

ARTS

and the

COMMON CORE

Unit Plan

Theater

Grade Level: Middle School - Grade 8

Title: Improvisation

Length of Unit: Once a week for 45 minutes, 12 sessions

Unit Description: Students will think and create in the moment. They will work on ensemble, focus and respect for one another. Students will learn to express themselves creatively and take risks in a safe environment. They will sharpen their acting skills.

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MS THEATER UNIT: Improvisation

Grade Level: Middle school, 8th grade

Frequency of Sessions: Once a week for 45 minutes

Length of Unit: 12 sessions (*ideally consecutive class meetings*)

BIG IDEAS / ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- Improvisation is life--thinking and creating in the moment
- Improvisation is an art form which requires ensemble work, focus, and respect for one another.
- Improvisation is a way for students to express themselves creatively and take risks in a safe environment.
- Improvisation can help sharpen all acting skills.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How does improvisational work foster ensemble?

How can students take risks and creatively express themselves through the use of improvisation?

How can improvisation develop and enhance acting skills?

GOALS

Common Core & NYC Arts Blueprints Standards

NYS: CCLS: English Language Arts 6-12, NYS: 8th Grade , Capacities of the Literate Individual

Students Who Are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language:

- Build strong content knowledge
- Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline
- Comprehend as well as critique.

NYS: CCLS: English Language Arts 6-12, NYS: 8th Grade , Speaking & Listening Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- 1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 8 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

- 6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

NYC: Arts Blueprints: Theater, NYC: Grade 8, Theater Making

Acting

Imagination, Analysis, and Process Skills

Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms, such as improvisation, theater games, spoken word, physical theater, clowning, puppetry, Story Theater, or musical theater.

Students continue to develop the processes and the analytical and imaginative skills associated with acting.

Students will be able to:

- Maintain focus and concentration in order to sustain improvisations, scene work, and performance
- Recognize and create a variety of vivid characters in improvisation, scene work, and plays
- Respond imaginatively and expressively to imaginary and scripted circumstances
- Contribute positively and responsibly to the ensemble through collaboration, sustained focus, and concentration
- Demonstrate sensitivity to the emotional and physical safety of self and others
- Receive, respond to, and incorporate directions
- Communicate clearly and respectfully with fellow actors, director, and crew members.

PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms to improve their acting as well as such forums as improvisation, theater games, spoken word, physical theater, clowning, puppetry, Story Theater, or Musical Theater.

Physical: Students will be able to:

- Use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises, improvisations, scene work, and performances
- Move and act appropriately on a stage set
- Create appropriate physical gestures and facial expressions that serve a character
- Use nonverbal communication to support and enhance their performance
- Use the body in a variety of ways to express clear, detailed choices of character, emotion, and intention.

Vocal: Students will be able to:

- Use a variety of vocal skills, including volume, pitch, articulation, rhythm, and tempo
- Speak with clear diction in solo, partner, and group performances, demonstrating the ability to fill the space
- Use the voice to express choices of character voice, emotional quality, and intention.

Characterization: Students will be able to:

- Use physical and vocal skills to create a variety of characters in improvisations, scene work, and performance
- Apply specific character needs, objectives, intention, obstacles, actions, emotions, and relationships in the creation of roles
- Apply an understanding of action and reaction in improvisation, scene work, and performance
- Demonstrate the ability to commit to truthful acting and responding "in the moment" within imaginary circumstances.

Staging: Students will be able to:

- Understand and use detailed vocabulary related to stage directions
- Demonstrate consistent, appropriate onstage behavior
- Apply an understanding of the various elements of theater making, including plot, action, conflict, character, and audience/actor relationship in performance.

Content	Skills / Strategies
<p>Students will learn to work as an ensemble. They will learn the basic rules of improvisation and how to apply them to improvised scene work. They will learn to think, create and respond on their feet. They will learn the importance of actors having strong objectives and taking risks.</p>	<p>Maintain focus and concentration in order to sustain improvisations.</p> <p>Recognize and create a variety of vivid characters in improvisation.</p> <p>Respond imaginatively and expressively to imaginary and scripted circumstances.</p> <p>Contribute positively and responsibly to the ensemble through collaboration, sustained focus, and concentration.</p> <p>Demonstrate sensitivity to the emotional and physical safety of self and others.</p> <p>Use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises, improvisations, scene work, and performances.</p> <p>Move and act appropriately on a stage set.</p> <p>Create appropriate physical gestures and facial expressions that serve a character.</p> <p>Use nonverbal communication to support and enhance their performance.</p> <p>Use the body in a variety of ways to express clear, detailed choices of character, emotion, and intention.</p>

ASSESSMENTS

Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels

Formative: DOK 4 Extended Thinking: Performance: Authentic Task

Students perform various improvisation exercises. They receive feedback from their teacher and peers and have the opportunity to revise their work.

Self and peer assessment

Formative: DOK 3 Strategic Thinking: Written: Journal/ Diary

Students keep a journal in which they reflect on their own work as well as the work of their peers after each class. They are given prompts by the teacher, and also are encouraged to free-write about any thoughts they have on the day's work.

Peer-to-Peer

Formative: DOK 4 Extended Thinking: Oral: Discussion

In every class, students discuss their work as well as the work of their peers. They give feedback to their peers and think about how they can utilize the feedback to enhance their performance. This process will be modeled in the first session and will then be led by the teacher throughout the unit.

Sequence of Teaching & Learning Experiences

Academic/Content Vocabulary

Lesson #1- How do we work as an ensemble?

Warm-Up: "Name Movement Introduction"
Students are brought into circle. Each student steps into circle and announces their name adding a movement.

Main Activity: "Machines" (two rounds)
Students work as an ensemble to create human machines. In the first round the machine is a general machine (i.e., repetitive sound and movement.) Second round will be a more focused machine (i.e., the machine of education). Questions: What did you experience? What changed between the two machines?

Discussion: Points for Students: What is ensemble? What is necessary for a group to work as an ensemble? What is improvisation? How can it inform our work as actors?

Lesson #2 - What are the basic rules of improvisation?

Warm-Up: Ships and Sailors

Main Activity: "Where am I? What am I doing? Come join me!"

Students learn the basic rules of improvisation

Students create a specific place on stage using

- ensemble
- improvisation
- focus
- nonverbal communication
- visualization
- feedback
- body language
- prior circumstances
- objective
- intention
- character
- acting truthfully under fictitious circumstances
- raising the stakes
- being in the moment
- physicality
- comedic timing
- quirk

their bodies and props, and behave as occupants would in this site, interacting with other actors nonverbally. Students discuss their own work and receive feedback from their teacher and peers.

Lesson #3 - How can we use body language and prior circumstances to create believable characters?

Warm-Up: "Transformation Walks"

Students move about the room as if they were various characters in various emotional states.

Main Activity: "Bus Stop"

Students create characters with specific prior circumstances and behave as these characters would at a bus stop. They interact nonverbally and must use their bodies expressively.

Students discuss their own work as well as the work of their peers.

Lesson #4 - What is an intention or objective? How do actors work to achieve their objectives or intentions?

Warm-Up: In pairs, students exchange the same two lines of dialogue several times with different intentions.

Main Activity: Teacher provides a number of objectives for actors to play using text from a small scene. Students then rehearse with partners—addressing each actor's objective clearly and with intention.

Students are directed to explore use of voice and physicality to convey meaning through character.

Lesson #5 - How do we create realistic characters? How do we act truthfully under fictitious circumstances?

Warm-Up: "Transformation Walks"

Students walk around the room at a steady pace and teacher side-coaches them to "become" or move like different animals rather than "like" an animal. Objective is for actors to embody the intention and movement of the animal they portray.

Main Activity: "Park Bench"

Students create realistic characters with prior circumstances. Both actors in a scene have the same intention - to get the other actor to give them the park bench. Actors are to work to achieve their objective while staying true to their character and prior circumstances.

Lesson #6 - How do we create realistic improvisations? How do we respond to our partner truthfully?

Warm-Up: "Zip-Zap-Zop"

There are many variations of this exercise, thus here is one example: Ensemble forms a circle and passes three sounds ("zip-zap-zop") in sequence to promote active listening, intention, focus, and teamwork. The goal is to keep the energy alive without breaking the "chain."

Teachers can vary the directions (i.e., around the circle, across the circle, reverse direction, etc.).

Main Activity: Two-person improvisations with secrets

Students participate in two-person improvisations in which they are given a relationship and conflict. They are to work to achieve their objectives and are advised to not try to be funny. They learn to raise the stakes in a scene. Students discuss their own work and the work of their peers. Students identify elements of a good improvised scene.

Lesson #7 - How do we work spontaneously, in the moment? How does physicality affect our acting?

Warm-Up: "Zip-Zap-Zop" (see above)

Main Activity: "Freeze"

Students participate in this classic improv game. Two students begin improvising a scene. When the teacher yells "freeze," the actors physically freeze, and the teacher selects a volunteer to go on stage and tap one of the frozen actors, who will then leave the stage. The volunteer must take that actor's exact physical position, but start a completely different scene as a completely different character. The remaining actor on stage must go with the new scenario. Repeat until all students have had a chance to participate. Exercise addresses listening skills and focus in a high energy forum. Revisiting of exercise creates a ritual of class, enables students to replay with same rules to improve work and group dynamics of collaboration to keep energy "up."

Lesson #8 - How do we create characters with distinctive personality traits?

Warm-up: "What are you doing?"

One student begins miming a specific activity (i.e., jumping rope, sweeping, etc.). The next student asks "What are you doing?," at which point the initial actor must tell the group an action that is unrelated in gesture to his/her

action (i.e., if jumping rope, the actor may reply "I am reading a book!" Second actor then mimes the response (i.e., reading a book) until the next actor enters and asks "What are you doing?" and so on....). Game explores freeing up imagination and physicality from literal and obvious choices.

Main Activity: "Alien"

An alien has landed in NYC. Three students create an improvised scene with three characters: a reporter, the alien, and an interpreter. The reporter interviews the alien, who speaks only "alien," while the translator translates. The audience gets to ask questions. This activity enables students to work on simple character development, active listening and working together to move a scene forward truthfully within circumstances.

