

SESSION 12-13

Goals:

- To get to the Final Draft
- Participants analyze their work
- Participants use critical thinking and evaluation

1. Before Workshop: Greetings, Nametags & Attendance

Sit in circle, volunteers evenly spaced among the participants.

2. Physical/Vocal Warm Up (5-10 minutes)

Breathing, stretching, movement, sounds- see Warm-Ups

3. Energizing or Focus Exercise (5-10 minutes)

From Focus Warm-Ups

4. Table Read

- Assign parts. Artists may have to fill in temporarily (These roles are still not necessarily permanent – although if you are able to cast by this point, that is great. See below for casting guidelines.)
- Read through the script aloud, together. This can be painful (it will be slow going), but it is important for everyone to hear the script together.
- Have the participants make notes if they have critiques or changes to suggest. Do not let them bring the changes in until the second read-through.
- When finished, ask the participants questions:
 - What scenes do we need to add?
 - Is the conflict clear?
 - What are the stakes? Are they high enough?
 - Is the choice that the character(s) is/are making clear?
 - Is the ending clear?

Incorporating Violence Prevention:

In critiquing their own work, participants learn the ability to be critical of themselves without blaming others or deciding they are “bad at this.” This helps participant self-esteem and may lead to critical thinking in other areas of their life. If participants can see negatives with grey areas instead of “black and white,” “good and bad thinking,” violence is less likely an option to solve such negatives. Critical thinking and education lead to problem-solving skills.

5. Finishing The Script

- Come up with a list of things to improv or otherwise work on – adding new scenes, fleshing out existing scenes, character development.
- The writers’ group can go off and do more brainstorming for how to flesh out the script at this point or if there are enough ideas to work on, just have all do improvs in small groups.
- Work out group scenes.
- Bring in additional elements: dance, music, rap, poetry, etc. Decide where these elements will go in the script. [Chorus? Group Scene (could be a party scene or some kind of meeting)? During scene changes? Prologue? Epilogue?]

Incorporating The State Standards

Get participant aesthetic opinions on the material viewed (4.0 Aesthetic Valuing). Notice how this process fits with the English Language Standards for Writing and the participants' English classes.

Writing Standards- Evaluation and Revision

1.9 (9-10 grades) Revise writing to improve the logic and coherence of the organization and controlling perspective, the precision of word choice, and the tone by taking into consideration the audience, purpose, and formality of the context.

(10-11 grades) Revise text to highlight the individual voice, improve sentence variety and style, and enhance subtlety of meaning and tone in ways that are consistent with the purpose, audience, and genre.

6. Review, Wrap Up And Pass The Clap

SESSION 14-21

Goals:

- To learn good habits of rehearsal
- To refine and memorize the play

Incorporating Violence Prevention:

Participants learn that rehearsal is important to learning. Practice is what makes someone good at a skill, not only talent. This helps self-esteem and shows that one can be good at most things with practice. Memorization is similar in showing participants that they can learn material with interest and commitment. These skills help in academics, sports and most areas of life and cut down on the frustration and lack of personal power that leads people to violence. It has become universally expected and proven in many studies that literacy and education are major tools in preventing violence.

7. Before Workshop: Greetings, Nametags & Attendance

Sit in circle, volunteers evenly spaced among the participants.

8. Physical/Vocal Warm Up (5-10 minutes)

Breathing, stretching, movement, sounds- see Warm-Ups

9. Energizing or Focus Exercise (5-10 minutes)

From Focus Warm-Ups

10. Rehearsal Of The Play

Dialogue

One of the things we say to the participants is that if the dialogue doesn't seem right that we can change it. It should come from them. We explain that, in our process of refining everything they have said and written, we may miss some things while getting it to the page.

Polishing The Script

Polishing the script can continue through to the performances. At some point, the participants get a final-final script (should be at around 4 weeks before the performance). At this point, any changes are hand-written.

Casting

Once we have the final draft of the script, we cast it. To cast it, we write down all the characters on butcher-block paper and ask the participants to write down three choices for characters they would like to play in order of preference. If this is done at the end of a session, then we can make the decision overnight. However, sometimes this happens at the beginning of a session and because of time constraints, we are compelled to make the decisions right away. In that case, a few of the adult volunteers go off for about 15 minutes and make the decisions.

Another idea for casting the play would be to have the participants audition. The participants would prepare a speech or scene of the character they want to play. This would show their commitment and help us in making casting decisions. It would not be a contest for who is the best, but for who is really serious and committed.

The casting can be done as a mock industry audition: participants come to class prepared with a monologue for the character they want to play. Auditions are taped on video and conducted just as in real life, with a size sheet, a Polaroid snap-shot, and a waiting area. After all have auditioned, the participants play the panel of casting agents, producers, directors, etc. They review the tapes of their performances, but look at them as an outside panel seeing them for the first time. The artists will act as their staff, who actually shot the auditions. They decide by consensus which person will play which role.

