spot for the meeting and bring pizza (paid for by the school) for the group to enjoy during their discussion.

The 25 peer leaders and their parents were aware and granted permission to participate in this research project. Students and parents were informed that their sons would face no disadvantage if they chose not to participate.

The Action

In late August, I held a training session with the peer leaders and used a 2014 Super Bowl commercial to introduce them to Freytag's Pyramid and storytelling structure. The boys practiced by telling stories to each other and identifying the different parts of each other's story.

A refresher training workshop with the boys was held about six weeks after school began to reinforce the earlier lessons and hear feedback from the boys about what parts of storytelling were going well or not going well.

My action was fairly small and confined. Though the boys were regularly encouraged to use stories, we never insisted they did so. The boys were always free to use our advice or set it to the side as they wished. I believe this descriptive approach — rather than a prescriptive approach where we mandated that peer leaders use stories — was consistent with Woodberry's larger goal of giving students wide latitude to own and shape the school's culture. In many ways, this project felt like teaching boys to navigate a canoe down the river. I gave them lessons and advice before the journey started and shouted some occasional advice to them as they paddled along, but most of the time I walked alongside the bank, observing what they did without being able to put a paddle in the water myself.

Data Collection

I drew on a mix of quantitative and qualitative sources for the project's data. Mertler (2017) suggests this mixed methods approach allows a researcher to triangulate data and build a more accurate set of findings. Surveys were sent by email to the peer leaders. Each peer leader filled out three surveys with short response and Likert-scale questions about storytelling during the course of the project — one after his first two meetings with his peer group; one in October at the midpoint of the research project; and one in December at the conclusion of the research project. The boys were asked to rate their comfort with using stories in peer leader meetings on a one to five scale, with one being "very uncomfortable" and five being "very comfortable." A Likert scale worked well in this situation because it allowed an aggregation of group data and allowed longitudinal data to be collected, providing comparative information across the term and across a dozen peer meetings.

I conducted weekly observations of peer leader meetings. An advantage of such observations is that a researcher "can gather data about actual student behaviors, as opposed to asking students to report their perceptions or feelings" (Mertler 2017, p. 106). These observations, Mertler adds, allow "the [researcher] to see some things that students might not be able to

report on themselves” (p. 107). I chose to observe five peer leaders, allowing me to watch each group at least two times and see how the Grade 9 boys’ relationships with their peer leader evolved.

My one-on-one interviews with peer leaders gave them a chance to expand on their survey responses and to discuss or reflect on their Peer leader Council (PLC) meetings and storytelling skills in a relaxed setting, which Cox (2018) argues is key to getting boys to open up and hold honest discussions of what might be sensitive topics. Interviews, Mertler (2017) notes, citing Schmuck (1997), allow a researcher “to probe further and ask for clarification in a participants response to a given question” and to access information from boys “who cannot or who are unwilling to share their thoughts, feelings, or perceptions in writing” (p.111). Any one of these three research methods — surveys, field observations of peer meetings, and one-on-one interviews — would have provided interesting findings, but combining them led to the collection of a useful mix of qualitative and quantitative data, giving me greater confidence that I was more accurately assessing the strengths and weaknesses of storytelling in our peer leadership program.

Data Analysis

After collecting all the data, I looked for common themes across my observations, interview transcripts, and the survey responses through a process of interpretational analysis. I coded each meeting I observed, recording whether a peer leader used a story, whether a new boy used a story, and whether the group started its meeting with a “high/low” or “rose/bud/thorn” exercise where each student was asked to share a high and low point of his week. The “bud” in the second variation of the exercise is something a student is looking forward to in the coming weeks.¹

Using this wide range of methods — surveys, field observations, and one-on-one interviews — gave me the ability to triangulate my data. Repeating the survey to the peer leaders three times gave me the ability to understand if their confidence in storytelling skills changed over

¹ An example of rose/bud/thorn from an observed meeting: “My thorn this week is that I slept through a class, got demerits for missing it, and now have work I need to make up. My rose is the start of lacrosse season. My bud is the spring break backpacking trip.

time. The boys reported that they were using stories, and the field observations confirmed these reports.

