

CREATING A COOPERATIVE CLASSROOM FOR INTEGRATED LEARNING THROUGH DRAMA

A WORKSHOP FOR TEACHERS

By

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Rationale

Many students enjoy learning through dramatic activities like acting out a story that they've read, or creating monologues by historical characters, but students may lack the skills of cooperation, collaboration, focus and self-control that drama requires. Teachers may feel uncomfortable managing activities that involve movement, role-play, improvisational play, and acting.

Through this workshop, teachers learn to skillfully manage dramatic play in the classroom and recognize the curricular connections that abound with drama. Teachers can help students gain control of their bodies and voices in service to learning across the curriculum. Students in grades 4-8 are primed to gain self control and ratchet up their self-awareness to the point of modifying their interactions with peers—they are ready to acquire new behaviors that enable groups to work well together.

Effectively using dramatic techniques in the classroom helps students deepen learning and spur higher level thinking in Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science curricula. Teaching and assessing through drama allow students to use kinesthetic, visual, and auditory learning pathways and tap into multiple intelligences—bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and verbal-linguistic. Drama allows students to learn core subjects by engaging their whole selves—body, intellect, imagination, emotions—thus creating deep personal connections to the curricular content and aiding memory.

Target Audience

Teachers of Grades 4-8

Length of Workshop

3 hours

Description

Teachers will experience methods for using drama and movement to teach Social Studies and English Language Arts curricular content, including geography, history, creative writing, and letter writing. This workshop demonstrates how to train students to move safely and with control, and includes techniques to help them incorporate collaborative learning skills into a classroom norm. Teachers will pick a time and place from their curriculum, explore it using theatre games and imagination, write from the point of view of a historical figure, and collaboratively create a mini-readers' theatre performance.

Approach

The workshop leader will:

- Engage teachers in experiential activities, involving movement, group participation, writing, and reflection.*
- Offer opportunities for teachers to experience and reflect upon drama games that teach the control and focus necessary for learning through drama.*
- Help teachers try out collaborative processes that help groups work together with ease and that they can take back to their classrooms.*

- *Engage teachers in working through a collaborative creative process that can be adjusted and applied to a number of Social Studies and English Language Arts curricular goals.*

Results

Teachers will:

- *Know some elements of drama*
- *Know how to use movement in the classroom to aid focus and concentration*
- *Know dramatic genres that work in the classroom*
- *Know appropriate dramatic approaches to curricular content from English Language Arts and Social Studies*
- *Know methods for nurturing and improving a class climate for cooperative learning*
- *Know theater games that teach students how to move with control in the classroom*
- *Know procedures for managing class so that students can develop cooperation skills while creatively exploring curricular content*
- *Be able to lead drama activities with confidence and control*

- *Be able to use processes that capitalize on positive peer pressure to teach students behaviors that enable collaborative creative learning*
- *Be able to lead a step-by-step dramatic structure that integrates Theater, English Language Arts and Social Studies curricular content*
- *Be able to assess learning via dramatic activities*
- *Appreciate the multiple learning pathways that dramatic activities engage*
- *Appreciate the multi-layered thinking skills that collaborative creation develops, including creative thinking, brainstorming, analysis, synthesis, juxtaposition, metaphorical thinking, revision*

Logistical Factors

- *Participants need to wear comfortable clothes they can move in and bring something to write with.*
- *The space needs to have enough room for everyone to move without being cramped. Chairs should be set up in a circle.*
- *A whiteboard and markers are useful, but not necessary.*
- *The teaching artist will provide a flip chart, music, and a handout with sample assessment tools and a script teachers can use in teaching.*

This workshop was developed through a Kennedy Center Training