

WRITERS CONTEST

Educator and Parent Guide



Introduction

This guide provides children with a series of simple steps they can follow to produce a story and accompanying illustrations. Even young children are capable of elaborating, revising, and editing their writing. Showing them how to sharpen these skills helps build confidence and prepares them for future writing experiences.



Illustrating their books allows youngsters to develop their own personal style and to express their ideas and feelings while creatively enhancing the meaning of their work.

The guide also provides educators, parents, and caregivers with steps they can take to help children create a quality story.



Credits

This guide was adapted from the Maine Public Broadcasting Network Reading Rainbow Young Writers & Illustrators Contest Guide

How to Write a Story

Lacey Kellett

Illustrations - Telling a Story with Pictures

Sandra Brennan

Image Credits:

The Accidental Hero

Written and Illustrated by Acacia W.

Blue Moon

Written and Illustrated by Tina R.

Meeting Common Core Writing Standards

KINDERGARTEN

Text Types and Purposes:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.2](#)

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.3](#)

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.5](#)

With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.6](#)

With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

GRADE 3

Text Types and Purposes:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3](#)

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.A](#)

Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.B](#)

Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.C](#)

Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.D](#)

Provide a sense of closure.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.4](#)

With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.5](#)

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.6](#)

With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Range of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.10](#)

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.



Image Credit:
Friends Forever
Written and Illustrated by Jacynth A.

GRADE 1

Text Types and Purposes:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.2](#)

Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3](#)

Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.5](#)

With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.6](#)

With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

GRADE 4

Text Types and Purposes:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3](#)

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.A](#)

Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B](#)

Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.C](#)

Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.D](#)

Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.E](#)

Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.4](#)

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.5](#)

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.6](#)

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.9](#)

Range of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.10](#)

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

GRADE 2

Text Types and Purposes:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.2](#)

Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3](#)

Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.5](#)

With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.6](#)

With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

GRADE 5

Text Types and Purposes:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3](#)

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.A](#)

Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.B](#)

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.C](#)

Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.D](#)

Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.E](#)

Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4](#)

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5](#)

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.6](#)

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.

Range of Writing:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.10](#)

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Writing a Story

For the NHPBS KIDS WRITERS CONTEST, children may make up a story, relate a true experience, or write a poem. Younger children may dictate their stories to an adult. In this case, the adult can write or type the final version of the story.

This guide has some suggestions for helping young children who want to enter the contest. Think of the ideas in this guide as a menu to choose from. Your young writer may know exactly what to write about and will dive right in. Or maybe she would like more guidance to help plan out her story.

Once a child has written a story, you will want to review the contest checklist and suggestions for how to revise the story.



Image Credit:
Betty the Storyteller
Written and Illustrated by Olivia D.



Image Credit:
Torin the Timid
Written and Illustrated by Torin

Main Elements of a Story

Setting: When and where the story takes place. Usually the setting comes at the beginning of the story.

Plot: Series of significant events that goes from the beginning, to the middle, then to the end of the story.

Main Character: The person, animal, or thing your story is about. Each character is revealed through physical characteristics and personality traits.

Problem & Resolution: The challenge your character(s) must face and how he, she, or it solves the problem.

Activity 1: Get Ready To Write!

Introduction: Writers often plan a story before they begin to write. Knowing a variety of planning strategies is particularly helpful for beginning writers. An example of a planning strategy is brainstorming (see Activity 2). Before they begin to write, children should understand that it is helpful to make a plan.

Goal: If the child already has a solid idea for a story, he can do some planning and begin writing.

Materials: Lined paper and a pencil.

Share with children: Writing a story is like going on a trip. You need to plan ahead so you will know where and when you are going to start, what you are going to do, and where you are going to end up. Do you have some ideas about what direction you are going to take? Let the writer express what he has in mind. If ready, encourage the child to start. Activity 2 is a great way for children to plan their stories.



Image Credit:
Thanks to Mr. Rutabaga
Written and Illustrated by Emilia S.

Activity 2: Brainstorming

Introduction: Brainstorming is a way of generating ideas. Come up with as many ideas on a given subject as possible, without judging the ideas. Just write down anything that comes to mind. After the list is completed, pick what you consider the best idea. This process is helpful in making decisions about all the aspects of writing from picking a topic to deciding which word best describes an idea. For example: The day was cold. Was it icy, frigid, freezing, chilly, cool, so cold even penguins were shivering? You make a list and the right word for the context will become apparent.

Goal: The child will use brainstorming to come up with a plan for writing a story.

Materials: paper and a pencil and brainstorming worksheets

Share with children: Sometimes it is hard to come up with a plan for your writing. One way writers make up their minds is to brainstorm. Brainstorming is when you come up with lots of ideas that may or may not be useful, but you write them all down anyway. Sometimes a very odd entry on your list turns out to be the best idea of all, and you will recognize it.