Lesson #9 - How do we create characters with distinctive quirks? How do we work to support each other as part of an ensemble? How do we improve our comedic timing?

Warm-Up: "What are you doing?" (see above)

Main activity: "Party Quirks"

In this game, students work in small groups (i.e., 4-6 players) with one actor hosting a party. Each guest has a quirk that is unknown to the host. The host must try to guess each guest's quirks. Actors must work as an ensemble to make this large scene work. Actors focus on comedic timing and supporting one another. Students identify strengths and weaknesses of their own, and each other's work. They identify what makes a good performance. Activity requires students to make quick and clear character choices, to take note of others' actions, to listen actively and to ensure that the group keeps the story moving forward.

Lesson #10 - How do we use our bodies, facial expressions, and tone of voice to convey meaning?

Warm-Up: "Shake hands"

Students walk around the space at a natural pace. Teacher side-coaches them to greet one another with a different handshake or greeting each time they encounter a new actor. Students are to recall each greeting and repeat the correct one when they re-encounter each actor. See detailed lesson plan for explanation.

Main Activity: "Famous Foreign Poet"

One student is a poet from a foreign country - real or make-believe, here to perform her award-winning poem. The audience provides the country of origin as well as the title of the poem, and the famous foreign poet performs one line at a time, while the interpreter translates it. In this activity, students must work together and must use their bodies and voices very expressively. Student actors explore use of improvisation that has to be grounded in the reality of the given circumstances, active listening, and telling the story.

Lesson #11 - How do we trust our instincts while performing?

Warm-Up: "Transformation Walks" (see above)

Main Activity: "The Card Game"

In this activity, two actors improvise a scene in accord with circumstances and relationship elicited from the audience. At any point during the scene, two "card holders" can hold up cards with random words on them that each actor must incorporate into the scene without breaking character. This game requires focus, risk taking, and trusting one's instincts.

Lesson #12 - Comedy Improv show!

After all the lessons in this unit are mastered, celebrate the students' work with a comedy improv show. Teacher might invite parents during a regularly scheduled class period, or share it in the auditorium and invite other students and/or parents as well. More intimate "sharings" tend to work better than larger "performances."

Balance a program or sharing based on which games the students prefer to play with ones that illustrate the skills you hope to achieve. Make sure every student has the opportunity to participate in at least one game. Consider "rehearsing" the games: although it is to be a live improv show, the students should be aware of the order and how best to demonstrate these exercises with intention and fun!

RESOURCES

Attachments

Theater MS Improv Lessons Attachment One, Acker, Shari, NYC Theater Educator

Theater MS Improv Theater Game Exchange Attachment Two, Avery, Peter. Director of Theater, New York City Department of Education.

Texts

Barker, Clive, *Theater Games* (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1977; repr. London: Methuen Drama, 2010).

Bressler, Roberts and Walsh, *The Upright Citizens Brigade Comedy Improvisation Manual* (New York: Comedy Council of Nicea, LLC., 2013).

Johnstone, Keith, *Improv: Improvisation for the Theatre* (New York: Routledge/Theater Arts Books, 1992).

Rooyackers, Paul, *101 Drama Games for Children* (Alameda, CA: Hunter House Publishers, 1998).

Viola, Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1963; repr. 3rd ed., Albany: New Albany Press, 2013).

Viola, Spolin, *Theater Game File* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989).

THEATER MS IMPROVISATION UNIT

ATTACHMENT ONE

IMPROVISATION UNIT

Shari Acker

This Improvisation unit was developed for a Middle School drama class but can be adapted for younger or older students. I wrote this unit based on my 15 years of experience teaching theater in the NYC Department of Education, as well as privately as a teaching artist. I drew my inspiration from experiences with students; my own training; the expertise of several of my colleagues and teachers; and professional improv performances that I have had the pleasure of experiencing. This work is certainly not entirely original – many of these exercises are considered classics and are played in improv classes, theater rehearsals, performed live and even on prime time television. However each time students, actors or anyone “play” them, they should engage with intent, focus, and fun as if it was the first time all over again.

LESSON #1

Aim: How do we work as an ensemble?

Warm-up Game: Ships and Sailors

- All students stand in the center of the room. When the teacher says “Ships”, all students move stage right. When she says “Sailors” all students move stage left. When she says captain’s coming, all students must salute. They may not move until she says “At ease”. When the teacher says, “Man overboard”, students must form groups of 2, with one student kneeling while the other is standing with his/her hand on his/her partner’s shoulder. When the teacher says “Three people rowing”, students must form groups of 3 and row. When the teacher says “Four people eating”, students must form groups of 4 and pretend to eat. Students get “out” if they talk, do not follow a command, are unable to create a group of the appropriate amount of people, or move during “Captain’s coming”. The game ends when there are 2 people left, and they are the “winners”
- After the game is over, lead the students in a brief discussion about what we just did, including the following questions:
 - What did we just do to play the game?
 - How did you feel while playing the game?
 - What skills did you use while playing the game?
 - How do you think you might use these same skills while working on a performance?
 - Does anyone know what an ensemble is? Did we work as an ensemble? How?

Main Activity: Machines

1. Ask for one volunteer to come onto the stage and make a simple sound and movement. Explain that it must be something that they can sustain for a period of time.
2. After the first student has his/her sound and movement established, have another volunteer come up. Instruct him/her to make a different sound and movement, but to somehow interact with the first student – adding on to what the first student had started.

3. Have a third, fourth, and fifth student come up one at a time to continue to add on his or her own sounds and movements, creating a machine.
4. Once the machine is established, say, "This machine is at volume 5 right now, lets bring it volume level 10! Volume level 4! Volume level 1! " Do the same thing with speed levels. After a minute, give the group a round of applause, and have them go back to their seats.
5. Explain to the class that this group just worked as an ensemble to make a machine. Say: I didn't give them any instructions as to what type of machine to make; they just worked together to make a machine. Now, we are going to break up into groups of 5 to create machines, but this time, you, as a group, can pick what type of machine you want to create. You can use your imagination and make up a machine that doesn't exist (ex. A machine that makes people smile; a machine that cleans up your room). Say: You have 5 minutes to work on this, and then we will share with the class.
6. Break the class into groups of five or six randomly by having them count off up to five. All the one's go together, two's, etc. Circulate as they are working in groups, providing help and/or feedback as needed.
7. After about five minutes, have one group at a time share their work. Give positive affirmations about their work, and encourage the audience to do the same.

Discussion Questions:

- How did you feel while working on your machine?
- What skills did we use to make this machine?
- How did we work as an ensemble?
- How will these skills help you as an actor/improvise?

Journal Reflection: How did we work as ensemble today? How did it feel to be part of an ensemble? What did you learn today?

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators addressed:

- Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms, such as improvisation and theater games.
- Students will be able to use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises and improvisations.

LESSON #2

Aim: What is improvisation?

Warm Up Game: Ships and Sailors – see Lesson #1

Discussion:

- Write the word **Improvisation** on Chart paper. Ask the class what they think of when they hear the words *Improvisation* or *Improv*. Create a web listing all of their responses.
- Try not to deny any answers, but after looking at the web, try to construct a working definition for your class using as many appropriate responses as possible. It should look something like this: *Improv – Acting without a script; thinking on your feet; making up your lines as you go along.*
- Discuss that while improvisation is a way to perform spontaneously and creatively, there are a few basic rules to follow. List them on a chart and discuss:
- **The Basic Rules of Improv:**
 1. **Have Fun!**
 2. **Always make your partner look good!**
 3. **Always agree with your partner “yes, and...”** *This is a complicated rule. You can disagree with a character in a scene to create conflict, but you can never negate circumstances your partner comes up with. If your partner states you are eating ice cream on the moon, that is what you are doing.*
 4. **Don’t worry about what you look like!**
 5. **It doesn’t always have to be funny!**

Main Activity: Where am I? What am I doing? Come join me!

1. Explain that in improv, specificity is very important. SAY: In this game, we are each going to create a place, and act as we would in this particular place. It’s very important that you visualize where you are. Even though we are on an empty stage, if you know where you are, the audience should be able to figure it out as well. Try to think of a place that you like to go. Make sure that this place is somewhere that others can come and join you in. Really imagine everything that you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste in this place. If you really imagine you are there, and really do what you would do while there, the rest of us will probably be able to figure out where you are. Once, I snap my fingers, if you think that you know where the actor on stage is, raise your hand and I will call on you to go join them. When you join them in their place, you may interact with them non-verbally.
2. Model an example. I always do being at the beach. I enter the stage, look around, look up at the sun, find a spot, and sit down. I mime taking a towel out of my bag and spreading it out. Then I take off my shoes, mime putting on sunscreen. I take a book out of my bag and lie down and read. After a few moments, I break character, and say directly to the audience “I’m breaking character now – you won’t do this. You will keep going in your scenes. Who thinks they know where I am?” Call on someone, if they are correct, invite them to join you on the beach and do what they would do on the beach. Then instruct the students to raise their hands if they want to join. Explain that this will be a silent game – there is not talking. You may interact with others on the beach, but not verbally. Point to each student to join. Six to eight students joining a scene are a good amount. When you think the scene has gone on long enough. Say “Curtain” Give everyone a round of applause and send them back to their seats.

3. Discuss –
 - How did you know I was at the beach?
 - What specifically did I do to let you know I was at the beach?
 - What did the other actors who joined me do to let you know they were at the beach?
Was there anything we could have done to make this clearer?
4. Have a volunteer come onto the stage and create their world. Instruct the audience that there is absolutely no talking. Once you, the teacher know where the student actor is, tell the audience “Now raise your hand if you know where s/he is. I will point to you and you can silently go join them,” Allow several students to join. When you feel that the scene went on for a substantial amount of time, say “Curtain.
5. Repeat the above discussion questions.
6. Repeat with a new student beginning the scene. Try to have all students participate, even if all don't get a chance to start their own scene. If students are really into this activity, you can always do it again next week, or do it as a warm up game in future classes.