Discussion of Findings

An emphasis on personal storytelling strengthened Woodberry's peer leadership program. Three clear themes emerged during data analysis:

1. Intentionally teaching the power of storytelling to peer leaders makes them more effective at telling stories and slightly more likely to use stories.
2. When new students are told stories, they respond with stories of their own.
3. An intentional use of stories keeps school traditions alive and helps transmit community values. (See Appendix F for a student-written summary of key community values).

Intentional Training Leads to Storytelling

Woodberry's peer leadership program benefited this year from the intentional use of stories. One important component of this success was the ongoing coaching by Ryan Alexander, the faculty mentor for the peer leaders. After our initial training sessions, Ryan consistently urged the Grade 11 boys to weave stories into their meetings, ensuring the boys heard regularly about the benefits of stories even if I was not able to meet with them. Interestingly enough, just as we were helping the Grade 11 boys build the habit of storytelling, many of their stories to the Grade 9 boys centered around the habits necessary to succeed as a Woodberry student. It is possible — indeed even probable — that some stories have been used by past peer leaders, but this research project is the first time that the leaders have been asked to regularly and deliberately incorporate stories into their meetings. This research project made storytelling a bedrock of this year's peer leadership program.

My first survey of peer leaders went out two weeks after our initial training. Of the 25 boys who were sent the survey, 18 completed it. Sixteen of the 18 boys who completed the survey had already used a story, indicating prompt adoption of the training I'd given them. Eight discussed the upcoming Pep Rally, a Woodberry tradition held before each football game. Four other peer leaders told a story about homesickness — a common concern at the start of the school year in

our all-boarding community. Two boys told stories about managing roommate conflicts, and one each told stories about academics and Woodberry's move-in day.

I conducted a second survey in mid-October with a subset of the peer leaders but received only 11 valid responses to the 25 surveys. All 11 of the boys responding to the survey said they had used at least one story in a meeting. Eight of the eleven said they had discussed Woodberry's Honor System, and six had discussed roommate issues or dorm life in recent meetings.

Because nearly every peer leader used a story so quickly, I adjusted my final survey, conducted in December, to find out more about the impact peer leaders believed stories had on their groups. More than half of the peer leaders reported that my training in August had not made them any more likely to use stories; five said the training made them more likely to use stories.

Half of the meetings I observed had a clear story that followed Freytag's pyramid. Several other meetings did not have a full-blown story but included what I labeled "mini-stories," a shorter description of a past experience. These "mini-stories" often came in response to a Grade 9 boys' question.

Stories Keep School Traditions Alive

The stories about Pep Rallies showed how a program of distinctive storytelling helps reinforce school traditions and culture. Later in the term, many peer leaders told stories about the Woodberry honor system as a follow-up to the orientation boys had received when they first arrived on campus (an orientation that included scenarios and stories based on past honor violations, and one of the few other places around campus where storytelling is used in an intentional framework with new students). Because Pep Rallies are such a unique part of Woodberry life, the peer leaders thought that it would be helpful for boys to understand the spirit of the event. "I think [telling a story about the Pep Rally] helped them see me as someone with a past as a freshman," Peer Leader 4 said in his survey response.

Stories by Peer Leaders Encourage Stories by New Boys

I was surprised by the comfort level students reported in using stories at the start of the school year. Using a Likert scale survey, I asked, "on a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable are you using

stories in your PLC meetings or when working 1-on-1 with a boy?; 1 being very uncomfortable, 3 being sort of comfortable, 5 being very comfortable.”

Ten boys rated their comfort level a 5 and the other eight boys rated it a 4. I had expected comfort levels to be spread over a wider range. The training at the start of the school year, coupled with the refresher training in October and the ongoing discussions I had with peer leaders about stories, seemed to give boys the courage to share their stories. When we emphasize stories with peer leaders and share our own stories with them, we help them see the value in their own stories. This then seemed to transfer down to the Grade 9 boys, with several peer leaders reporting that the new boys were quickly becoming more comfortable sharing their own stories about life at Woodberry, either with the peer leader or with the group.

