

Drama in Education

Drama in education provides a forum for students to develop an understanding of themselves and others. As students develop a better understanding, they are able to create works using the forms, elements and techniques of the drama discipline (Ontario Arts Curriculum, 1998)

Techniques

There are many methods for teaching drama. Each strategy involves varying levels of student participation. Drama can be done as an activity on its own or as an extension of another subject area. Picture books are often used as a source in drama.

Drama games

Drama games, activities and exercises are often used to introduce students to drama. These activities tend to be less intrusive and are highly participatory.

There are several books that have been written on using drama games that can serve as excellent resources for anyone wanting to incorporate drama games into their work. Games for Actors and Non-Actors by Augusto Boal is perhaps the best known internationally and includes writings on his life work as well as hundreds of games. There are also smaller books however, which serve as excellent practical guides. For example, Drama Games by Bernie Warren is an excellent pocket book for someone looking to try drama games for the first time.

Choral speaking

Choral dramatization involves students reading aloud by assigning parts to each group member. Choral dramatization can use texts such as **rhymes, poetry, and picture books**. Students can experiment with voice, sound gesture and movement (Swartz, 1995).

Tableaux

Tableaux involve students creating visual pictures with their bodies, emphasizing key details and relationships (Wilheim, 2002). Tableaux are frozen scenes and usually involve at least three levels. Students focus on a focal point, facial expressions, and body language. This technique is useful for maturing participants' presentational skills as well as audience skills.

Improvisation

Improvisation is the practice of acting and reacting, of making and creating, in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one's immediate environment. Improvisation can be a great introduction to role playing. Students focus on position, expression and creativity in their impromptu skits.

Role playing

Role playing allows students to play a character in a real or imaginary situation. One of the simplest forms is where "the student plays himself faced with an imaginary situation." (Wilheim, 2002, p.62) Other strategies have students playing real-life or imaginary characters

in a variety of contexts. Role play can be used throughout many areas of the curriculum, especially history and language arts to support and strengthen understanding of content. Below is a list of some common role-play strategies.

- **Reenactment:** Students perform scenes from a historical time period or a scene in a story. “An enactment may be cast in the past, the present, or the future, but always happens in the ‘now of time’” (Wilheim, 2002, p.8). This strategy encourages students to interact with a text and challenges them to take on the perspective of a character.
- **Extended role play:** Students may create the scene that takes place before or after a story or scene. This strategy helps students to predict and theorize about cause and effect.
- **Hotseat:** Student is interviewed in character. By putting the character from a scene, event or story on the “stand” students can further explore their understanding of the content. Other students in the class prepare questions that explore the character and their conflicts. Students are encouraged to write open-ended questions. Teachers may wish to model hotseating first by acting as the character in the role. Also, the person in the hotseat may have a couple of students who act as their “brain.” They are there to help answer questions if the person on the hotseat needs them. There are many variations available for this strategy.
- **Teacher In Role:** This strategy is key to involving teacher participation. This strategy can take on many forms. The teacher may take on the role of a character or figure from the event, scene or story. The primary objective of this strategy is to allow students to ask questions and help discover answers to any unresolved issues. The teacher may also choose to immerse themselves in the scene and take on a role while interacting with other characters. The primary role in this situation is to further the evolving drama.
- **Expert panel:** Students themselves become an expert. In order to prepare for this role students must determine what an expert in the area might know. This works well in history or when focusing on broader issues/topics in literature. This strategy can unfold by having students meet as a group of experts or by having students meet in pairs in an interview situation.
- **Writing in role:** A variation on the above strategies, students may also write in character. Often they are asked to imagine themselves as a real or fictitious character in a particular state or situation. Writing in role can take on many forms including a journal, letter, monologue, or newspaper article. This is not meant to be a summary of the story, but instead a further exploration of the character and their interaction with events.

Many people when they hear the word "Drama", they automatically think about a performance. There are many positive benefits that drama can play in realm of a child's development.

Implementing drama within the classroom is a great option for educators. Not only can drama be used and adapted across the curriculum, but it can also serve as a catalyst building individual skills that students can later use in everyday life situations.

Drama in the classroom is great because it makes drama active, engages students and makes learning purposeful. Drama can be used across the curriculum and adapted to suit any subject. From acting out skits, to exploring different characters alternative endings and scenarios. Drama promotes critical thinking, so that students can formulate and express their own opinions.

Here are just a few Benefits That Drama In Education Has to Offer.....

Walking In the Shoes of Another: Taking on the role of another character allows students the opportunity to play through and experience the life of another in a comfortable and safe environment.

Self-Confidence: When students take risks in class and in performances, students learn to trust their ideas and abilities as individuals.

Critical Thinking & Problem Solving: Students working through this process learn how communicate their thoughts and look at things from a different perspectives and formulate their decisions.

Imagination and creative thinking: through decision making and creative exploration students are given the chance to play with imaginative ideas.

Cooperation & Collaboration: Working in groups with other peers allows students to collaboratively discuss, rehearse, and combine creative ideas with peers at various levels.