Discussion Questions:

- What did we do?
- How did it feel to create your own world on stage? How did it feel to join someone else's'?
- What skills did we use to play this game?
- How do you think these skills will help you as an improv performer?

Journal Reflection: How did you work as an improviser today? Did anything surprise you today?

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators addressed:

- Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms, such as improvisation and theater games.
- Students will be able to use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises and improvisations.

LESSON #3

Aim: How can we use body language and prior circumstances to create believable characters?

Warm-Up Game: Transformation Walks:

- Instruct to the students to move around the room, however they feel like moving. The only rule is that they cannot talk, and they cannot push or bump into anyone else. Then instruct the students to move around the room as if they were: A prince or princess; a five-year-old; a 99 year old; a business man or woman; a teenager; a farmer; a wave in the ocean; a feather in the wind, the number 1; the number 10; the number 4; etc – anything you come up with.
- After about 5 minutes, have the students sit in a circle and lead them in a discussion, asking the following questions:
 - What did we just do to play the game?
 - How did you feel while playing the game?
 - What skills did you use while playing the game?
 - How do you think you might use these same skills while working on a performance?

Main Activity: Bus Stop

1. Set up three cubes to serve as a bench at a bus stop.
2. Explain that in this game, four people are going to enter the set one at a time, and act as if they were waiting for the bus. Explain that each person will be given a slip with a number on it. That number is their age. They must think about how a person of that age would behave while waiting for the bus.
3. Explain that they may interact with each other at the bus stop, but they must do so *nonverbally*. Instruct them that after they receive their age, they must decide where they are going, and how they feel about it. That is called *prior circumstances*, and will affect their behavior.
4. Select four volunteers to do the activity. After they have been “waiting for the bus” for about two minutes and had sufficient time to set up their characters and interact non-verbally, stop the scene by saying “scene”.
5. Have the four actors remain on stage. Select 1 actor, and ask the audience the following **discussion questions**:
 - How old do you think he is?
 - How did you know that?
 - What did he do to convey this?
 - Do you think he was happy about where he was going? Why?
 - Is there anything he could have done to make his choices clearer?
 - Repeat this with each of the four actors.
 - If time permits, and students were struggling allow them to revise using the feedback for just about 30 seconds. Repeat this with each of the four actors.
6. Repeat until all students have had a chance to participate.

Journal Reflection: How did it feel to participate in this activity? To be an audience member? How did body language and prior circumstance help you and your classmates to create believable characters?

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicator addressed:

- Students will enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms, such as improvisation and theater games.

- Students will be able to apply an understanding of action and reaction in improvisation, scene work, and performance.
- Students will be able to use physical transformation to create a viable characterization.
- Students will be able to use non-verbal communication to support and enhance performance.

LESSON #4

Aim: What is an *intention* or *objective*? How do actors work to achieve their objectives or intentions?

Warm –up Activity:

1. Ask the class: How many of you have ever gotten in trouble? (All usually raise their hands)
2. Then ask: How many of you have been in trouble, and your parents or teacher has said to you “You are in trouble not because of what you said, but because of **how** you said it?” (Again, most raise their hands)
3. Explain that what we say can mean many things depending on you how say it. Your tone of voice and body language really influences the meaning of what you say.
4. Invite a student volunteer to join you on the stage. Explain that we are going to engage in a dialogue. The only thing I am going to say is “Hi! How are you?” and the only thing the student can reply is “Fine, how are you?” Say: This sounds very simple, but see how I say my line will affect how my partner responds.
5. Ask the class to say “1, 2, 3, action” and then begin the scene. Say the lines in a very enthusiastic manner, as if you were seeing a friend you haven’t seen in a very long time. Odds are your partner will respond the same way.
6. Ask the class “How did we feel about seeing each other? How did you know?” (Responses should be “you sounded happy; you smiled, etc”)
7. Repeat the exact same dialogue with the exact same partner, but with a different tone of voice and body language, as if you were very angry with the person. After the scene, ask the class: How did we feel about each other this time? How did you know? How does what we do with our voices and bodies change the meaning of what we say?
8. Have the class break into pairs, and try this activity on their own. Give them 2 simple lines of dialogue, such as “Excuse me, do you have the time?” and “No, I’m sorry, I don’t”, and instruct them to try the scene 3 times, each with a different meaning.

Main Activity: 1-10 with intention

1. After the warm-up activity, assemble the class in the audience. Ask them if anyone knows what an intention, or objective is.
2. Explain that an objective, or an intention, is what an actor wants to accomplish in the scene. These words are used interchangeably. Reference back to the warm up activity. Say: In the first scene I did with the volunteer, my intention was to let her know that I was happy to see her. I used my tone of voice and body language to achieve that objective.
3. Explain that all actors have objectives in every scene they are working on. It is very important to use your voice and body to help you achieve your objective.
4. Explain that now we are going to play another game, where how we say things is very important. In this game, you have a script: the only words you

can say are the numbers one through 10. You can say them any way you wish, and you may repeat them, and you may do whatever you want with your body (without harming anyone). Explain that two people will come up on stage at a time. One person will be given a slip of paper with an *intention* on it. The intention is what they want from the other person. They have to achieve that intention and the only words they may utter are the numbers one through ten. Explain that it sounds a lot harder than it is, and model how to do it with a student. I usually model it with the intention "To make him/her leave the room". Model this intention (without sharing it with your partner or the class) by saying the numbers sternly, while pointing at the door. If the partner is not getting it, try moving towards the door, and gesturing him/her to come, while saying the numbers strongly. When the partner does leave the room, bring them right back in and clap. Ask the class:

- What was my intention? How did you know? What did I do to achieve it?
5. Invite a pair of students up to the stage to perform the activity. One student (the giver) is given a slip of paper with an intention on it, while the other (the receiver) is to react to the giver. The giver is trying to make the receiver do, or sometimes feel something. The giver is to stop and let the audience know once they have achieved their objectives. It is much easier to make someone do something rather than feel something. You may want to ask each giver if they want an easy or hard one. You may also want to decide based on your observations of their ability level; you want each student to succeed. Sample intentions include:
 - To make him/her give you something.
 - To make him/her laugh.
 - To make him/her dance.
 - To make him/her feel good about themselves.
 - To annoy him/her.
 - To make him/her take off their shoes.
 6. Repeat until all students have a chance to go up at least once. **Note: You will probably not get through all students in this session. You will probably have to continue next session.**

Discussion Questions:

- How did it feel to play this game?
- Did you prefer being a giver or a receiver? Why?
- How does using your body and voice help you achieve your intentions?
- What skills did you use?
- How might this activity help you as an actor?

Journal Reflection: Respond to today's class. Focus on the above discussion questions in greater detail in your entry.

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators addressed:

- Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms, such as improvisation and theater games.
- Students will be able to use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises and improvisations.

- Students will be able to apply specific character needs, objectives, intention, obstacles, actions, emotions, and relationships in the creation of roles.

LESSON #5

Aim: How do we create realistic characters? How can we act truthfully under fictitious circumstances?

WarmUp Activity: Transformation walks (see prior lessons for explanation)

Main Activity: Park Bench

1. Set one cube center stage. Tell the class that we are going to pretend that this cube is a park bench, and that it is the only park bench in sight.
2. Explain that in this activity, one person is seated at the bench. This actor has to come up with a really good reason why they are on this bench, and why they may not want to give up their seat (*prior circumstances*). The second person in the scene has to try to convince the first person to give them the seat. Both actors are to react realistically to one another; they are to react how they really would react in real life. There are no winners or losers in this game. The point is to act in a realistic manner, but constantly keep your *prior circumstances* and *objective* (to have the seat) in your mind.
3. The teacher should choose a student volunteer and model how to perform this activity with that student.
4. After the example is finished, allow pairs of students to come up on stage to perform this exercise.

Discussion Questions:

- How did you feel while playing this game?
- What skills did you use?
- How may this exercise help you grow as an actor?

Journal Reflection: How did it feel to participate in *park bench*? What did you observe as an audience member? Whose work did you admire most, and why?

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators Addressed:

- Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms.
- Students will be able to use physical and vocal skills to create a variety of characters in improvisations, scene work, and performance.

LESSON #6

Aim: How do we create realistic improvisations? How do we react to our partners truthfully?

Warm-Up Game: Zip Zap Zop

- Sit in a circle with your students. Explain that we are going to play a game that will help us focus on our partners.
- Say: This game is simple, yet very complicated at the same time. This is a classic improv game, and some of you may have played it before. There are many different versions of this game, so please pay close attention to the rules. You may have learned it differently from a different acting or improv teacher, and that is OK, but in this class, we are going to play with this set of rules, so please pay attention very carefully.
- Say: I am going to turn to Sally who is sitting to my right, make eye contact with her, and say the word “zip”. Sally will then turn to Steve who is next to her, make eye contact with him, and say the word “zip”. Then he’ll turn to the person, and so on until the word zip gets around the whole circle.
- Try that one time, making sure everyone is turning their heads and making eye contact with their partner.
- Once the group has this, Say: The next part of the game is “zap!” Zap changes the direction of the game. We’ve been turning to the right to say “zip”. If you want to change direction, when someone says “zip” to you, instead of turning to the next person and saying, “zip”, you can retort “zap” to the person who just said “zip” to you. If you zap someone, they must change the direction and turn to the left and then say “zip” to the person next to them making eye contact.
- Try this out, using only zip and zap. After the class gets the hang of it, introduce “zop”
- Say: Now that we’ve mastered “zip” and “zap”, we can also use “zop”. To do this, you make eye contact with someone on the opposite side of the circle, say “zop” while clapping your hands towards that person. The person who has been zopped can turn to the person on either side of him and say “zip”
- Try this out. When someone makes a mistake, call them on it. Ask the class what this person did wrong. Once the class gets the hang of the rules, start playing where a person is “out” if they make a mistake. Instruct those that are out to watch carefully to see if anyone makes a mistake.
- Continue the game until there are 3 students playing and call it a 3-way tie.

