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ABSTRACT

As one component of the Special Arts Project and designed to stimulate the use of creative drama in the classroom, this booklet describes 26 topics for classroom dramatic activities. Examples of topics are slow-motion techniques, simultaneous conversation, magic strings, making an object real, texture walk, word toss, tag freezes, and changing relations. (JM)

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ED 114 896

CREATIVE DRAMA

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CS 501 185

PREFACE

Creative drama is concerned with the whole of the doing of life – it involves the dramatic playing out of situations so that possibilities of life can be tried out and explored. It is not for children alone though they should work with it a great deal. Children learn through playing in drama; they can try things out, explore new roles, imitate a variety of models, stretch and experiment with their growing vocabulary, and learn to share with and relate to other people. Drama, a structuring of the play process, has widespread educational implications. It should not end with the end of elementary school for it has direct relevance for the teenager and the young adult. It can provide a safe and legal environment in which life styles can be tried out and experimented with. The questions "Who am I?", "Where am I?", and "Why am I?" are at least as important for the teenager as they are for the young child. The learning to share ideas, working together with others, and reacting sensitively to one's self and to others are areas for exploration through drama. Similarly drama can be used with adults. It can help them discover their ability to play imaginatively, to become more aware of themselves in their world and their reactions to this world.[1]

[1] Dr. John R. Sharpham, A POSITION PAPER ON CREATIVE DRAMA.

Artists

Alan Nichols
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EXERCISES

A. PATTI-CAKE:

With partners (non-verbal) - First step in learning to work non-competitively. Each team of two develops its own pattern. Once the team is secure with this task, the next step is added: hold a conversation on an unrelated topic, while continuing pattern.

B. SLOW-MOTION TECHNIQUES:

Individuals work as part of whole ensemble with the concept of moving as if they were in a slow-motion film. Emphasis is placed on awareness of others. The second step is a moving through imaginative substances: i.e. cotton candy, peanut butter, or any object agreeable to children.

C. MAGIC STRINGS:

With partners (non-verbal) - The objective is to create the reality of imaginary string for both the person who is the puppet and the puppeteer. Strings are set in motion by puppeteer. Roles are reversed.

D. DRAWING GAME:

Teams are composed of five (5) or six (6) students. Each group selects its own representative. Simultaneously the leader shows the representatives a card with a word printed upon it (for non-readers the word is verbalized). The representatives are then sent back to their teams with pencil and paper. They must attempt to communicate the written word (a simple object) through drawing only. Skill at drawing is unimportant because the objective is to have the children work for concepts.

E. SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION:

With partners -- Each individual selects a subject about which to talk. When group leader gives signal to begin, both partners talk at the same time. Exercise helps to develop concentration.

F. MIRROR:

With partners -- One student has the role of person; the other student is the mirror. (Non-verbal) - With slow movement the mirror and the person work together to attempt simultaneous action. Roles are reversed and as students become confident in themselves, and in each other, the movement may increases in tempo. Though not essential, music may be used.

G. SLOW MOTION/REPEATED WITH MOVEMENT OF A SMALL BLOCK OF STYROFOAM:

The objective is to keep block moving through the space, passing from person to person, in slow motion without dropping it. This exercise develops control and group awareness.

H. PROGRESSIVE STORY:

In a team of six (6) or seven (7), group makes up a story. Leader keeps changing story-teller. Group attempts to keep story going without repeating any of the words in the phrases of previous story-teller. Emphasis is placed on use of descriptive adjectives. Exercise develops attention span.

I. HEAVY OBJECT:

With partners -- Students work together to create the reality of a non-exsistent heavy object; i.e. a crate of books, or any object agreeable to students. The task is to move the object. The same muscular involvement is used as if the students were moving a real crate.

J. SOUND AND MOTION:

All students involved -- Group forms a standing circle. One member is selected to go into center to start an abstract movement and sound. This member of group moves inside the circle from person to person establishing eye-contact. As many as possible should be contacted. Student selects someone to whom he/she gives this sound and motion. The recipient mirrors the exact sound and motion. When giver feels recipient is secure, he/she moves into recipient's place in circle. Recipient, who is still in eye-contact with giver, moves to center of circle. They both continue working together, until the recipient evolves a sound and movement from the one received. Sound and movement must not be predetermined.

