THEATRE TRAINING TRACK 2013

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When I hear, I forget.
When I hear and see, I remember.
When I hear, see, and do, I understand.
When I hear, see, do, and add emotion, I gain wisdom.

- *Chinese Proverb*

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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

As a result of participating in this workshop:

Teachers will KNOW

- The fundamentals of integrating theatre into curriculum
- The basics of tableaux, playwriting and improvisation
- Several theatre warmup games that can be adapted to any age level

Teachers will BE ABLE TO

- Lead their students in creating tableaux, scripting short scenes, and performing improvised work
- Create theatre-integrated lesson plans using workshop strategies
- Connect tableaux, scriptwriting, and improv back to their grade and content areas

Teachers will APPRECIATE

- How the skills needed to be an actor overlap with core curriculum areas
- The value of kinesthetic, imagination-based curriculum strategies

Arts Integration is
an **APPROACH** to **TEACHING**
in which students
construct and demonstrate
UNDERSTANDING
through an
ART FORM.

Students engage in a
CREATIVE PROCESS
which **CONNECTS** an
art form and another subject area
and meets
EVOLVING OBJECTIVES
in both.

Arts Integration definition from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

THEATRE WARMUPS

| Actor's Neutral |

This strategy is an effective way to quickly and efficiently regain classroom focus if students are working independently or with partners. When showcasing this strategy to students, model the "Actor's Neutral" pose that they should assume.

STEPS	INSTRUCTIONS
1	Teacher calls out "Actor's Neutral", immediately followed by two claps.
2	Upon hearing "Actor's Neutral", students immediately focus in and clap along with the Teacher's claps.
3	Students assume the "Actor's Netutral" pose – mouths are closed, hands are their sides, and eyes are on the teacher.
(4)	The Teacher can help this strategy remain effective by treating it as a challenge in itself – publicly point out which students are showcasing an appropriate Actor's Neutral.

| Bippety Bippety Bop |

An excellent ice breaker and appropriate for any grade level. This game is an effective warmup that develops numerous theatre skills simultaneously: vocal depth and projection, physical control, and mental acuity.

NOTE: This game must be played in a circle configuration. If your classroom does not allow for an obvious circle configuration, try one of these options: have the students move their desks to create space in the center as part of the activity – ie: with complete control and in slow motion. If this is impractical for your room, try having the students create a circle around the desks in the room so that they are standing on the perimeter. Have the Leader standing in the middle of the circle.

STEPS	INSTRUCTIONS
1	Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
2	Teacher asks students to form a circle without speaking, while the Teacher counts down from 15.
3	Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral and adjusts the circle as needed.
4	Teacher steps into the center of the circle and assumes the role of Leader. The Leader has 2 game pieces available for the start of the game. He/She can:

	• Go up to someone in the circle and say "Bippety Bippety Bop". If the Leader says this, the student spoken to must say Bop before the Leader can finish the phrase. If the student cannot, then he switches in and becomes the Leader. • Go up to someone in the circle and say "Bop". If this is said, the student spoken to must not say anything. If she makes a noise, she must switch in and become the Leader
5	The Leader begins the game with the above two options, acting as mediator if there is an argument.
6	Once the students have become comfortable with the game, the Teacher returns to the center of the circle as the Leader, and can play the following game pieces: • Go up to someone in the circle and say "Airplane". If this is said, the student spoken to must put both hands over their eyes in the shape of goggles, while the students on either side create the wings of the airplane. All 3 students must make a buzzing airplane sound. All of this must be completed while the Leader counts to 10 as quickly as possible. • Go up to someone in the circle and say "Elephant". If this is said, the student spoken to must twist their arms into the shape of a trunk while the students on either side create the ears. All 3 students must create the elephant sound. All of this must be completed while the Leader counts to 10 as quickly as possible.
7	Continue to play the game several times to build up theater skills. Once students have become comfortable with the game, ask them to create their own elements to add to the game. Past examples from classes have included "Ninja", "Werewolf", and "Magical Unicorn".

→ **CURRICULUM CONNECTION** → Try using this game as a vocabulary review to assess student understanding of key terms. Students can create a game piece around individual vocabulary words, such as "mammal" or "irony". Agree on a game piece for each word as a class, and then test for student understanding by playing the game. The humor and quick thinking will help cement the words in students' minds. → → →

A GAME PIECE I COULD CREATE FOR MY CLASS: _____

THE CLASS ACTS IT OUT BY:_____

_____

_____.

| Statues |

Statues is a great game for introducing students to the use of theatre techniques in the classroom. It allows students to begin experimenting with performing while fostering teamwork and laying the foundation for creating tableaux.