Peer Leader 19 said, “storytelling has helped me get to know the new boys in my group better because it is engaging, and now I have two kids in my group that like to stay back after meetings to just talk and hang out for about fifteen minutes, which always includes storytelling.” Peer Leader 16 said, “stories have gotten me closer with my guys this year.”

During field observations, I rarely saw a Grade 9 boy tell a full story, which gave the Grade 11 boys very few chances to be the recipients of stories. Each of my surveys asked peer leaders what happened after they told a story. The two most common responses they reported were that the new boys asked follow-up questions for more information or responded with a story of their own. At the start of the school year, the peer leaders listed attributes of a good meeting (See Appendix E for the values developed in August by the peer leaders). Stories — from both the leader and the new student — were one of the attributes listed, and as the year went along the leaders began to hear more stories from the new students. Stories invite and inspire other stories.

Peer leader 18 reported in the final survey that he now bases all of his meetings around stories. This leader said boys in his group responded with their own stories during meetings and that his stories often prompted questions from boys. Peer leader 12 was the most consistent storyteller of the five leaders whose sessions I observed. He used stories in both of the meetings I attended

and explicitly asked the boys in his group to respond to his story with a story of their own. He would then use one of the boy's stories as a springboard into a new topic.

Conclusion and Implications for Practice

In late February I attended my final peer leadership meeting. I had closed my data gathering phase and had not been to a meeting for several weeks, but I wanted to shoot a bit of video that night. Peer Leader 12 opened his meeting with the group's usual opening exercise while the group dug into the pizza. He effortlessly wove a short story about a recent athletic setback into the start of the meeting. The discussion then turned to several recent events on campus and how boys were preparing for the upcoming exams. The meeting seemed to be winding down, without any major stories shared by either the peer leader or the new boys. I had just turned off my camera when one of the Grade 9 boys said he wanted to tell the group a story. Misreading his academic schedule had led him to miss two classes, leading to demerits, makeup work, and difficult conversations with those teachers. As the story concluded, the peer leader showed wonderful empathy by responding with a story of his own about oversleeping an alarm and missing part of an athletic practice a few weeks earlier. A second new student then jumped in with a story of his own. Three stories — two by new boys — burst forth in about three minutes. In one sense, this exchange was utterly ordinary — it was a group of boys hanging around, eating pizza, and talking about their week. These moments happen all the time at Woodberry. The comfort these new students clearly had with each other and the trust that they could share an embarrassing story without fear of ridicule, however, presented a night and day contrast with their first group meeting, which I'd observed six months earlier.

It is clear that stories are a prominent form of connection-building at Woodberry. Given the call of our school's vision statement for Woodberry Forest to graduate men equipped with empathy and curiosity, and given our strong focus on long-standing traditions that deeply shape the school's culture, this should come as no surprise. Stories build connections across a wide range of relationships — between old boys and new boys, between alumni and current students, or amongst the faculty. Stories are clearly part of the Woodberry experience, whether they are told late at night on dorm or in the context of a peer leadership program. This action research project gave Grade 11 boys the courage and capabilities to share their stories with the Grade 9

new boys under their care. It also helped them build storytelling into a habit, both for themselves and for the new boys. And as they have in so many communities over so many years, stories in the Woodberry peer leadership program built a sense of connection for new boys.

A strong storytelling culture already existed at Woodberry before this project and stories are a currency we use in the school to build relationships. Stories are clearly part of the Woodberry experience, whether they are told late at night on dorm or in the context of a peer leadership program. This action research project gave Grade 11 boys the courage and capabilities to share their stories with the Grade 9 new boys under their care. It also helped them build storytelling into a habit, both for themselves and for the new boys.