As a Class: Have the class develop a main character, setting, plot, and problem and resolution for a story. When they are finished, have each student complete Main Character, Plot, Problem and Resolution, and Setting Worksheets for their own story. Explain that this is just the beginning of their story, and that they may want to change some things once they begin writing, but that having a plan for their story can help them along the way!



Image Credit:
Abby's Magical Pink Cowgirl Boots
Written and Illustrated by Abigail S.

A Matter of Character

What is your character like in the inside and the outside? Use the bubbles marked outside to describe the physical characteristics of your character. What does your character look like, how do they move? Are they short, tall, muscular, fast? Does your character have freckles, a sunny smile, a button nose? In the bubbles marked Inside, describe your character's personality. What is the personality of your character? Is she kind, funny, loyal, smart?

Inside

Outside

Inside

Outside

Inside

Outside

Inside

Outside

You can do this for all of the characters in your story. On the back of this sheet, draw a picture of your main character. Think about how you described your main character when you draw your picture!

The Plot Thickens!

How does your story start? Where does your story start? Who is in your story? What happens in your story? What problems do your characters face? How do they solve those problems? How will your story end? In each of the columns write down some ideas for the beginning, middle, and end of your story.

Beginning

Middle

End

Work It Out!

In the left column, make a list of all the problems (or challenges) you can think of that this character might have. For example, your character may not be a fast runner and must race against someone much faster than he is (Tortoise and the Hare). When you have finished your list, circle the problem you think would be most interesting and challenging for your character to solve. In the right hand column, make a list of all the ways you can think of that might solve this problem. Circle the solution you like the best.

Problems!

Resolutions!

A Perfect Setting!

Think about the possible times (Tuesday afternoon) and places (at the ball game, on a lake in Maine) - when and where your story takes place. Pick one setting you think works the best for your character and problem. What are some good descriptive words for your setting? Write a description of your setting in the top box. Draw a picture of the setting you selected under your description. Use your written description to help you draw your picture.

My Setting

My Story Outline

Character(s)

Plot

Problem

Resolution

Setting

Ready to Go!

Now you have a basic plan. You can begin writing your story for the contest. Start with what happens first, then what happens next until you get to the end.

Activity 3:Revising

Introduction: Once the story is written, the writer needs to read it over to see if anything should be changed and to be sure she has met the standards for the NHPTV KIDS WRITERS CONTEST. The writer will want to look for ways to make her writing be just right for the contest.

Goal: The child has the opportunity to make whatever changes are necessary to feel satisfied with her story and to meet the rules of the contest.

Good Stories Include:

Organization: A clear beginning, middle, and ending.

Topic Development: Enough information to satisfy the reader's questions.

Detail: Descriptive language helps develop and enhance the writing.
(Example: brown squirrels chattering overhead.)

Word Choice: Carefully chosen words provide clarity to expression.
(Example: path, road, highway).

Sentence Structure: A variety of sentence types and lengths adds to the flow of the story.

Materials: Goldilocks and the Three Bears, if you have a copy.

Share with children: Now that you have written your first draft, how can you make your story "just right?" Can you retell the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears?" (Listen to the retelling or read/tell the story to the writer.) When you are revising your own story, keep in mind the idea that you don't want it to be too anything, but "just right." How can you get your story "just right?"

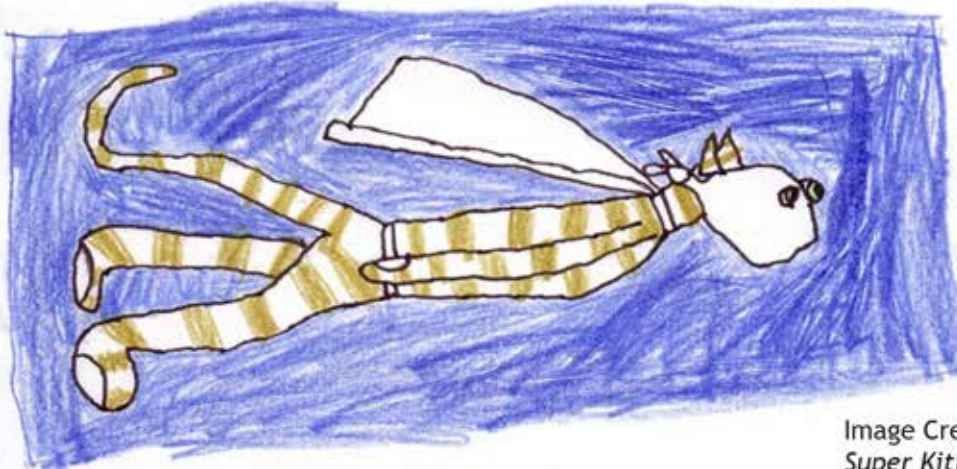


Image Credit:
Super Kitty's First Adventure
Written and Illustrated by Aaron D.