STEPS	INSTRUCTIONS
1	Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
2	The Teacher lays out the ground rules for the students: Throughout the activity, students should not need to speak above a whisper.
3	The Teacher should ask for examples of emotions that people experience. As students raise their hand with examples, the entire class should act out each emotion as it is called out. Encourage students to show off the emotion using their whole bodies.
4	Have students stand and begin walking silently around the room. The Teacher counts to five. When the teacher reaches 'five', the students make eye contact and give a high five to the person closest to them. This person becomes their partner. Students should hold onto their partner.
5	The Teacher settles any partnering issues, and asks all students, still holding their partner's hand, to face the teacher. The teacher asks the person on the right to raise their right hand – this is person A. The teacher asks the person on the left to raise their left hand – this is person B.
6	The Teacher explains, "**Person A is the sculptor, a person who molds clay into whatever shape they want to create. Person B is the clay. When I say go, Person A will mold Person B into a (happy – or sad, or mad, etc.) statue. Person B, it's your job to help Person A by freezing however Person A wants you to. Is everyone ready? Ok, go.**"
7	Give the students approximately one minute to complete this, and then ask everyone to freeze. Explain to the students, "**Person B will remain frozen in the shape of their statue. Everyone who is Person A may walk around the room and view the other statues, without talking. Ready, go.**"
8	Once the viewing is complete, have the students return to their partners, and switch roles (Person A becomes the clay, and Person B the sculptor). Repeat steps 5 and 6.

→ **CURRICULUM CONNECTION** → Try using this game as an assessment tool for student grasp of a complicated concept. Ask students to create sculptures around a topic like "The Rule of Law", and then to explain their sculpture once it has been created. Assess for understanding. → → →

| Five-Headed Story Monster |

This strategy is useful to help students overcome any reluctance they might have towards jumping into a writing project. It encourages quick thinking, creativity, and focus. This can be useful as a warmup or as a deeper activity once students have learned how to create tableaux.

STEPS	INSTRUCTIONS
1	Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
2	Teacher asks for five students to come up and stand in a line onstage.
3	The Teacher introduces a topic for the sentence the "Monster" will create. The sentence must make sense grammatically, and should be fairly short.
4	When the Teacher says go, one by one each of the students contributes one word towards the creation of a sentence.
(5)	The Teacher says the sentence back to the "Monster", and then counts down from 20 as the 5 students immediately create a tableaux.
(6)	Once the students have created their tableaux, the Teacher counts down from 3 and claps her hands. When this happens, each student in the tableau says the sentence they have just created together.
(7)	Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral
(8)	The Teacher should assess the sentence and tableaux for understanding – coach the students to challenge themselves if their grammar or the sentence content is incorrect.

→ **CURRICULUM CONNECTION** → You can connect this game to any curriculum area. You could asks students to create a sentence around "Igneous rocks" (8th grade science), "Religion in the 13 colonies" (5th grade social studies), or "What happens on certain days of the week" (Kindergarten math).

This game really shines in ELA and can be used to assess punctuation and grammar using the entire class. For instance, in 2nd grade you could ask students to create an interrogative sentence, and make sure the tableaux shows that the students know what that means. In middle school ELA, you can ask students to create a sentence with primary and secondary details contained within it. → → →

|Freeze Tap|

This activity is a great warmup for any class that is focusing on improv.

STEPS	INSTRUCTIONS
1	Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
2	Ask for two students to come up onstage.
3	Once the students are onstage, have the audience decide the circumstances of the scene: WHO are the characters onstage, WHERE are they, and WHAT are they doing/what is the storyline?
4	Once the details have been set, say "Action" and allow the scene to begin. You may need to coach the students at first. Encourage students to be as physically expressive as possible.
5	At any point, a student in the audience can yell out "FREEZE". When this happens, that student goes up onstage and taps one of the characters on the shoulder. The new actor then **gets into the exact same position** as the person he/she tapped out.
6	Once the new actor is in position, he/she **begins a brand new scene** with no connection to the previous scene and the cycle continues.
(7)	Once students have become comfortable with the rules of the game, encourage them to improvise scenes utilizing their science content knowledge. For instance, if studying magnets, have the students think of scenes that in some way involve the use of magnets. Coaching is important – encourage students to use their science vocabulary correctly.

TABLEAUX

Tableau is a French word meaning 'picture'. In a tableau, one or more actors create a frozen scene around a given prompt. Tableaux look like a 'slice of life' – as if a real-life moment has been frozen in time and presented to the audience.

Why Use Tableaux in the Classroom?