K. TEXTURE WALK:

Entire group involved in slow motion walking through specific conditions, i.e. rain, heat, ice, sand, etc., with emphasis on the students' personal reactions to the substance, or conditions through which they walk.

L. NAME AND DIRECTIONS:

Entire group forms a standing circle. One person is selected to go to anyone in circle to make eye-contact with him/her and to say his/her name. That student in turn says his/her name also. 1st student takes 2nd student's place in circle - 2nd student chooses someone else in circle; process is repeated. As game continues a series of directions are added: these directions must be performed in exact order, as speed of game gets more rapid. Directions

are simple: i.e., tug ear-lobe, shake person's hand, etc. (This exercise is recommended as a STARTER because it facilitates better communication among the group).

M. MAKE-AN-OBJECT REAL:

Entire group involved -- Each person selects a favorite fruit. Concentration is then centered on moulding and discovering this fruit in empty space. Group is coached to look for specific properties: smell, texture, taste, weight, and size.

N. MAKE A BOX:

With partners: Students work together (non-verbally) to shape and mould empty space into a small box. They attempt to work together for the same texture and size -- finding it, not pre-determing.

O. WORD TOSS:

A portion to a poem is selected - or a very familiar rhyme, i.e. "Mary had a little lamb": Each word is treated independent of connotation or meanings and is used as an object to be thrown around the standing circle. Words must be kept in sequence. At times the word could be a ping-pong ball, a bowling ball, or a feather.

P. WHO STARTED THE ACTION:

Entire group forms a standing circle. One person is selected to leave the room entirely, while a leader is appointed. Entire group will work together to choose a leader. The person who left circle is called back to center to attempt to discover who is the appointed leader. Once found, leader leaves room. This exercise stresses ensemble work and concentration.

Q. MACHINES:

Group is divided into four teams of five or six. Each team is given the name of a different machine. Each team will work together to create and to communicate its machine to the others. Each person must be an integral part. Combination of techniques which could be used, i.e., slow-motion textures, sound and motion, and directions.

R. BEING VAGUE:

Work in teams -- One team selects a topic, object, well-known person, or event to talk about. Subject chosen is never mentioned by name. Object of lesson is to find how many ways person can hold a conversation and be as vague as possible.

S. SCENES AROUND AN ACTIVITY:

Four teams combining being vague with textures, making objects real, etc., Scenes are assigned i.e. planting garden, cooking a meal, while involved in activity, conversation has no relationship to activity: i.e. while cooking discussion about last nights basket ball game.

T. TAG-FREEZES:

Four teams -- One member of each selected to be "it". Everyone moves in slow motion. When leader calls freeze, all stop and hold position until leader gives signal to continue.

U. MAKE A WORD:

Four groups -- Each is given a word. Objective is to spell out the word, using members of group to form appropriate letters.

V. SCENES WITH OBJECTIVES:

Four teams -- Each team is told who, where, and what. The "what" being their objective. Team members then improvise within their structure, attempting to solve their objectives.

W. CHANGING RELATIONS:

With partners -- Leader gives them who, where, what, as they are working towards their objective, the leader calls change, they freeze -- see the physical position of each other and from that, create a whole new who, where, what. They can see in the other persons frozen position all manner of objects, animate and inanimate. Who ever has the first impulse to create a scene must have cooperation from his scene partner.

X. CHANGING RELATIONS II:

Leader plus five students: first who, where and what are given by teacher or leader. Leader by being a part of group he/she is able to aid success of each scene. Success means that all the individuals will achieve participation on a creative, positive level.

Y. CHANGING RELATIONS III:

Audience makes several suggestions in freezes. Group chooses one.

Z. NAME 6:

Purpose of this game is to pin-point and to intensify concentration. Groups should be no larger than eight members. Seven members of the group form a circle, sitting on the floor facing the center. The 8th member looks at the group and calls a certain member of group by name. The 8th member will now sit in the center of the circle. 8 closes bis/her eyes while an imaginary object is passed from hand to hand in either a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction.