Table Read

Once the play is cast, we sit in a circle and read it out loud (this time with everyone reading the part they will play).

Running the Workshops

By this time a lead artist, volunteer, or guest artist is chosen as the play director and he/she leads most of the workshops from here. A lead artist or project manager still stays in the capacity of overseeing the pacing and making sure that we are hitting deadlines. Even though the director is in charge of directing the play and therefore planning the workshops, it is still important that (s)he work closely with the other artists. The lead artist is ultimately responsible for the workshops.

Rehearsal Format

Each director will work differently, but it is important that he or she present a plan in the form of an emailed agenda by the end of the business day on the day before the workshop. The agenda should include the scenes we will work on and the plan/schedule to work on them. It should address certain questions so that the artists can prepare in advance for the workshop. For example:

- Will we be divided into groups to work on separate scenes?
- If so, which adults are assigned to which scene?
- Will we show the scenes at the end?
- How much time will we have to work on our scenes?
- What is the goal? Is it blocking, memorizing, or fleshing out a scene?

Technical Rehearsal

Session 21 should be treated as a technical rehearsal to work on all the technical aspects of the show and make sure they are set for performance including but not limited to: mikes, sound equipment, PA system, audio recording equipment, video cameras, editing equipment, lights, costumes, set pieces, etc.

Dress Rehearsal

Session 22 should be treated as a dress rehearsal, running through the entire play twice without stopping for a small audience of staff, artists, and select friends of the participants if possible. Participants will be given notes after each performance by the director and prepped for the coming performance with a pep talk.

SESSION 22

Performance 1

Session 23 should be a performance for peers from the institution where the workshops are held. Keep in mind that this is a tougher audience for participants because they are peers. A good performance here will make the next one a piece of cake!

SESSION 23

Performance 2

Session 23 should be a performance(s) for outside guests including: *US* supporters, donors, press, partner agencies, institution administration and staff. Following the performance should be a reception for the actors and guests.

SESSION 24

Post Production Workshop

This is a chance to see what the participants learned from the experience.

Questions can be asked such as:

How did this change you?

What are your future plans?

How will you incorporate what you learned here into your life?

This session can be documented and evaluations can be done for studies of the curriculum. This session can be done in conjunction with the after-play party allowing an extra week of rehearsal and moving the final performance to session 24.

Incorporating Violence Prevention:

It is important for participants to see how they have learned and changed as a group as well as individually. This helps them internalize the process of their transformation.

CONCLUSION

State Standards

If presented correctly, this program should incorporate all the California State Standards for Theatre from the Visual and Performing Arts Standards. This means that this program can be implemented in conjunction with school teachers of our participants and they will be credited for completing this standard. Lessons can be coordinated with lessons happening in their English language classes as we address the standards for writing as well. This may allow the participants to get extra credit in their English classes for our program. In this way, both students and teachers will be enriched academically by our program, making it more valuable to them and showing the importance of the arts. We will be studying the program to see if participants improve their test scores, academic grades, classroom attitudes, and literacy. We will publish the findings with the next edition of this curriculum and in our annual reports.

Violence Prevention

Violence is a product of fear and powerlessness. It is our belief that this type of profound arts experience empowers young people by giving them not only a voice, but tools that help them in academics, public speaking, career goals, and critical thinking. Our 3-year study of this program and subsequent studies will be the first of its kind at analyzing an arts program with institutionalized youth as a violence prevention tool. We are confident that the arts will prove a useful tool in the fight against violence and ignorance. Our findings will be published in the next edition of this curriculum and in our annual reports.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this curriculum will be constant and the text will be constantly updated based on feedback from the artists, partner agencies, participants, teachers, and research studies. *US* administration will conduct audits of the program, sending out evaluation forms to all the stakeholders named above for feedback.

A 3-year research study will be conducted starting in the fall of 2004 with UCLA Public Policy Institute interns. The study will be modeled on violence prevention studies from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Evaluated will be participants' academic grades/attitudes, attitudes towards authority/parents/guardians, probation officer reports, new crimes (if any), goals, and extra-curricular activities. Our program staff liaison at Camp Gonzalez, Joe Perez, is an EDD candidate at UCLA's School of Education and will be helping with the study in an advisory capacity. Staff at our partner facility, Optimist Youth Homes, are trained in both rehabilitation and art therapy. They will also be assisting with our program and study.

The written scripts of our plays will be archived for evaluation. We will also try to record each play as an audio play for broadcast on radio, distribution on CD and documentation on the web. We do this because as most participants are wards of the County or State, we are not allowed to photograph them. However, we can record their voices and produce the recording with the actors listed anonymously. In this way their identity is protected and we still have a documentation of the event we can show to others. Another option would be to video tape a play where all the characters wore masks and were anonymously listed, or a play where the players were only seen in silhouette or from the back.

Feedback

If anyone reviewing this curriculum has any feedback or suggestions for changes in this curriculum, please contact *US* staff at (310) 558-3190; fax (310) 558-3191 or email at sally@theunusalsuspects.org

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