Organization - Beginning, Middle, and End

How do you get your storyline “just right?”

What if the storyteller wrote the following?

1. Goldilocks fell asleep in baby bear’s bed. When the bears came home they were very surprised to find her there. When she woke up she was so scared she ran screaming from the house.

OR

2. Goldilocks entered the empty house and finding the breakfast on the table, she helped herself. Next she tried out the chairs in the living room and after breaking baby bear’s chair, she went up to the bedroom and took a nap in baby bear’s bed. When Goldilocks was awakened by the bears she was so frightened she ran from the cottage and never ever went into a stranger’s house again.

The storyteller got it “just right” in the second example by showing what happened in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end.

Topic Development

Share with children: Since your story can only be a certain number of words, depending on your grade, you don’t want your story to be too long or too short. How do you get the length “just right” for the NHPTV KIDS WRITERS CONTEST? How much you decide to include in your story and how much do the details you included affect the length of your story? Do you need to add more detail, or do you need to take out some details?

How do you get the amount of information in your story “just right?” What if the storyteller wrote the following?

When Goldilocks goes into the bears’ home she tries out their food, their chairs, and their beds. What if she also tried on their clothes, read their books, and played some musical instruments. Would these last events help the story? Would they make the story too long?

What if Goldilocks only tried out their beds? Would that make the story too short?

But the storyteller got it “just right.” There was enough information, but not too much. Read through your story. Have you answered all of the reader’s questions? Did you include too much? Do you have enough information? What can you take out? What can you add?

Detail

How do you get detail “just right?” What if the storyteller wrote the following?

1. Goldilocks sat in the Papa Bear’s chair. It was too hard.

OR

2. Goldilocks looked around the bears’ cozy living room. She thought the wallpaper with the roses was very pretty. Then she saw the big red chair and thought that would be such a comfortable place to rest after her long walk in the woods. She had to scramble to climb up on the chair because it seemed big enough for a giant and she was only a little girl. Still she was pleased to get herself settled into its cushions. Very soon she found that the big cushion was quite stiff and the covering somewhat rough against her skin. This chair was too hard she thought.

OR

3. Goldilocks looked around the cozy room and ran over to the biggest chair. It was red and inviting. She scrambled up and settled down in its cushions. It surprised her how stiff and uncomfortable it was. “This chair is too hard,” she pouted.

In example number three, the storyteller got it just right by having enough detail, but not too much or too little.

Share with children: *For the NHPTV KIDS WRITERS CONTEST, your story has to be a certain length.*

If your story is too short, look at example number two above. The storyteller added a lot of detail when describing the chair. If you like, try this exercise. Start off with a straight-forward sentence like. “She went across the bridge.” Keep adding descriptive language until you have something like, “Wrapped in her bright red woolen cape, Sarah skipped happily across the old wooden bridge.”

If your story is a little too long, are there any details you could leave out? What did the storyteller do to make the third example shorter than the second?

Image Credit:
The Not So Wild Bear
Written and Illustrated by Abby S.



Word Choice

How do you get the word choice “just right?” What if the storyteller wrote the following?

1. Goldilocks walked through the woods. She found a house in a clearing.

OR

2. Goldilocks skipped down the path that led through the tall pines. She discovered a dwelling in a meadow.

Share with children: *The storyteller got it “just right” by picking words that were specific and clear. Let’s go back and compare the words the storyteller chose in each example. Help them underline or point out “walked” and “skipped,” “woods” and “the tall pines,” “found” and “discovered.” How do the words in the second example help to describe the setting and action in the story? Let’s go back and read through your story. Are there words that you could replace with more specific or descriptive words that would make the story even better?*

Sentence Structure

How do you get the flow of sentences “just right?” What if the storyteller wrote the following?

1. Goldilocks walked down the road. Goldilocks saw a house. Goldilocks knocked on the door. No one answered. Goldilocks opened the door. Goldilocks went in.

OR

2. Goldilocks walked down the road and saw a house. She knocked on the door, but since no one answered, she opened the door and went in.

Share with children: In example number two, the storyteller got it “just right” by combining some of the thoughts into one sentence. The storyteller did not want to use too many sentences that were the same length.

Mechanics

Don’t forget to proofread for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization!

Activity 4: ILLUSTRATIONS

Telling a Story with Pictures

Introduction: Young children can use many materials and different techniques to create the illustrations in their book. The NHPTV KIDS WRITERS CONTEST rules state that there must be at least five original, clear and colorful illustrations in the finished work. The art can be located on the same page as the text or on a page by itself. Only one side of the paper can be used and each page must be numbered on the back.

Goal: The book will feature five or more illustrations that enhance the text of the story.