Main Activity: Two person improvisations with secrets

- Review the chart with the basic rules of improv
- Explain that today we are going to perform improvisations where the actors are given a structure. We will give them a relationship and prior circumstances. Ex: Two sisters. One is very upset because the other borrowed her shirt without permission and got a stain on it.
- Have two student volunteers come on the stage, and with the audience come up with a relationship and prior circumstances. Review the term “objective” and explain that is very important for each actor to have an objective that they are trying to achieve throughout the scene. Ex: One sister wants an apology and for her sister to replace the shirt. The other sister wants her sister to forgive her and let it slide. Then have the class say “One, two, three, action!” and the actors will improvise the scene.
- During scene work, you can “side coach” by saying things to the actors such as “find a solution” or “get what you want”.
- When you think the scene has run its course, say “scene”. Allow for applause.
- Discuss the improvised scene:
 - Were the improvisers believable? Why or why not?

- Did you see them pursuing their objectives?
- How did you feel while performing?
- Repeat the scene, giving each actor a secret that you whisper in their ear ex: Sister 1 was planning on wearing the shirt out tonight. She has a date with a boy she had a crush on and doesn't want anyone in the family to know. Sister 2 knows about the date and is jealous, and got the stain on purpose.
- Have the actors perform the scene again, and see if their secret changes the way the scene plays out. When you feel that the scene has run its course say "scene" and allow for applause.
- Allow the actors to share their secrets.
- Discuss:
 - How was the scene different this time?
 - How did the secrets raise the stakes in the scene?
 - Were the actors more believable?
 - Were the actors pursuing their objectives? Were they doing so more than they were in the original scene?
- Repeat with as many pairs of improvisers as time allows for. You may have your own list of situations or allow the class to provide scenarios. You must always provide the secret.

Note: For all students to participate, this lesson may take two class periods. It's very important that everyone gets a turn to act as well as be an active audience member.

Journal Reflection: Why is pursuing an objective important while performing an improvised scene? Why is it important to listen to what your partner is saying during scene work?

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators addressed:

- Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms, such as improvisation and theater games.
- Students will be able to use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises and improvisations.
- Students will be able to apply specific character needs, objectives, intention, obstacles, actions, emotions, and relationships in the creation of roles.
- Students will be able to demonstrate consistent appropriate onstage behavior.
- Students use vocabulary that is authentic and integral to theater.
- Students enhance their ability to critique live performance.

LESSON #7

Aim: How do we work spontaneously, in the moment? How does physicality affect our acting?

Warm –up Game: Zip Zap Zop

Main Activity: Freeze

1. Have the students sit in the audience area. The teacher should stand in the playing area, and Say: Today, we are going to learn a new game, called Freeze. This is also a very classic improv game. It requires focus, and it also requires actors to trust their impulses, and act spontaneously in the moment. Ask the class if they know what that means, and have a brief discussion about it.
2. Say: In this game, two improvisers will take the stage. The audience will provide an opening line for one of the players. The players will start improvising a scene with the opening line. Remember, scenes are most interesting if each actor is pursuing an objective. Its tricky, you have to think of one very quickly! At some point in the scene, I will say, “Freeze”. The actors will freeze in their exact physical position from when I say, “Freeze” At this point, if you are inspired, you will raise your hand, and I will call on someone. That person will come up onto the stage. She will choose one of the improvisers whose physical position inspires her, and tap that actor on the shoulder. That actor will return to the audience, and the new improviser will assume her EXACT PHYSICAL POSITION, AND BEGIN A NEW SCENE FROM THAT PHYSICAL POSTION. THE OTHER ACTOR WILL NOT MOVE UNTIL THE NEW ACTOR SAYS HER FIRST OPENING LINE.
3. Have two volunteers take the stage. Elicit an opening line from the audience. Try to ensure that the opening line is open ended and engaging, implying a conflict of some sort. Have the actors start the scene, and call freeze when you feel the scene is at a point of high conflict and the actors are in interesting physical positions. Have an audience member come up and take the actors exact physical position. Ask the audience if the actor is in the right position and allow them to help if the improviser needs it. Then instruct the improviser to start a completely new scene, letting the physical position they are in inspire the first line.
4. Repeat until everyone has had a turn.
5. Throughout the game, you can say, “Freeze” and have a brief discussion if actors are having a hard time creating conflicts or starting new scenes. Allow the audience to provide suggestions, and then have the actors start again.

Note: This is a game that kids of all ages tend to love. It can be used as a warm-up game once the students have mastered it. It provides excellent practice of improv skills and can be quick enough for all students to participate.

Discussion Questions:

- What did we do while playing the game?
- How did you feel while performing? While in the audience?
- What skills did we use to play this game?
- When else might we use these skills?

Journal Reflection: How does physicality affect an improviser's performance? Cite specific examples from today's class.

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators addressed:

- Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms, such as improvisation and theater games.
- Students will be able to use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises and improvisations.
- Students will be able to apply specific character needs, objectives, intention, obstacles, actions, emotions, and relationships in the creation of roles.
- Students will be able to demonstrate consistent appropriate onstage behavior.
- Students use vocabulary that is authentic and integral to theater.
- Students enhance their ability to critique live performance.

LESSON #8

Aim: How do we create and portray characters with distinctive personality traits?

Warm –Up: What are you doing?

- Have students stand in a line in the playing area. Say: In this game, one improviser will stage and begin doing something, for example, playing basketball. Once it is clear to the audience what the person is doing, the next actor on line will come on stage and ask, “What are you doing?” The improviser will answer, saying something completely different than what he is doing, ex” Dancing Swan Lake”. The actor who asked will immediately begin dancing Swan Lake. The next actor on line will come up and ask “What are you doing?” the actor dancing Swan Lake will say something completely different, like “Playing Basketball”, the new actor will begin playing basketball, and so on.
- Allow each student to have one turn. After everyone had a turn, have a brief discussion:
 - What did we do during this game?
 - What skills did we use?
 - When were these scenes especially enjoyable to watch?
 - What can we do to make them even more fun to perform and watch?
- Play the game again, so that each student gets a turn, and gets to apply the fresh feedback.

Main Activity: Alien

1. Set up the stage with three chairs or cubes.
2. Explain that in this game, there are three characters: A news reporter, an Alien, and an interpreter.
3. Explain that in this game, an Alien has landed here on earth (I like to say here in Brooklyn, and use local attractions, such as Chuck E. Cheese, Target, or our school’s cafeteria as examples of where the Alien was specifically found.). The news reporter is live on the scene to interview the alien. Since the alien does not speak English, the interpreter must interpret the interviewer’s questions from English into Alien language (this is done by making gibberish, nonsense sounds, and using exaggerated facial expressions and physical gestures). The Alien then replies in “Alien Language”, and the interpreter then interprets the alien’s response back into English.
4. The teacher should model the activity, switching from seat to seat, playing all three roles.
5. After the class understands the rules, choose 3 volunteers to play the interviewer, interpreter, and the alien. Instruct the interpreter to ask 3 questions, and then allow members of the “studio audience” to ask 3 questions. Have the class say “1, 2, 3 Action!” Then you, the “host” should say something to the effect of: Ladies and Gentlemen, we have some groundbreaking news! An Alien has landed right here, in Brooklyn. He was found wandering around Target. Live on the scene is our top reporter

Claudia. With her, we have our alien languages expert, who will be interpreting, and of course the Alien. Claudia, you are live in 3, 2, 1...

6. After the first sketch, have a brief discussion:

- What skills did the improvisers use to play this game?
- What was particularly effective? Why?

7. Repeat allowing all students to have a chance. **Note: In a large class, everyone may not get a turn. Stress that if they do not go today, they will definitely go next week.**

Journal Reflection: How did you feel while playing this game? Which role did you like best? Why? What skills did you need to use to play this game? Whose work did you admire? Why?

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators Addressed:

- Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms.
- Students continue to develop the processes and the analytical and imaginative skills associated with acting.
- Students will be able to create appropriate physical gestures and facial expressions that serve a character.
- Students will be able to recognize and create a variety of vivid characters in improvisation, scene work, and plays.

LESSON #9

Aim: How do we create characters with distinctive quirks? How do we work to support each other as part of an ensemble? How can we improve our comedic timing?

Warm –Up: What am I doing?

Main Activity: Party Quirks

1. Have the students sit in the audience section of the room.
2. Explain the rules of the game. One person, the party, host, will exit the room. While the host is out of the room, five improvisers will be chosen to be party guests. We, the audience, will give each improviser a quirk (Review the definition of the word quirk – an unusual personality trait). When the audience has given each guest a quirk, the guests will go offstage and the host will be called back in. The host will deliver a monologue to the audience explaining how excited she is to be throwing a party. From offstage, the first guest says, “ding dong” and enters the party. He will interact with the host as if he were at the party, but make sure that he also is incorporating his quirk into the character. The host will try to guess the quirk by saying “Are you my friend who....”. If the host guesses correctly, the audience will applaud and the guest will sit down. If the host guesses incorrectly, the guest simply says no and the scene continues. The second party guest may enter after the first guest has been there a while if the host doesn’t guess the quirk right away. **This is where our comedic timing is very important. If you feel your fellow actors are struggling, come in and help them. If the audience is really enjoying the scene, wait a few moments until there is a lull to come join.** There should not be more than 2 (or possibly 3 if the host is really having a hard time) party guests at a time. The guests may interact with each other as well as the hosts.
3. Discuss ways to support your team. For example, if a guest’s quirk is that he is scared of his own shadow, and the host is not getting it, you can enter and say “ooh, look its your Shadow! Run!” This will help the host without too blatantly giving it away.