An area for further exploration is whether or not the peer leaders, having practiced delivering stories, were good listeners and able to deliver an empathetic response when a story was shared with them. The survey of Grade 9 boys found that 16 of the 17 boys completing a survey remembered their peer leader telling a story. A future project could explore how well the Grade 9 boys remembered the stories used by peer leaders and how those boys took the lessons shared and put them to use. As they have in so many communities over so many years, stories in the Woodberry peer leadership program built a sense of connection for new boys. Future projects might seek to study other key aspects of storytelling at Woodberry and whether the training given to peer leaders should be extended to prefects, other student leaders, or faculty members. When conducting my training with peer leaders in future years, I plan to help them understand how their work and their storytelling fits into the broader context of stories told at Woodberry.

Reflection

My research project involved jumping into a program, our Peer Leadership Council, I had previously observed from a distance. Because the project wasn't based in my classroom or daily work, I worried often about gathering enough data. And because this project didn't tie into a class or academic expectation, I had to ask, humbly and frequently, for our already busy students to fill out my surveys and participate in my research. I'm grateful they did.

I'm thankful for the continued personal and professional support I receive from Woodberry Forest School, particularly from Headmaster Byron Hulsey, who allowed me to take on this project — with all the costs and time commitments it entailed — even though it fell outside my core professional duties and responsibilities. Matt Boesen works tirelessly to advance a culture of research and inquiry among Woodberry faculty; I'm grateful for his encouragement to submit a research proposal. Nolan LaVoie was the action research trailblazer at Woodberry, and my path was much easier because of his work and advice. The IBSC has built a wonderful community around action research that's been fostered by leaders like Trish Cislak. I'm grateful to Trish for all of her suggestions, edits, and Skype calls. I've also loved getting to know the wonderful researchers in my team and talking to them across five countries.

Ryan Alexander, our director of residential life, mentors the Peer Leadership Council at Woodberry. He was gracious and supportive as I intruded on his program over the past year, generously giving up meeting time so I could work with the peer leaders. This project couldn't have gone forward without his blessing and support. Finally, thank you to the peer leaders and new boys who welcomed me into their meetings, gave me slices of pizza, and were wonderful at pretending I wasn't there. I've learned a lot from you all.

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APPENDIX A: PEER LEADER FIRST SURVEY

Geiger Action Research - PLC start of year survey

Dear PLC Leaders, Thank you again for your work in support of the school, and for working with me on my action research project. This short survey is designed to take about five minutes... I plan to administer very similar surveys again after the first marking period and at the end of the fall trimester to understand how storytelling is (or is not) helping you in your work as we go through the fall. I will be at your Sunday evening message to answer any questions you have and to serve as a resource if you want to chat a bit about storytelling. -- Mr. Geiger

* Required

1. What is your name? *

2. In your first two PLC meetings, did you use a story -- whether a personal anecdote or one about a friend or that you'd heard in the past -- to illustrate the information you were sharing with the new boys? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes Skip to question 3.

No Skip to question 6.

Results of your storytelling

Since you said "yes" to the question about using a story in your first few meetings, I'd love to know more about your experience.

3. What issue or topic did you tell a story about? *

4. Did you find the story effective? If yes, how so? If not, any ideas why not? Write as much or as little as you want. *

5. What happened after your story? (i.e. did boys ask questions? Did they share a story of their own? Did you move on to a new topic? Something else?)

Skip to question 8.

Leaders who have not used a story

Since you said "no" to the question about using a story in your first few meetings, I'd love to know more about that.

6. Do you plan to try out storytelling during an upcoming PLC meeting? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

7. Please share a bit about why you have not used a storytelling method so far or why you might not plan to in an upcoming meeting.

Your comfort level with stories

8. On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable are you using stories in your PLC meetings or when working 1-on-1 with a boy. 1 is very uncomfortable, 3 is "sort of comfortable," 5 is very comfortable. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very uncomfortable using stories	<input type="radio"/>	Very comfortable using stories				

9. Please share any other comments or feedback you have about storytelling, our initial training session, or ask any questions you'd like me to address with you one-on-one.