For students, the goal of a tableau is to demonstrate their understanding of the class subject matter or content using their physical position. Teachers can use student tableaux to give students a kinesthetic and creative link to what they are learning. Teachers can also utilize tableaux as an assessment tool – do students understand the material well enough to showcase it to the class?

There are several different ways to use a tableau. When curriculum is first being introduced, teachers can use '**Individual Tableaux'**. This enables students to try out a concept physically, forging additional connections in the brain, and allows teachers to see what is being understood.

| Individual Tableaux |

STEPS	INSTRUCTIONS
1	Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
2	The Teacher explains what subject matter each student's tableau will involve.
3	The Teacher asks students to take 20 seconds to think about how they can create a tableau, or frozen picture, while standing just behind their desks.
4	The Teacher asks students to stand behind their desks.
5	The Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
6	The Teacher counts down from 3 and claps his hands. Students freeze in their Individual Tableaux.
7	The Teacher can interview individual frozen students to assess understanding.

| Group Tableaux |

STEPS	INSTRUCTIONS
1	Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
2	The Teacher explains what subject matter each group's tableau will involve.
3	Students are broken into groups (4 is a good number) and directed to an area of the room to work in.
4	The Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
5	Ask each group member to think silently about what the tableaux could look like.
6	The Teacher asks the groups to take 1 minute to discuss what the tableaux should look like. Students are encouraged to work at Level 1 (a whisper).
7	The Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
8	Ask each group to now create their tableaux, again working no louder than level 1. Remind students that the scenes are frozen, and that once they are in position onstage they do not move. Give them approximately 1 minute to complete this.
9	The Teacher asks for Actor's Neutral.
10	Ask students to return to their desks and sit down.
11	Call up Groups one by one to present their tableaux. Encourage the audience to make guesses about what they are seeing and why it was included in the tableaux.

Criteria for Feedback on Tableaux

When giving feedback on student work, encourage improvement in the following areas, as each will deepen understanding and retention:

PHYSICAL LEVELS: Encourage students to explore different physical levels, with some low against the ground, and others stretched up high.

EXPRESSION: Remind students that they are acting with their entire bodies, especially their faces.

TEAMWORK: Are the students all in the same scene together? Encourage them to include one another, and to work together to create a dynamic scene onstage.

SCRIPTING

Scripting refers to a short, informal way of writing brief scenes. It focuses on character and dialogue, and is less involved than full-on playwriting, although it uses the same structure. Scripting always answers the questions WHO? and WHAT HAPPENS?

Why Use Scripting in the Classroom?

Scripting offers students the opportunity to receive and process knowledge in a creative way. Students have the opportunity to express themselves and to synthesize their knowledge for presentation.

Scripting is, simply, writing a short script or scene on a given subject matter. When first teaching this strategy, it is advisable to use pairs of students, and not to skip ahead to bigger groups until students are familiar with writing in the script format.

| Scripting: Format |

When teaching scripting, the first thing to do is show students the format of a script. Explain that scripts are records of what people will say and do onstage.

A properly formatted script looks like this:

<div align="center">THE BOOK</div>

KYRA: Give me the book.

STEVEN: No.

(KYRA reaches for the book. STEVEN keeps it out of her reach)

KYRA: Please give me the book. Now!

STEVEN: I can't do that.

KYRA: I want the book.

(STEVEN takes a step back)

STEVEN: This book is mine. OK?

KYRA: Give me the book!

In a properly formatted script:

The TITLE of the scene is in CAPS and <u>underlined</u> at the top of the page.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em; text-align:center;">

THE BOOK

</div>

CHARACTER NAMES are capitalized, followed by a colon. Writers should skip a line between character's lines. Students do not read the character names - they only read the text after the colon.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

KYRA: Give me the book.

STEVEN: No.

</div>

STAGE DIRECTIONS are put in parentheses. STAGE DIRECTIONS are not read out loud, they simply indicate what the actors should do in that moment. If the scripting is being done a computer, STAGE DIRECTIONS should be in *italics*.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

(KYRA reaches for the book. STEVEN keeps it out of her reach)

</div>

| Scripting: Content |

Step 1:
The Teacher should introduce the subject matter that the scripts will be about. It should not be too broad: "The American Revolution" is too broad, for instance. It is much more effective to give a specific subject matter to each group: "John and Abigail Adams". For best results, give each group a specific topic rather than giving them too much leeway, especially at first.

The Teacher can provide inspiration material for Scripting from multiple sources: the material could be paragraphs from a textbook, a math problem, or a painting.

Step 2:
When Scripting, the first step for each student group is to create characters – the **WHO**. Because each student should be expected to be a participant in each scene, each character should expect to have lines. What characters to create is up to the students.