4. Once the class understands the roles, pick a volunteer host, volunteer guests, and begin the game. If the audience has a hard time coming up with quirks, have a few ready on hand (ex. Neat Freak, Strange Tic, obsessed with Justin Bieber, doesn't wear deodorant, thinks he's a superman).
5. Have the first group play the game. During the game, if a guest gets stuck, instruct the other guests to help him out. If they still are having a hard time conveying the quirk, go on stage and whisper some ideas or strategies into the guest's ear.
6. After the first group performs, engage the class in a discussion:
 - What did we do in this game?
 - What skills did the improvisers use?
 - What worked really well?
 - What do you think we can do in the future to make the game even funnier for the audience?
7. Play the game again with a new set of improvisers, instructing them to keep the answers from the last two questions in mind. Repeat until all students have a chance. Have a brief discussion after each group.

Journal Reflection: What did you like best about playing Party Quirks? What did you find most challenging? Why is timing important?

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- Students will be able to use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises and improvisations.
- Students will be able to apply specific character needs, objectives, intention, obstacles, actions, emotions, and relationships in the creation of roles.
- Students will be able to demonstrate consistent appropriate onstage behavior.
- Students use vocabulary that is authentic and integral to theater.
- Students enhance their ability to critique live performance.

LESSON #10

Aim: How do we use our bodies, facial expressions, and tone of voice to convey meaning?

Warm- Up Game: Shake Hands

- Instruct students to walk silently around the room. After they are moving around the room, say "Freeze" Instruct them to silently find a partner closest to them and shake hands. If there are an odd number of students, the teacher should participate so that everyone has a partner. Say: Whenever I say, "shake hands" you must find this person and shake hands.
- Have them resume walking around the room, and call out "Shake hands" a couple of times.
- Have them walk around the room and call "Freeze". Say: Find a NEW partner, and touch elbows with them. This is your elbow partner. Whenever I say "elbows", you must find this person (not your shake hands partner) and touch elbows with them.
- Have them walk around the room and call out "Shake Hands" or "Elbows" each a few times. Then say, "Freeze" and Say: Now find a new partner and stand toe to toe with them. This is your toe-to-toe partner. Whenever I say "Toe to toe" find this partner.
- Have students walk around the room and alternate the commands.

- After a few more tries, call “Shake Hands!”. Say: While you are shaking hands, see if you can find your elbow partners.
- If they are able to do that, Say: now see if you can stay connected with these partners and find your toe-to-toe partner. If its not possible, its OK.
- Whatever level of success they have, give them a round of applause, and make sure they give themselves a round of applause for working together so nicely.
- Have a brief discussion:
 - What did we do to play this game?
 - How did you feel while playing it?
 - What skills did we use?
 - How did we work as an ensemble?
 - When else in improv do we need to use these skills?
 - What strategies worked well while playing this game?
 - The next time we play this game, is there anything we should remember?

Main Activity: Famous Foreign Poet

1. Have the students sit in the audience. Stand in the playing area and say: Today we are going to learn a new game, called “Famous Foreign Poet”. In this game, we will have an award winning foreign poet here to recite his or her award-winning poem. This poet does not speak English at all. Luckily we have a translator who will translate the poem.
2. Have a volunteer come on stage to be the poet. The teacher should model being the interpreter. Ask the audience “Where is this famous foreign poet from?”, or “What language does this poet speak?” If there are a lot of students who speak a different language, say Spanish, do not allow the poet to be from a Spanish speaking country.
3. Ask the audience “What is the title of this Poet’s award winning poem?” Encourage them to come up with silly answers – the wackier the better.
4. Say: Now the poet is going to recite their award winning poem, entitled _____. I luckily speak her language and will interpret it.
5. Instruct the poet to speak in gibberish, with whatever inflection they feel will serve the character. Encourage them to use their bodies and vocal intonation as much as possible to convey their poem since they cannot speak English.
6. As the interpreter, after each line, translate into English. Try to make the translation match the poet’s physical/vocal message, but keep in mind the title of the poem.
7. After the poem is finished, say “The End” and both take a bow.
8. Have a brief discussion with the class:
 - What did we do during this game?
 - What skills did we use?
 - What made it funny?
 - Why is physicality and tone of voice so important in this exercise?
 - What worked really well?
 - If we were to do it again, what could we improve upon?
9. Have as many pairs of students as possible get to play the game. Have a brief feedback session following the above last few questions after each pair. If possible, allow for some pairs to revise based on feedback.

Journal Reflection: How did you feel playing this game? What was most challenging? How does physicality and tone of voice affect performance? Whose work did you particularly enjoy today? Why?

Note: This game can be played as “Famous Foreign Opera Singer” as well. It’s played the same exact way, except for the fact that instead of reciting a foreign poem, the

celebrity guest is singing an opera song. Kids tend to love this after they have become proficient at Famous Foreign Poet.

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators addressed:

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- Students will be able to use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises and improvisations.
- Students will be able to apply specific character needs, objectives, intention, obstacles, actions, emotions, and relationships in the creation of roles.
- Students will be able to demonstrate consistent appropriate onstage behavior.
- Students use vocabulary that is authentic and integral to theater.
- Students enhance their ability to critique live performance.

LESSON #11

Aim: How do we trust our instincts while performing?

Warm-up Game: Transformation Walks

Main Activity: The Card Game

1. Have the students sit in the audience. Give each student three large index cards. Instruct them to write any one word or name on each card. Tell them that the words can be silly, but of course not inappropriate (no curse words).
2. Collect the cards and tell the class that we are going to be using these cards in the next improv game. Say: In this game, there will be four actors on the stage. Two will be improvisers, and two will be cardholders. The cardholders will not be speaking, but will to some extent control what the improvisers are saying.
3. Choose 4 volunteers to come to the stage. It would be best to choose your more advanced students to model this exercise for the first time, as it is a difficult one. Have the two improvisers stand opposite each other. Lets call them A and B.
4. Then have Cardholder B stand behind actor A, so that actor B can see him. Card Holder A stands behind Actor B, so that card actor A can see him.
5. Whenever a Card Holder A holds up a card, Actor A must say the word on the card, regardless of what's going on in the scene. The actor **MUST** say whatever is on the card, and then do his best to make it make sense in the scene. Whenever Card Holder B holds up a card, Actor B must say what is on the card. Its very important that the actors are standing facing each other, with the card holders standing so that only their actor can see their card. Actor A must never see what is on Card Holder B's card.
6. This sounds a lot trickier than it is. Just try it and see how it works.
7. Ask the audience for an opening line. Instruct the improvisers to start a scene based on the opening line. After a few lines instruct the cardholders to hold up their cards one at a time when they think it will be particularly funny.
8. This usually provides hilarious scenes. The cardholders have a good time controlling the improvisers. Coach the improvisers to just trust their gut as to what to do next. They are trained improvisers with good instincts!
9. Try to side coach the improvisers if they struggle. Try to help them find an ending.
10. When they finish the first scene, discuss:
 - What did the improvisers do in this scene?

- What did the cardholders do?
- What skills did each use?
- Why are these important skills for an improviser?
- How did all performers trust their instincts?
- What worked really well?
- What do you think we can try to do differently the next time we play this game?

11. Repeat with as many groups as time allows.

Journal Reflection: Why is it important to be focused and trust your instincts as an improviser? If you performed today, how did you like playing this game? If you were an audience member, whose work did you particularly enjoy, and why?

Blueprint Benchmarks and Learning Indicators addressed:

- Students enhance and develop their performance skills while learning to work in diverse styles and forms, such as improvisation and theater games.
- Students will be able to use the body and voice expressively in theater exercises and improvisations.
- Students will be able to apply specific character needs, objectives, intention, obstacles, actions, emotions, and relationships in the creation of roles.
- Students will be able to demonstrate consistent appropriate onstage behavior.
- Students use vocabulary that is authentic and integral to theater.
- Students enhance their ability to critique live performance.

SESSION #12: Improvisation sharing or performance

NYCDOE THEATER TEACHER “THEATER GAME” EXCHANGE

A living, breathing handbook

Thank you to all the DOE teachers who contributed. The first 58 games and exercises are courtesy of Youth Theaters from across the country as part of the Youth Theater Game exchange I chaired for AATE for several years. Please do email my office with more as they occur to you -- we will add them to the list and circulate.

Games and exercises serve many purposes depending on context (skills work, ensemble, collaboration, warm-ups, risk-taking, fun, etc.). However they should also always be in service of one's larger lesson, rehearsal or performance: leading into, illuminating or addressing specific techniques, concerns or opportunities.

Enjoy!
Peter

1. Clapping Circle (with changing directions)

Age Level: All ages

Group Size: 4-40

Description: The class stands in a circle. The first student begins by turning to either the student on his/her right or left. The two make eye contact and try to clap at the same time. The receiving student then passes the clap to the next student until it goes around the entire circle. The purpose is to develop focus and then speed. Once students have mastered this, the teacher may select one or two students who may change the direction if they choose. When this student receives the clap they may either pass it on as usual or may send it back to the person who gave it to them, thereby reversing the direction.

2. Zip Zap Zop

Age Level: Grades 4-adult

Group Size: 4-40

Description: The class stands in a circle. The first student claps his/her hands toward any other student in the circle while making eye contact and says “zip.” The student who was “zipped” then sends the clapping motion to any other student in the circle saying “zap.” The student who was “zapped” then sends the clapping motion to any other student in the circle saying “zop.” The cycle then begins again.

The purpose of this game is to make eye contact and send a focused clapping motion and sound to the next student. Once students have mastered the basics, the speed should pick up. Encourage students to use their first impulse – take 3 or 4 seconds deciding who will be next.

3. Word Tennis

Age Level: Grades 3-up

Group Size: 2-20

Description: Two students face each other and are given a category (i.e., colors, rivers, states in the U.S., etc.). The students, one after the other, name as many things from that category as he/she can. If a student takes more than a count of three to come up with something or repeats an item that has already been mentioned, he/she is out and is replaced with another student from the class.

4. When I Go To California

Age Level: Grades K-6

Group Size: 6-30

Description: The class sits in a circle. Each student says “When I go to California, I’m going to bring _____.” The student is free to fill in the blank as creatively as he/she wishes. The object the student wishes to bring does not necessarily need to be “logical.” For instance, the student can bring their mother, a car, a tree, Oreo cookies, etc. After the first student goes, the second student begins, “When I go to California, I’m going to bring [the first student’s object] and [their new object].”