Through concentration on the changes in the movement of air as object is passed, 8 will clap hands together. When 8 thinks the object is in the hands of the person called earlier, he/she clap hands together. (The person in the center, 8, should not tell the group who his/her choice was; this secret is shared only between teacher and self.) When hands are clapped, 8 opens eyes, WHOEVER has the object is given a letter of the alphabet and the latter person names six objects starting with the same alphabet letter. Example: 8 clapped hands; opened eyes, saw object was in Nina's hands. 8 gives Nina the letter "B". Nina calls out ball, bat, bug, bugle, buggy, bike. Had Tony been holding object, she would have given him the letter. 8 then takes Nina's place. Nina tells teacher where she wants object to be when she claps. Game continues until each group member has experienced leadership role.

SIMPLE SONGS FOR CLASSROOM USE

THE ELEPHANT SONG

I was walking through the jungle one fine day
When I heard a noise from far away
I said to myself "What could this be?
An elephant's after me!"

CHORUS: Elephant, elephant
Comin through the grass
Elephant, elephant
Moves pretty fast
Elephant, elephant
Lookin at me
Guess I'd better find a tree

I saw the elephant at the zoo
I said to myself "What could he do?"
But then the elephant flew into a rage
And broke out of his cage

CHORUS

I climbed a mountain to the top
I figured that would make him stop
But when I got there, what'd I see?
The elephant waiting for me

CHORUS

I get into a Greyhound Bus
I said to the driver "it's him or us!"
Then I screamed "Could this be real?
The elephant's at the wheel!

CHORUS

I jumped onto a moving train
To take me all the way to Spain
I said to the people "There's an elephant loose!"
They said "He's in the caboose.

CHORUS

I ran through the desert and I ran through the sea
With the elephant coming right after me
I turned around to meet my fate
She asked me for a date

Elephant, elephant
Comin through the grass
Elephant, elephant
Moves pretty fast
Now we're together
Happy as can be
Ella Funt and me.

(c) 1975 Michael Ferry & Joseph Kenig

DOCTOR SELTZER

When you wake up in the morning
And you can't get out of bed
AN DEE DOO AN DEE DOO AN DEE DAY
Take a drink of Doctor Seltzer Potion
Keep from dropping dead
AN DEE DOO AN DEE DOO AN DEE DAY

CHORUS: And it tastes so good
And it lasts so long (2)
And that is why
I sing this song

When your mouth is tasting murky
Like galoshes in the swamp
AN DEE DOO AN DEE DOO AN DEE DAY
Take a drink of Doctor Seltzer Potion
Do the Bristol Stomp
AN DEE DOO AN DEE DOO AN DEE DAY

CHORUS

When your tonsils get all rusty
From a-swimmin in the pool
AN DEE DOO AN DEE DOO AN DEE DAY
Take a drink of Doctor Seltzer Potion
Keeps you out of school
AN DEE DOO AN DEE DOO AN DEE DAY

CHORUS

When your vocal chords get overstretched
From singin in the rain
AN DEE DOO AN DEE DOO AN DEE DAY
Take a drink of Doctor Seltzer Potion
Helps to ease the pain
AN DEE DOO AN DEE DOO AN DEE DAY

CHORUS (2)

(c) 1974 Joseph Kenig

Editor

Dr. Mary Catherine McKee

ESAA-State Project Director

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MISSOURI STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

ESAA--Special Arts Project

Creativity with Focus

JUL 2 8 19

An interpretation of the project is in order from two sources: leaders of MSCA staff and State Project Director. However, the granting agency requested evaluation only from the latter and so this director will describe it as she saw it. The business practice of "Management by Goals" guided the operations of the Project. Always two objectives were the focus of activities: 1) improvement of the child's self-concept; 2) increased contact between the artists and racial and ethnic groups of students, their parents, and teachers.