Depending on the assignment and the source material, these can be fictional or nonfiction characters. Give each group about 2 minutes of discussion time to decide on characters for their script.

Step 3:
The next step for students is to decide **WHAT HAPPENS**. Sometimes as the Teacher you will give each group this information. Give each group about 2 minutes of discussion time to decide on what will happen

(Step 2-3:)
One excellent strategy for helping students decide on a WHO and WHAT HAPPENS for their scripts is to have each group create tableaux to start off. Ask them to create the tableau and then write a script that goes along with it.

Step 4:
Before students begin writing, remind them of two things.

The first is their learning objective – if your objective is for them to write a historically accurate play showcasing certain facts from their textbooks, be sure to make that clear.

The second thing to remind students is to keep their characters truthful – ie: what would these people REALLY say and do in the circumstances you are putting them in?

Step 5:
Begin writing! Circulate in the room, making sure that everyone is participating and writing in the correct format. With Scripting, there is a tendency for strong personalities to dominate in the groups.

NOTE: When scripting, **it is strongly advised that ALL students in the group write out the complete script, complete with other people's lines.** This serves a twofold purpose: it ensures that each student in the group is engaged in the writing process, and avoids the difficulty inherent in trying to pass a single script back and forth between a large group during performance.

Step 6:
Perform the brief scenes everyone has scripted! As an audience, evaluate if the learning objectives have been met.

SCRIPTING SCHEMA

_____
[Title]

_____ : _____
[CHARACTER]
_____.

_____ : _____
[CHARACTER]
_____.

(_____.)
[Stage Directions]

_____ : _____
[CHARACTER]
_____.

_____ : _____
[CHARACTER]
_____.

_____ : _____
[CHARACTER]
_____.

(_____.)
[Stage Directions]

_____ : _____
[CHARACTER]
_____.

IMPROVISATION

Improvisation, or improv, is a type of performance that involves unscripted, spontaneous scenes. The actors onstage make up the lines and the action that is occurring as they go along.

Why Use Improv in the Classroom?

Improvisation can be a tricky strategy to use with younger students. Sometimes, especially when the strategy is first introduced, you will find students milling around, slightly unsure of what they should say or do. The younger the student, the more important it is to have the Teacher act as a coach – someone giving advice from the sidelines when students get stuck.

If a class continues to work on this strategy, however, it can provide students with some of their deepest and most creative thought connections between science and theatre. In order to create an improvised scene that incorporates scientific knowledge, students must process and use that knowledge in creative ways.

| Improv: Simple Rules to Follow |

When leading an improvised activity, it is important to consistently refer back to a few basic concepts. Within a few classes, students will begin to recognize these ideas and their improvisation work will continue to improve.

The "Yes, and…" Rule

At all times, students should be reminded that improvised scenes only work if both actors are willing to respond "Yes, and…". What this means is that if one actor makes a suggestion in the scene, the other actor must accept that suggestion and run with it. In improv, an actor should never say 'no'. For instance:

IMPROVISED SCENE EXAMPLE

KYREN: Hey how's it going?

JAMILAH: Pretty good. Hey! Your shoes are turning blue for some reason!

[At this point, KYREN has two choices. An actor just getting started with improv might say:]

KYREN: No they're not!

[**But now JAMILAH is stuck. She has nowhere to go with the story she started to tell. However, if KYREN says:**]

KYREN: Oh wow…that is so weird! What should we do?

[**The scene can move forward**]

Always Define the WHO, WHERE, and WHAT

In improv, even though the story of the scene and lines are being made up as the actors go along, it is very important to understand right from the beginning WHO the characters are, WHERE they are, and WHAT they are doing/WHAT is going on?

If students seem stuck, always ask them about the WHO/WHERE/WHAT. If they are stumped, get suggestions from the kids in the audience, who will often be bursting with ideas. In coaching students who are improvising, focusing on one of these can really help them focus and move the scene forward:

WHO: Encourage students to choose strong, clear characters with some sort of relationship. Family members are a great idea for students to improvise with – if students can't think of what characters they should be, encourage them to a grandfather and his granddaughter, for instance. Students inherently understand these relationships and can act them out clearly.

WHERE: Make sure students are clear about where they are – in a mall, in the middle of a hurricane, on a pirate ship, etc.

WHAT: What students are doing can often arise out of the first two criteria. Improvised scenes are always more interesting if there is a clear conflict between the characters.

NOTE PAPER

Executive Function, Arts Integration and Joyful Learning (Part 6 of 7)

March 14, 2012
By Judy Willis, MD

This post is part of a series on executive function. Here I will cover the arts and the neuroscience of joyful learning.