Example:

Student 1: “When I go to California, I’m going to bring a pizza.”

Student 2: “When I go to California, I’m going to bring a pizza and a teddy bear.”

Student 3: “When I go to California, I’m going to bring a pizza, a teddy bear and a piano.”

Student 4: “When I go to Cali., I’m going to bring a pizza, a teddy bear, a piano and soap.”

5. Clay - Sculptor

Age Level: Grades 5-up

Group Size: 6-40

Description: Students divide into groups of two. One student is “A”, the other “B”. Student A becomes a lump of clay and student B becomes the sculptor. With a time limit of approximately 2 minutes, Student B molds student A into an interesting statue and gives the statue a name.

At the end of the two minutes of work, the teacher asks each sculptor the name of their statue. Students now reverse. B becomes the sculptor and A becomes the clay. Repeat the exercise.

6. Memorize the Shapes

Age Level: Grades 5-up

Group Size: 8-40

Description: Each student creates an interesting shape with their body. Students are encouraged to use a variety of levels, but to create a shape that is easy to hold for about 1 minute. Once students have created their shape, the teacher designates it as “Shape 1.”

Students pair up with another student. They teach each other their Shape 1. Teacher asks to see the whole group show the new shape they just learned. This is designated as Shape 2. The teacher should then ask to see Shape 1 for four counts and Shape 2 for four counts.

Students pair up with another student. They teach each other their Shape 1. Teacher asks to see the whole group show the new shape they just learned. This is designated as Shape 3. The teacher should then ask to see Shape 1 for four counts, Shape 2 for four counts and Shape 3 for four counts. This game can continue for as many levels as the teacher desires. Once the students know four or five shapes, this can also become a concentration game. The teacher can mix up the order he/she asks to see the shapes (i.e., Shape 3, Shape 1, Shape 5, Shape 4, Shape 2).

7. A/B Conversations

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 4-40

Description: Students divide into groups of two. One student is “A”, the other “B”. The teacher gives a “first line” for Student A to say to student B. All groups are working with the same first line at the same time. The students create a realistic conversation based on that first line.

The first lines should allow students the freedom to create their own specific conversation. Children should be encouraged to define a specific situation using their first lines.

Sample First Lines: “I can’t believe you said that to me.”; “A bag of potato chips, a coke and a banana.”; “It’s down the hall, second door on the left.”

8. One Minute Monologues

Age Level: Grades 5-up

Group Size: 8-40 (not all share)

Description: One student stands in front of the class. The student is given a topic and must speak for one minute on that subject without stopping. Encourage students to give many details and to speak slowly.

Example: A student sits in front of the classroom. The teacher gives the topic "pizza" and the student speaks for one minute about pizza.

9. Freeze Tag

Age Level: Grades 2-up

Group Size: 6-40

Description: Two students begin an improvised scene. Encourage the students to be very physical. After a little while, the teacher says, "Freeze." The improvising students freeze. The teacher selects a student from the audience to tag one of the two students in the improvisation. The tagged student leaves the improv and the new student assumes their frozen physical position. Encourage the student to find the exact physical position of the student he/she tagged. The new student now starts the improv again, using the physical position they have assumed, but beginning an entirely different scene. Example: Students are improvising a scene in a car. Teacher freezes scene. A student from the audience tags the driver. When the scene starts again, the new student begins the scene not as a driver holding a steering wheel, but as an artist looking at a picture. The other student must go along with the new scene.

10. Household Appliances Instant Success Stories

Age Level: Grade 3 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Break the class up into small groups. Give them a few minutes with their groups to decide what inanimate object (fan, toaster, telephone) to be; everyone must be a part of the whole; this can be done with or without sound effects. Let the class try to guess what each group is representing; if they can't guess a few tries, ask the group what they are & ask the class for suggestions to help the group to do it again (usually this just means getting more specific and detailed).

11. Instant Success Stories Postcard from ("Tableaus")

Age Level: Grade 2 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Break the class up into groups. Tell the class what story you are going to tell and have each member of the group decide what character they will be (there can be more than one of each character). Tell a short, well-known story (e.g., "The Three Little Pigs") and ask each group to simultaneously mime it. After you have gone through the whole story, give each group a few minutes to decide on its own version of the story (e.g., "Pigs in Space," "Pigs of the Old West," "Opera Pigs") and work on it a little bit. Ask each group to perform their own version for each other.

12. Postcard From ("Tableaus")

Age Level: Grade 2 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Break the class up into groups. Students can decide to work with sounds as well as movement or to just mime. Each group will perform in turn for the others. Give the group a subject (and/or a place--wacky or real, e.g., "Body surfing with the polar bears in the North Pole"). You can also have the class write down suggestions on index cards and put them in a bag to be picked out by one person in the group; you can also easily make this into a guessing game for the other groups by not saying the subject out loud or when the group leader picks a card, keeping it to themselves. Give them a countdown from 10 for everyone in the performing group to get into position. **SAMPLE SUBJECTS:** Inside a computer, filling of a club sandwich, a bathroom cabinet, items in a freezer during an electricity failure, clothes in a washing machine, The Olympics. **NOTE:** These tableaus can also be very useful as a staging technique (going from tableau to tableau) or as a starting point for staging.

13. Talk Show

Age Level: Grade 5 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Break the class up into pairs (preferably do not put friends together). Give them 3 minutes to find out three things about their partner that they never knew before. Go around the class and let each person introduce his/her partner as if he/she were the host of a talk show introducing a guest.

14. Silent (or Foreign) Movie

Age Level: Grade 5 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Break class up into groups of 4 or 6; 2 (or 3) will be the “actors”; the other 2 (or 3) will be the “voices.” Each group decides who’s going to act and who’s going to speak and pair up (actor with a voice). Give each group in turn an improv or scene to do; the voices should stand behind their actors (maybe on chairs?). Give the scene a “3-2-1-GO.”

The actors mime (like a silent movie) the action of the scene, while the voices speak for them (it can be the actor’s inner thoughts or actual dialogue). OR the actors can do the scene using gibberish and the appropriate voice can “translate” after each actor speaks.

15. Tambourine Talk

Age Level: Grade 5 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Choose a pair of actors. Give them each a tambourine or rhythm instruments (maracas, wooden sticks, drum, etc.).

Option 1: Give them the situation and characters of the improv (or ask the class for suggestions). Give them a “3-2-1-GO.” The students act out the scene but instead of talking, they use the tambourines to communicate. Stop the scene after a few minutes. Ask the students to continue (or restart) the scene with words. Give another pair of students a chance.

Option 2: Ask the students to communicate with their tambourines, 2 or 3 exchanges, with no set situation or characters in mind. Remind them that this is like a conversation and they are responding to each other. Ask the performing students what they discovered the scene to be about; how did they feel? Ask the class what they thought the scene was about. Start an improv with words based on the scene that just took place (using either the students that had the tambourines or two new students). Give another pair a chance to start a scene with tambourines.

16. What Are You Doing?

Age Level: Grade 2 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Divide the class into 2 teams (Team A and Team B). The first person in each line should be facing each other, the rest of each respective team lines up single file behind them. “A” begins miming an action (you can direct that the actions be related to a theme, if you want). “B” asks “A,” “What are you doing?” “A” must answer with anything EXCEPT what he/she is really doing (i.e., if “A” is miming combing his/her hair, she could answer “Shooting hoops”). “B” then starts miming the action that “A” has answered (i.e., shooting hoops).

“A” goes to the end of his/her line and the next “A” in line asks “B” “What are you doing?” “B” then likewise answers with anything EXCEPT what he/she is honestly doing (i.e., “walking on the moon”). “B” then goes to the back of her line, and the 2nd “A” begins moon walking and the game continues until: (1) everyone has had a turn or (2) until the topic, if there is one, is exhausted, or (3) the most students are left on one team (if an elimination version is played with the teacher eliminating students as they aren’t quick enough or if their action doesn’t fit the topic, etc.)

17. Come Join Me

Age Level: Grade 1 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Students can form a circle around the playing area or be on one side of the room with the playing area to be on the other. One student begins doing an action that can be associated with a place. One at a time, as the other students figure out where the first student is, they join her by doing a different action associated with that place (i.e., the first student mimes laying bricks, a second one can mime wheeling over cart of cement, a third could be directing a truck, a fourth could be backing the truck into the site, etc.).

NOTE: This game can be played in mime or as an improv, depending on your preference; you could even begin it in mime and then when as many players as you want have joined in, ask the students to begin an improvisation.

18. Machines

Age Level: Grade 3 and up

Group Size: 4-12

Description: The students all sit at one end of the playing area. One student takes the stage and starts a movement and a sound. Both the movement and the sound should be abstract. One by one, other students build up around the first. Each new student adds a new sound and movement. Students should not touch one another, but should inter-relate closely. The director can speed up or slow down the machine on command. All students need not join in each machine.

NOTE: After the students get the hang of it, the director may suggest a machine with a theme; the students' sounds and movements should then suggest or relate to the theme.

19. One Word Story

Age Level: Grade 5 and up

Group Size: 8-30

Description: Students form a circle. Decide which direction the story will flow and who will go first. The first person says one word ("Once"). The person next to him/her says another word ("upon") and so forth, each adding to the sentence. Any student may decide that his/her word is the end of a sentence by adding punctuation mark after his/her word ("time" "period") and the person next to him/her may then begin a new sentence. If you want to begin a new sentence, you can begin with a punctuation mark and then say a word ("question mark" "Then"). Encourage the students to go quickly and not take time to think, but to say the first thing that pops into their heads. Continue until you feel the story has come to some sort of a conclusion, OR stop the story in the middle and ask each student to write a conclusion.

20. Coat Of Arms

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: See attached sample template. Ask each student to fill in his/her own coat of arms and not to put their names on it. Put the shields on the floor. Give the students time to look them over. Ask the students to match the shields to the student, ask them to give the reasons they think that shield goes with that student but the "matchee" shouldn't tell whether or not it is in fact his/her shield. Once all the students have been matched to a shield, ask all the students that have been matched to the right shield to raise their hands; ask them to explain what the symbols on their shield mean to them. After all the students that have been matched correctly speak, ask the rest of the students to retrieve their shields and explain what their symbols mean.