Our approach was designed to be innovative. The famed Yale psychologist Kenneth Keniston, for example, complains that traditional education puts too much emphasis upon "the child as a brain," and focuses too narrowly on a few learning areas. Because the school provides but one type of environment-- with specific kinds of atmosphere-- individualistic, oriented toward cognitive achievement, imposing dependency on and withholding authority and responsibility from children, the ESAA Special Arts Project provided enrichment in the affective and psychomotor domains. Realizing that one cannot change emotion directly, the ESAA project focused in depth on behavioral changes that resulted from enhancement of self concept.

Today increasing number of students fail to gain a successful identity and they react illogically and emotionally to their failure. Because they are lonely, they need involvement with school adults who are warm and personal and who will work with their behavior in

the present. The role of the artist in teaching children self-worth, in giving them the knowledge and tools necessary to succeed in our society, concerned all of us who guided the program. The artists stressed cooperation, understanding and practical attainment without the competitive report-card rewards of traditional study. Through the various art components, students were given an opportunity to control their own personalities and to mold themselves into a working crew, circumstances that gave scope for both character development and emotional exploration. Because self-doubt, cynicism and apathy are real dangers in young students, the artists in our program brought a strong stance based on artistic experience, emotion, and heart.

The project books (forwarded under separate cover) testify to the successful development of each art component. For all of us concerned with the project, these books evidence a magnificent achievement of our goals. They are the results of the artists' interactions with students, teachers, and community. They express concretely a warm personal achievement in group dynamics.

The writer would like, also, to give a qualitative report on the following concerns associated with the project: evaluation, budget, cooperation between teachers and artist, publicity, workshops, LEA coordinators, and state advisory commission.

EVALUATION

When students are involved with responsible people (artists) who themselves have a success identity and can fulfill their needs, the students are then in a position to fulfill their own needs. The artists in our program were of this calibre and the class reactions (with only one or two exceptions) demonstrated artist-student involvement which was real, warm, and positive. The artists stood as an

example of responsible involvement so that members of the class could learn to become involved with one another and begin to function as a working, problem-solving group. Involvement, vital to success, existed to a strong degree in the program.

The writer respected highly the assistance and association with the Center for Educational Improvement, University of Missouri, Columbia. Our contact man, Dr. Edward Ciaglia, works with these schools on a year-round basis and he personally monitored our program. For first semester activities, teacher questionnaires were administered and interpreted. During the second semester, the Center conducted a quantitative analysis of the project. (See attached evaluation results.) Statistical proof which they found is not conclusive that the children's attitude in racial bias changed, but the psychometrist, Mr. Crowson, in his research with the children, feels that there is some validity for stronger racial bias in traditional-type schools as against a lesser bias in children enrolled in IGE (Independently Guided Education) schools. A rather interesting sideline to his findings is that the younger the child, the more biased he/she is. The Center will use these findings as a basis for further research.

Evaluation for University City are employees in aesthetic education at CEMREL. Their year-round monitoring of the artistic components in University City school district provides a realistic, comprehensive, qualitative evaluation which attests to successful achievement of the goals. (Evaluation will follow in two weeks.)

BUDGET

The budget worked out as realistic, adequate, and well-planned. When members of the MSCA staff calculated the figures last spring, they

checked projected costs with commercial companies. However, for the best advantage of the program, this writer choose to make two exceptions: 1) hire school district presses to produce booklets at one-third commercial costs; 2) in lease/purchase of equipment, to rent it from the artists themselves at one-third commercial prices. Thus artists had more incentive to teach children to handle equipment with care and concern. Since there were no damages or loss of equipment, the insurance liability money was not needed. Because of these adjustments, there appears to be a surplus of $3,377.10 returned to granting agency.

Because Columbia did not assume its fiscal responsibility in the project, the MSCA office took it over. The result was a "round-robin" chain effect: Invoices from Columbia; Stage Project Director's signature for approval; warrant requests typed to accompany invoices; Jefferson City fiscal office to process invoices; checks mailed to MSCA office; remailing of check to individuals/companies with return form to MSCA upon receipt of check. To further complicate matters, Jefferson City reorganized their fiscal programs with state offices during the first semester, with the result that ESAA personnel were not paid until Christmas for work performed in September. This writer understands now why the granting agency desires each school district to assume fiscal and technical responsibility for its project.