Promising Starts

Children's brains need to acquire memory associations that link pleasure with learning. The creative arts can provide this link through associations with the pleasures of creative experiences enjoyed during early childhood.

When students know they will have opportunities to use artistic, kinesthetic or manipulative experiences in the course of learning and as part of their learning assessments, their optimism is renewed. Knowing from the start that they will create representations of their learning through visual, musical or movement expressions (ideally with a medium of their choice) is an inoculation against boredom and low effort.

When the brain has reasons to expect that something previously pleasurable will soon happen, such as when a creative activity will be part of new learning, that expectation results in increased release of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which increases pleasure and reduces stress. When students have the expectation of pleasure prior to the introduction of new material, the release of this anticipatory dopamine can release students from the hold of self-predicted failure.

Fixed Mindset to Growth Mindset

Arts, writing and other creative representations embedded throughout the curriculum can reignite the childhood joy students came to associate with learning, discovering, and creating. These opportunities increase interest, motivation, active participation and effort for all learners as they are disabused of the message that one's intelligence and potentials are defined by standardized math and language arts test scores.

Through the work of Carol Dweck and others, we've associated a fixed mindset of beliefs that students often acquire after their efforts toward success repeatedly fail. Students with fixed mindset may lose motivation and reduce effort because they believe their intelligence and skills are predetermined, limited and unchangeable, and therefore effort is fruitless.

Embedding the arts in instruction and assessment can change these students from the beliefs of a fixed mindset to those of a growth mindset. Indeed, with effort, practice and newly recognized skillsets, they can transform their capacity for learning and increase their academic success.

Learning that incorporates the arts, movement or physical enactment offers students opportunities to engage their academic subjects through talents and abilities which they have not previously recognized as being relevant to their scholastic and cognitive potentials. The representation of learning through creative arts also reduces mistake anxiety by removing expectations for a single correct response or product. When students have choices in ways to practice, use and demonstrate understanding of learning through drawing, computer art, skits, script writing, raps and songs, the brain can be released from the mindset of low expectations of success. When confidence grows through the arts, it may be the first time some students will experience success in certain academic subjects.

The arts can be used to re-motivate frustrated students or enrich the conceptual learning for bored students who have already mastered the information. In these cases, however, artistic activities should be authentic

and meaningful; they should not be perceived by students as "add-on fluff" to academic subjects. Indeed, the authenticity of the incorporation must be evident to them if they are to participate to their highest potentials and grow in confidence and competence from their achievements.

Immediate Gratification or Effort Toward Goals

One of the most critical executive functions developing in students' prefrontal cortexes is the ability to delay immediate gratification and to apply effort toward goals that are not immediate. This is a habit of mind that sustains successful adults through challenging times and gives them the perseverance to effect positive change even when initial responses are less than enthusiastic.

These executive functions cannot spring up *de novo* after students leave school. While their judgment, prioritization and goal pursuit neural networks are undergoing their greatest rate of maturation between ages 5 and 25, students need experiences that correlate effort toward progress. They need positive learning, assessment and feedback experiences to build the understanding that, even when pleasure or success is not immediate, their planning, prioritizing and sustained effort can bring long-term and powerful satisfaction.

Through authentic embedding of the arts, you can guide students to recognize the links between their efforts and successful goal outcomes over time. As these positive learning and assessment experiences continue and students begin to build confidence, they will apply effort even when the pleasure is not instantaneous. This begins building their habit of mind such that they recognize value in the practice, review and application of learning even the most challenging or "boring" fundamentals in terms of goals they envision beyond the classroom.

You may recognize the impact of your efforts as you see students apply more effort, collaborate successfully, ask questions, revise work and review foundational knowledge as they recognize how these can help them reach what they now perceive as achievable and desirable goals.

The Arts and the Neuroscience of Joyful Learning

The arts also promote symbolic/conceptual thinking and innovative skillsets. Arts integration correlates with students' increased sustained attention not only while participating in art-related activities, but also with increased attention span in general and improved critical thinking (Posner and Patoine, 2009; Uptis and Smithrim, 2003).

With the arts in the picture, classrooms can be the safe havens where emotional comfort and pleasure are companions to knowledge acquisition. Students will gain emotional resilience as they learn more efficiently and at higher levels of cognition.

It will take more time and study to make greater direct correlations between the research and teaching interventions. However, the good news is that the preliminary neuroscience research correlates experience in symbolic representation of academic learning with the neural activity seen when the brain processes information using the highest forms of cognition, creative problem solving, critical analysis and innovation.

Notes

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