21. Red Light – Green Light: Actor's Version

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: The performers move during "green light" without planning. They just explore movement. On "red light" they freeze and then justify their position. Ask each one "what are you doing?" There are no wrong

answers, though at first they will use the most obvious - lots of “dancing” and “running.” The more they play, the more varied their choices will become. Some actors will latch onto ones they hear. Steer them gently away after a few times to “no repeats.” Some will pre-plan their action. I demonstrate this by moving myself then yelling “red light” and going into “swinging a baseball bat” no matter what position I’m in. They usually laugh and get the point. A follow-up version is to give them locations and let them pre-plan. (“Green light - desert. Go.”) They pretend to be anything found in this location. Try ocean, sky, jungle, on the moon... Devise your own variations. There are no wrong answers. Allow them to discover each other, as well as to discover sounds, textures and connections.

22. Write Your Own Play

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Each student writes two sentences on separate pieces of paper, based on a theme: (i.e. – A forest fire, A test tomorrow, No toilet paper in the lavatory). The papers are then tossed into a hat. Each student chooses two. The leader randomly picks small groups to read the lines in sequence and assigns random blocking. The group retires for 3-5 minutes to rehearse the scene so that it makes sense. Afterwards, everyone else “reviews” the plays.

23. “AH”

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Purpose: To teach that we can communicate without actual words. Students are given separate goals.

Example:

A. You are to get B to go to the Doctor for a shot.

B. You are to get A to go Shopping for toys.

C. You are to offer to Drive the car to one place only.

Students act out the scene without touching each other. The only word they use is “AH.”

24. Translator

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Student A is a poet from another country. Student B is his/her translator. The poet speaks a line of his/her “poem” (which is a bunch of nonsense syllables) and tries to use his or her body to make the meaning especially clear. The translator then “interprets” for the rest of the class what he/she thinks the “poet” was trying to say.

25. Musical Counting Concentration

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: In a circle (or square), have everyone clap in rhythm and count 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, i.e. a basic 4 count. Once this is established divide into 4 groups or sections of circle and have first group only say “1” on each go around, second group only say “2”, third group only say 3, and 4th group only say 4. Everyone continues to clap. Once this is established have someone in middle of circle try to distract counters by counting wrong! When someone in circle counts out of place, he/she becomes the person in the middle. Variations include a silent beat, such as clap, 2, 3, 4 or 1, clap, 3, 4. With older kids poly-rhythms or other time signatures can be done.

26. Stage Focus

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Arrange some objects on the stage (chairs, tables, etc.). Then take one chair and ask the student to make it the focus of the scene (i.e. place it higher, or further downstage or center it, etc). They learn how to be the focus of the audience's attention and how not to.

27. Acting Red Light – Green Light

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Choose a scenario – western, outer space, etc. Play red light – green light but when the actors freeze, they must freeze in a character from the scenario.

28. The Number Game

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Form a circle. Each student has a number in sequence. The first person (1) says a number (6) – that student (6) must say another number (10). That student (10) must be aware of his/her number and say another number (5), etc. If a student fails, he/she goes to the end of the circle and everyone is renumbered. The object is to eventually get to be #1. Letters may also be used but are harder.

29. Cerebral Laugh

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: All laugh out loud when the teacher's hands come off the knees. Stop laughing when the hands go back to the knees. All giggle (same cue). All laugh with no sound (use hands, fingers, tummy). "Louder" (but still no sound). Demonstrate "cerebral laugh" (have someone actually give cue). "Cerebral Laugh" = laugh in head – no visible reaction. Have students then do it and define in which "body" part they are laughing.

30. Orchestra

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Students sit in a circle facing center. One student is the "conductor," and he/she begins producing a rhythm (with hands, voice, or body). The next student adds on to the sound by producing a different rhythmic pattern that fits into the measure the conductor has established. This continues until all students are clapping, singing, stomping, etc. in a regular pattern or "groove." For advanced work – allow conductor to "shape" the sound < or >, cut off in tempo, etc.

Variations: If first round is in 4/4 try one in 3/4, try one round using only voices or only hands.

31. Status

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Purpose: To determine relationships and dynamics (how you behave and how others relate to you).

Props: 1 deck of standard playing cards.

1). Pass out cards Reminding all NOT TO LOOK AT THEIR OWN CARDS!!!

2). Cards are then held up against your forehead so that everyone but you can see your card. (Remember "Indian Poker"?)

3). Everyone is given a situation – 1st day of class – Birthday Party – and told to have a conversation where the card you hold is your status. A king or ace would be treated well no matter how they act. A deuce or three would be ignored or even treated badly.

4). After 60 seconds – ask all to line up in the order they think their cards represent, low to high.

32. Tennis Ball Game

Age Level: 3rd grade and up (can work for younger kids, 3 or 4 tennis balls but fewer balls).

Group Size:

Description: Kids sit in a circle. Establish an order of children (i.e. Jane to John to Mary to Joe to Suzie, etc.). 1st ball is released (in rhythm or not) and rolled to the next person, next person, etc. Before the ball comes back to Jane, a second ball is released... if they can keep up, release a 3rd or 4th ball. Keep going for as long as you can. Excellent for concentration, focus, etc.

*Lighting Round: break up into 3 smaller groups – time a “round” to see how many times in which the ball can go through the cycle (a minute?).

33. Choreography Game

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Put on music or pianist plays. Define verbally the type of movement shown and have students experiment. Choose 1 interesting move and have that demonstrated. Name the move by the name of the student – “Gary.” All do the “Gary.”

34. Rigatoni Knockout (Elimination)

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Teach “Rigatoni Macaroni” Vocal exercise. Line up kids in at least three lines and create singing order as a snake viz.:

15	14	13	12	11
6	7	8	9	10
5	4	3	2	1

Each kid sings one “rigatoni” or “macaroni” only, in sequence, so the exercise is going one voice at a time. Start slow and gradually increase speed. If a kid misses his/her turn or makes a mistake, he/she is out (sitting down in place is easiest).

35. Five Changes

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Divide into pairs, determine who is A and who is B and stand opposite each other. A then looks carefully at B for 30 seconds. A then turns away while B changes five things about his/her appearance (e.g., unties a shoelace, places a watch on a different arm, unbuttons a button). A then turns back, looks carefully at B, and attempts to name the five changes. Replay with B observing and A making changes.

36. Hunter and the Hunted

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Have the group form a tight circle. Select two participants to enter the circle. One will be the Hunter and one will be the Hunted. Both participants are blindfolded and led to different places in the circle. The rest of the group must be very quiet so that the players in the middle can use their sense of hearing to find and avoid one another. The rest of the group acts as spotters gently using their hands to make sure the Hunter and Hunted don't leave the circle. Once the Hunted is caught, replay with two new participants.

37. Red Handed

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Have everyone gather in the middle of the room. One person is chosen as “IT” and closes his/her eyes for a moment. The other players begin passing a small object (marble, stone, coin) from person to

person. "IT" opens his/her eyes and moves around the crowd. If "IT" suspects someone has the object, he/she walks up and taps that person's fist. If the hand is empty, "IT" moves on. When someone is caught Red Handed, he/she becomes "IT."

38. Ruler/Chair/Person

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Players form a circle. The first player takes a ruler, transforms it into something else, and then uses it in a ten second pantomime. (i.e., "This is not a ruler, this is a flute.") The ruler is passed around so that everyone has a turn transforming it into something else. Next a chair is added. The players must use both objects, but use them as something else. (i.e., "This is not a ruler and a chair, this is a conductor's baton and this is a podium.") Finally, a person is added. Players must use both objects and the person as something else. (i.e., "This is not a ruler, a chair, a person; this is a carving tool, this is a wood stand, and this is a lump of clay.")

39. Imaginary Ball

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Everyone stands in a circle. The leader tosses a real ball to someone across the circle, calling the name of that person. That person names someone else, throws the ball to them, and so on until everyone has made contact with the ball. Then the leader puts the real ball away. Now the empty space will be transformed into a ball and thrown back and forth to each other. The leader side-coaches the size, shape, density, surface of the imaginary ball. At his/her discretion the leader side-coaches the ball changing into a different ball. The idea is that the person who's passing the ball and the person who is receiving the ball must both adapt to the changes in the properties of the ball.

40. Reaction Photographs

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Players number off: 1, 2, 3, etc. They begin walking randomly around the acting space. Player #1 calls out his/her number and a statement. (For example: "One. Look out for that car!") Everyone freezes in a pose reacting to the statement. Hold the pose for 15 seconds while glancing at what other people are doing. Repeat this process for all players. Focus on using entire body and various levels.

Variation 1

Players divide into pairs, designating one as A and one as B. Players move about the space, staying near their partners. As before, when a statement is called out, people freeze in a related pose. This time, however, the A's assume a pose as if they had issued the statement, while the B's assume a pose responding to their partner. Continue playing switching roles periodically.

Variation 2

Divide into small groups with each having a section of the acting space in which to work. Each group moves randomly within their space. In sequence, players call out their number and a newspaper headline or picture caption. When a statement is called out, each group without discussion assumes a collective pose appropriate to the headline/caption.

41. An Animal and an Adjective

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: The players begin walking around the room. The leader calls out an animal and the player begins to walk around the room as that kind of animal. Then the leader calls out an adjective that may or may not describe that animal. The players then apply that adjective to the animal that they have been acting out.

42. 1-5 Game

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Players are first guided through a movement sequence in which 1 indicates slowest and 5 indicates fastest. When a leader calls out the number 1, participants walk around the room in the slowest of slow motion. When 2 is called, they walk a little faster. 3 is a normal or comfortable walking speed, 4 is a fast walk and 5 is as fast as you can walk without running. The leader calls out numbers in a random order and the players must respond as quickly as possible by adjusting their speed. Once they have mastered that, the leader announces that he/she will call out two numbers. The first will indicate the speed of walking. The second number will indicate loudness of talking. Talking can be counting or saying the alphabet or saying a nursery rhyme or doing nonsense syllables. 1 is a whisper, 2 is a bit louder, 3 is a normal speaking voice, 4 is loud, and 5 is as loud as you can talk without yelling.