Before You Begin: Tips for Adults

- Provide work space that allows for creative “messes.” Make sure the children are comfortable and that the space is well lit.
- Try materials out ahead of time to make sure they work.
- Think about the type of paper the children will be working on. The surface affects how the art material works. Smooth papers will give a different effect than papers with “tooth,” such as watercolor paper.

Materials: The following is a list of art materials children may consider using:

- Crayons
- Colored pencils
- Craypas (oil pastels for children)
- Colored chalk (dipped in water)
- Variety of fabrics
- Watercolor paints
- Tempera paints
- Markers
- Variety of papers (construction paper, tissue paper, magazines, wallpaper, rice paper, brown paper bags, gift wrap)



Image Credit:
There is a Time ...The Biography of Ziggy
Written and Illustrated by Eden M.

Share with children: *You can show the feelings of main characters by the way you draw their face, body, and what colors you use. First, decide what parts of the story you'd like to illustrate. Think about some action that happens in your story. What are your characters doing? What does the setting look like? As you decide what to illustrate, use your imagination and try to visualize the picture in your head. Identify some things that are in the scene.*

Additional suggestions for older children

- **POINT OF VIEW** is important to an artist. An illustration can be drawn from a bird's eye view, a mouse eye view, close-up, or far away.
- **PERSPECTIVE** is showing distance. Far away things look small, close up things are big and near the bottom of the paper.
- **RESEARCH AND OBSERVATION** are important steps for artists in getting details right. Encourage children study examples of what they will be drawing.

Creating the Illustrations

If you like, make a rough sketch of your idea with pencil on practice paper the same size as your final drawing. A "rough sketch" is a quick drawing and may only take a few minutes to do. Once your rough sketch is done, review the materials list and decide what type of materials would be best for your illustration. You might try using a combination of materials.

If you don't need to practice, go ahead and draw your illustration on the final paper using pencil so you can erase if needed. Draw carefully and add lots of details. Use the whole "illustration" space you have selected and don't forget the background.

At this point, you can go over your pencil lines with a black Sharpie marker to outline your image then finish with color or just color in your pencil drawing.

TIP: If you want to show texture of various kinds, use different types of lines - thick, thin, dark, light, straight, curvy, zigzag, or crosshatching. For thicker texture, add tissue, fabric, yarn, or ribbon.



Image Credit:
A Week in the Life of a Paper Doll
Written and Illustrated by Brooke

Suggestions for Using Art Materials

Have a variety of materials available for children to use. You may want to demonstrate some of the following ideas.

- Use crayons in various ways - use the side for light colors and/or press hard with the end for bold colors.
- Try coloring with crayons or Craypas for the main characters and then add watercolor paints or tempera for the background.
- TIP: Cool colors (blues and greens) make you feel cool, calm, relaxed or sometimes sad. Warm colors (reds, oranges, and yellows) make you feel warm, bright, wild, and loud. Blend new colors when using colored pencils, Craypas, chalk, or even crayons!
- Dip colored chalk in a very small amount of water and then draw it is more like painting! When dry, spray with hair spray to keep from smudging.
- Try making the complete picture out of cut papers—construction paper, newspaper, brown bags, wrapping paper, wallpaper remnants, tissue paper, etc. Cut your shapes then glue them onto the page.
- Try making a complete picture out of fabric. Cut your fabric shapes and glue them to the page. Add details by using yarn, ribbon or glitter.
- Try a tissue collage - apply watered down white glue with a paint brush to background paper, place torn or cut pieces of tissue onto glued areas. Overlapped pieces create new colors.



Image Credit:

Luna-Tic

Written and Illustrated by Gwyneth W.

NHPBS KIDS WRITERS CONTEST

Checklist

Introduction: The following checklist will help children assess whether or not their story and art adhere to the contest rules.

Share with children: *Let's make sure your story meets all the guidelines for the contest.*

Word Count

Word Count includes "a," "an," and "the" in your story, but not words on non-story pages such as the title page or the words included in an illustration.

- If you are in kindergarten or first grade, your story needs to be between 50-200 words.
 - If you are in second or third grade, your story needs to be between 100-350 words.
 - If you are in fourth or fifth grade, your story needs to be between 150-500 words
-
- If your story is too short or too long, go back to the Revision Section and look at "Topic Development" and "Detail."

Illustrations

- Does your story include at least five original, clear and colorful illustrations ?

Format

- Are your story and accompanying illustrations on one side of the paper?
- Have you numbered the back of each page? The back of each page must be blank EXCEPT for the page number.
- Have you printed your story clearly in ink or pencil or typed it? Did you check your spelling and grammar? (Younger children may dictate their stories to an adult.)

Entry Form

- Is the entry form neatly filled out and does it have all the needed signatures?
- Entry forms: nhpbs.org/kidswrite, or contact Susan Adams at 603-868-4455 or at sadams@nhpbs.org