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APPENDIX B: PEER LEADER MID-TERM SURVEY

Geiger Action Research - PLC mid-term survey

Dear PLC Leaders, Thank you again for your work in support of the school, and for working with me on my action research project. This is the second of three surveys I will conduct. Like the first one, it should take about five minutes... These help me understand how storytelling is (or is not) helping you in your work as we go through the fall. Please email me if you have any questions. -- Mr. Geiger

* Required

1. What is your name? *

2. Have you used a story at a PLC meeting this year? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes Skip to question 3.

No Skip to question 8.

Results of your storytelling

Since you said "yes" to the question about using a story in your meetings, I'd love to know more about your experience.

3. Please list as many of the issues or topics that you can remember using a story to cover... these can be "big" topics like the Honor System or "smaller" topics like room cleanliness... any time you used a story and remember doing so, please list it. *

4. Are there certain topics that you found it was easy to cover with a story? *

5. Are there certain topics that did not work well to cover with a story? If so, please list them.

6. What happens after you share a story? (Please check what happens most frequently)

Check all that apply.

- A new boy responds to my story with a story about his own experiences.
- A boy asks questions about my story to get more information.
- Nobody says anything.
- A boy changes the topic with a question or statement about something not related to my story.
- Other: _____

7. Do you notice boys sharing stories with you and the rest of the group more than they did at the start of the school year?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Skip to question 10.

Leaders who have not used a story

Since you said "no" to the question about using a story in your meetings, I'd love to know more about that.

8. Do you plan to try out storytelling during an upcoming PLC meeting? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

9. Please share a bit about why you have not used a storytelling method so far or why you might not plan to in an upcoming meeting.

Your comfort level with stories

10. At your August PLC training, the group described what a great PLC meeting looks like. Words given included: conversation, laughter, engagement, laid-back, social, guidance, and stories. Do you think sharing stories supports these other factors? If yes, how do you think it does this? If no, why do you think they do not? *

11. On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable are you using stories in your PLC meetings or when working 1-on-1 with a boy. 1 is "very uncomfortable," 3 is "sort of comfortable," 5 is "very comfortable." *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very uncomfortable using stories	<input type="radio"/>	Very comfortable using stories				

12. Please share any other comments or feedback you have about storytelling, our initial training session in August, or any of my follow up visits and conversations with you. Please let me know if there's anything else about stories or about PLC meetings you think I should know as I continue my research.

APPENDIX C: PEER LEADER FINAL SURVEY

Geiger Action Research - PLC final survey

Dear PLC Leaders, Thank you again for your work in support of the school, and for working with me on my action research project. This will be the final survey. I will do a few final observations and interviews in January before writing my reports in January and February. Please email me if you have any questions. - Mr. Geiger

* Required

1. What is your name? *

2. Have you used a story at a PLC meeting this year? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes Skip to question 3.

No Skip to question 8.

Results of your storytelling

Since you said "yes" to the question about using a story in your meetings, I'd love to know more about your experience.

3. Please list as many of the issues or topics that you can remember using a story to cover... these can be "big" topics like the Honor System or "smaller" topics like room cleanliness... any time you used a story and remember doing so, please list it. *

4. Are there certain topics that you found it was easy to cover with a story? *

5. Are there certain topics that did not work well for a story? If so, please list them.

6. What happens after you share a story? (Please check what happens most frequently)

Check all that apply.

- A new boy responds to my story with a story about his own experiences.
- A boy asks questions about my story to get more information.
- Nobody says anything.
- A boy changes the topic with a question or statement about something not related to my story.
- Other: _____

7. Do you notice boys sharing stories with you and the rest of the group more than they did at the start of the school year?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Skip to question 10.

Leaders who have not used a story

Since you said "no" to the question about using a story in your meetings, I'd love to know more about that.

8. Do you plan to try out storytelling during a PLC meeting? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

9. Please share a bit about why you have not used a storytelling method so far or why you might not plan to in an upcoming meeting.