COOPERATION BETWEEN TEACHER AND ARTIST

This was a sensitive area in the program. This writer, as well as the MSCA staff, endeavored, through art-orientation for teachers, and education-orientation for artists, to achieve teacher-artist involvement that was sincere, warm, and positive. Although we had to

be alert constantly to problems which might arise, success resulted. Except in one or two instances, teachers seemed more appreciative of the regular artists than they were of the visiting artists. (Puppetry and the Charlie Parker Memorial music group were exceptions.) When the artists were in direct contact with the students--rather than being crowded together in gym or auditorium--better teacher-artist-student rapport resulted.

PUBLICITY

News releases were sent out periodically to St. Louis and Columbia newspapers. A reasonable response resulted from the publicity on the grant announcements in the print media. Delighted students' reaction was covered at the expiration of the program in May. Television stations produced from two-minute to fifteen minute announcements about the Project. LEA coordinators were asked to speak on radio programs. Publicity in both print and media was positive and approving.

WORKSHOPS

In compliance with proposal specifications, the artists regularly conducted workshops. In Columbia there was an average attendance of fifteen adults--teachers and parents--with a low percentage of minority peoples, in spite of the fact that the writer regularly contacted leaders in art societies, parent-teacher organizations, and civic groups in order to encourage higher workshop attendance among minority peoples. The following rationalizations may be given: 1) ninety per cent of mothers in these schools work outside home; 2) time of workshops was immediately after school hours; 3) after the workshops, artists had to commute to either St. Louis or Kansas City;

consequently there were no evening workshops; 4) because of new curriculum techniques in IGE (Independently Guided Education) schools, teachers were involved after school hours. In University City there was a higher attendance record because of evening sessions. Artists-in-residence would have improved this facet of the project in that the artists could become more involved with the community.

LEA COORDINATORS

In Columbia, Mr. Kent Toalson proved a reliable leader and LEA Coordinator. As chairman of the Fine Arts Division in the Columbia School system, he was familiar with the performing arts as well as with the school personnel in ESAA eligible schools. Although he could devote only a small portion of his time to the project, his wisdom, prudence, and artistic expertise were greatly appreciated. It was a privilege to work with him.

In University City, Ms. Rose Banks was competent, cooperative, and sensitive to the accomplishments as well as to the problems of the program. Her prudence and willingness produced positive results with one or two exceptions. She cooperated well with the writer and with the MSCA staff.

State Advisory Committee Meetings

When the program began, the writer had some qualms about lack of significient progress to report monthly. These fears were unfounded. As the program evolved, the interest of the members grew and the success of the program was enhanced greatly by their vast wealth of experiences and diverse suggestions. The interaction of minority and non-minority members yielded a wealth of insights. The open

dialogue on all diverse questions was inspiring. One minority member especially wished his reaction to go on record. At first he had some misgivings about the program helping minority children, but at its close he expressed great admiration for the fine opportunities given both minority and non-minority students.

CONCLUSION

All facets of the project interested the writer, but the highlight of the whole program for her was the time spent in the schools establishing contact between artists, teachers, principals and, most importantly, the students. The program had success because of the MSCA staff's concern with high quality artists and this writer's concern that the artists interrelate successfully with students, teachers, and community. The writer's only regret is that she could not have accomplished more. Sincere gratitude is due: Mrs. Emily Rice, whose managerial wisdom helped to solve many questions; Mrs. Lottie Wright, whose patience with the thorny fiscal problems brought solutions; to other members of the MSCA staff whose knowledge and expertise contributed greatly; to the ESAA secretary/bookkeeper for her loyalty and dedication; to the State Advisory members for their faithful attendance, helpful suggestions, and moral support; and finally to our program officer, Ms. Donna Gold, for her insightfulness, artistic acumen, and helpfulness and to the granting agency for budget allotment to finance the project.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. M.C. McKee

Dr. M. C. McKee
State Project Director