Your comfort level with stories

10. At your August PLC training, the group described what a great PLC meeting looks like. Words given included: conversation, laughter, engagement, laid-back, social, guidance, and stories. Do you think sharing stories supports these other factors? If yes, how do you think it does this? If no, why do you think they do not? *

11. On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable are you using stories in your PLC meetings or when working 1-on-1 with a boy. 1 is "very uncomfortable," 3 is "sort of comfortable," 5 is "very comfortable." *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very uncomfortable using stories	<input type="radio"/>	Very comfortable using stories				

12. On a scale of 1 to 5, did the August training make you less likely or more likely to use stories in your PLC meetings. 1 is "far less likely," 3 is "no change either way," 5 is "far more likely." *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Far less likely to use stories	<input type="radio"/>	Far more likely to use stories				

13. Do you think Woodberry boys are comfortable sharing "their" story with each other? Why or why not? *

14. Please share any other comments or feedback you have about storytelling, our initial training session in August, or any of my follow up visits and conversations with you. Please let me know if there's anything else about stories or about PLC meetings you think I should know as I continue my research.

APPENDIX D: GRADE NINE SURVEY ABOUT PEER LEADERS

Freshmen PLC Survey - Action Research

Dear Third Formers,

You may remember that I visited your PLC group one or two times this year as part of a research project I'm doing. My project explores how storytelling can be used in our PLC system to help new boys better understand important topics about life at Woodberry. Please fill out this short survey to help me with my project.

* Required

1. What are your first and last name? *

2. What is your peer leader's name? *

3. Do you remember your peer leader telling you a story during a meeting this year? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

4. Are there any topics that you remember him using a story to discuss with you? If so, what were those topics? *

5. Did hearing stories from your peer leader about key things at Woodberry make it easier to understand life here? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

I'm not sure

6. Who else has told you stories about life at Woodberry since you arrived. Please select any/all that have done so. *

Check all that apply.

- Prefects
 - Prefect roommates
 - Old boys in your advisee group
 - Other old boys (who aren't in the categories above)
 - Your Advisor
 - Teachers/coaches
 - Other: _____
-

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Appendix E: Peer Leadership Council Values

Set by Peer Leadership Council during August 2018 orientation and training sessions.

What does a great PLC meeting look like?

Conversation, Laughter, Engagement, Laid-back, Stories, Social, Guidance

Traits of a great PLC leader

Caring, Listening, Charismatic, Involved, Invested, Sensitive, Genuine, Aware, Honest, Enthusiastic, Reliable, Friendly, Available, Supportive, Chill-esque

Appendix F: Essential Guidelines for Being a Woodberry Boy

Written anonymously by members of the Class of 2018 before their graduation.

Honor at Woodberry Forest is not something you memorize or master completely in your time at the school. It is respect for yourself and others. Honor is your way of life on the field, in the classroom, on dorm, and anytime you represent the school. Honor is more than not cheating on a test, or lying to a teacher. Although those cases are very important and not tolerated, honor at Woodberry should become your norm and become second nature to you. For example, if the referee in your football game asked if you made a derogatory comment towards a visiting player, you would immediately own up to the claim, not because you have to, but because it's the right thing to do. Honor at Woodberry is respect, and it makes the school a better place for everyone to live, learn, and work.

To live with honor and respect, your everyday behavior should encompass:

1. Holding the door for other members of the community
2. Using good manners around the faculty, staff, parents, and school guests
3. Respecting your peers and their belongings
4. Being sociable, not allowing technology to deter from face-to-face relationships
5. Being on time
6. Doing every task to the best of your ability
7. Having your brothers' back always, and investing in the brotherhood
8. Taking care of the little things in everyday life
9. Utilizing the resources here in academics, athletics, and the arts
10. Creating a strong foundation in your first year
11. Choosing to step out of your comfort zone to try something new

These norms are by no means the only guidelines to your time at the school; however, they certainly will help invigorate your experience here at Woodberry Forest.

Sincerely,

Your brothers from the Class of 2018