43. People to People

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Partner students and have them touching toe to toe. Quickly call out two body parts and have them connect one part to the other. Continue calling several combinations (e.g., elbow to elbow, ankle to knee, thumb to ear, back to back, hip to hip or wrist to shoulder.) Call out "People to People" and everyone moves to another partner. Continue with as many combinations and partner changes as desired. Teacher can "play in role" and allow mature students to call combinations. Remember to have a "G-rated" classroom. The last combination to call is "bottom to chair" thus returning everyone to where they started.

44. Catch the Dragon's Tail

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Form a line. Put your arms around the waist of the person in front of you. The last person in line tucks a handkerchief or scarf in the back of his/her belt. Everyone in the line transforms into one large, long dragon. Work up steam by letting out a few roars. At a signal, the dragon begins chasing its own tail. The objective is for the person at the head of the line to snatch the handkerchief. The objective of the person at the end is to save his/her tail. When the tail is caught, the head dons the handkerchief and becomes the new tail. The person second from the front becomes the new head.

Variations:

Dueling Dragons: Two or more dragons try to catch each other's tails. To make it more interesting, the dragons can also pursue their own tails.

Dancing Dragons: The dragon's movement is limited to a bunny hop. A conga line. A waltz.

45. The Dragon's Treasure

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Form a circle. One person is chosen to become the Dragon. The Dragon stands guard over the treasure (several items: scarves, pencils, balls) in the center of the circle. Players around the perimeter of the circle try to steal the treasure without being tagged by the Dragon. The Dragon can roar and pivot around to keep an eye on everyone, but cannot sit or stand on the treasure. If the Dragon touches someone who is trying to steal the treasure, that person is instantly frozen in place until the end of the game. The game continues until everyone is frozen, or most likely until all pieces of treasure have been stolen. The thief with the most treasure becomes the new Dragon.

46. Fox and Squirrel

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Form a circle. Distribute two balls (the Fox's) and a beanbag (the Squirrel). The objective is for the Fox to catch the Squirrel by tagging whomever is holding the beanbag (the Squirrel). Pass the Fox the balls around the circle They can move in either direction and can change directions. Note that though Foxes are quick, Squirrels are slick- and able to leap. Foxes can only be passed from person to person. Keep everyone alert by calling out "Fox" or "Squirrel" each time you pass one of the balls or the beanbag.

47. Yes!

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Everyone moves throughout the space. The leader begins by yelling out a movement and vocal suggestion such as, "pretend you are a rooster greeting the morning" or "hop on one foot and recite the Pledge of Allegiance!" Everyone in the group responds by yelling simultaneously, "Yes!" and then engages in the movement and vocal suggestion. Anyone in the group may now yell out another movement and vocal suggestion with the game continuing in the same manner.

48. ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT Improv Scenes

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 10-30

Description: Split the group into pairs. All practice saying, "Row Row Row Your Boat" in different ways (begging for water, scolding a student, etc).

Have each pair designate themselves as an A or a B. Quickly memorize the dialogue:

A: Row Row Row Your Boat

B: Gently down the Stream

A: Merrily Merrily, Merrily

B: Life is But a Dream

Then have the students act out different scenes with this gibberish dialogue through improvisation (such as a teenager trying to sneak past a parent, two monkeys trying to escape a zoo, etc). Great game to focus on improv (don't plan the ending out), scene structure (creating clear beginning, middle and ends of scenes) and genres (play with murder mysteries, soap operas).

49. TWO WORDS: Vocal improv

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 10-30

Description: Split the group into pairs. Have each pair designate themselves as an A or a B. Have each pair improvise an abstract scene where each only gets one word (such as yes/no, bold/shy, Barbie/Ken). Focus on vocal dynamics (volume, pitch and rhythm). Then have all A's rotate once to work with a new partner and a new pair of words.

50. Television Technology

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 10-30

Description: Begin set-up, "My friend works for RCA and there is a great new TV invention. It is 3D, is hooked up like TIVO, and even gets all the security cameras in the world." Then begin by going to a specific channel (Animal Planet Monkey special, Fashion Show, the security camera at a local pre-school playground, etc). Students improv the scene. Teacher can then change volume, freeze, slow motion, fast forward, reverse, or reverse slow motion. Teacher can even go to specific moments in the program (the food fight, the blooper reel, etc). Great for teamwork, warm-up, physical movement.

51. Great Answering Machine

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 10-30

Description: Get 7 volunteers. This is the Great Answering Machine. Each “cog” (student) will give one word of the answer until someone gives a punctuation mark. The audience asks questions such as “Oh Great Answering Machine, I’ve always wanted to know why is the sky blue?” Focus the audience on asking questions about the future, or philosophy or things (don’t try to trick the machine)

52. Big Chief

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 15 – 25

Description: One player leaves the room. The other players (sitting in a circle) elect a “big chief.” The big chief begins a movement which the others imitate. The player outside of the room then comes in and tries to figure out who started the movement. “Big Chief” changes the movement while the player who left the room is in the center of the circle. The movement could be snapping, patting the thighs, waving the hands, etc. This continues until the person in the center guesses the “big chief.”

53. Sexy/Smelly/Silly

Age Level: 7th grade and up

Group Size: 15 – 20

Description: Four or five students are to imagine they are at a gathering place (on the beach, at a restaurant, in a park, etc.). One actor (of the 4 or 5) is to determine that one person is sexy, one smelly, and one silly. Their reactions to the other actors in the “scene” should demonstrate this. The class must be able to tell which is which.

54. Trance

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 10 – 20

Description: Partners. One player must follow another player’s palm, as if in a trance by it. The follower must keep his/her nose within three inches of the leader’s palm at all times.

Variation: A follower on each hand and foot.

55. Yes it is...but that’s not all!

Age Level: 2nd grade and up

Group Size: 6-10

Description: Have the group sit in a circle. One participant begins to tell a story about a group experience: “One day we decided to take a drive to New York City...” After 3 or 4 sentences the storyteller adds a fantastical element: “As we walked down Avenue of the Americas, we saw Godzilla...isn't that right [name of another person in the group]?” The person named by the storyteller says, “Yes it is [name of storyteller] but that's not all!” and continues the story, handing it off to another member of the group after 3 or so sentences using the same “Isn't that right?” format. Continue until everyone has contributed. This exercise encourages fantastical imagination, vivid storytelling and listening to fellow actors.

56. Physical Telephone

Age Level: 3rd grade to adults

Group size: 5-50

Description: Modeled on the childhood game telephone, participants attempt to pass the exact same message throughout the group until the last person has “heard” it. Participants line up in a single file line with their backs to the demonstrator (except for the second person in line). The demonstrator (#1) mimes a precise physical action (e.g. note how many times you hopped on one foot and what your facial expressions were, etc.) for the next person in line (#2) to observe. Once the action is complete, #2 asks the third person (#3) to turn around and face him/her. #2 tries to recreate the action and pass it to #3 who will in turn pass it to

#4, etc. The last person to receive the mimed action then demonstrates the action to the group and defines what they were doing (i.e. I dribbled a ball 3 times and missed a foul shot). Often, the final demonstration does not resemble the initial action.

Note: Discuss and replay. Mix up the lines and who gets to be the demonstrator.

Skills: nonverbal communication, physicalization, observation, precision, listening, focus

57. Electric Fence

Age Level: 6th grade and up

Group Size: 20-50

Description: Four ropes are tied to the tops of four chairs creating a squared-off area (much like a boxing ring). Everyone gets inside the square, with that interior space being barely large enough for the participants. They should feel a bit crowded. The objective is for everyone to get out of the square by getting OVER the ropes without touching them. Spotters stand on each side of the square as the participants begin, and if anyone at anytime is seen making contact with a rope, everyone must re-enter and start all over. Once a participant safely exits the square, he or she cannot - in any way - help those remaining inside, but rather can join the spotters in watching for contacts with the ropes. A deceptive exercise in that it seems so simple, but is not. A wonderful way of ensemble building as participants will discover the necessity of strategic teamwork to assure everyone's release.

58. Gripe Orchestra

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 10-60

Description: Participants follow a conductor's instructions as they produce phrases associated with a gripe or other feeling. Students stand or sit in "choir formation" with teacher/leader positioned in front as the conductor. Everyone decides on a "gripe," some kind of grievance, complaint, or objection that they have about something. (This is a fun exercise in itself, because it gives one a chance to find out more about people.) The phrases gripes they create will be sounds of the orchestra: The Gripe Orchestra!

For example: "Are we there, yet?" or "Do we have to?" or "I don't want to go," (do a phrase check to find out what everyone's gripe is).

- Explain that you are going to demonstrate some conducting signals. (Just like a chorus or orchestra conductor.)
- Raise your arms to signal getting louder (crescendo).
- Put your palms down and lower your arms to indicate getting quieter (decrescendo).
- Move your arms rapidly to indicate getting faster, and move your hands apart in a
- "s-t-r-r-e-t-t-c-h-h" signal to indicate getting slower.
- Finally, hold both palms outward in a "halt" sign to mean to stop altogether.

The conductor cues each student when to start by making eye contact and pointing to them. Eventually, one may want to conduct the entire group simultaneously. Have part of the group get louder and other people get softer. Stop some people altogether while bringing up the volume on other people. Have some speed up and others slow down. See how well the students can follow your conducting instructions. (Feel free to use a pencil as a conducting baton. Eye contact is very important.)

Note: Next, give someone else in the group a chance to conduct. Have students change their gripes. Or, select an emotion (happy, sad, angry, or excited) and have students decide on a phrase that reflects that feeling.

New Additions from DOE Theater Teachers

As of May 31, 2011

59. Toe To Toe

Age Level: any age

Group size: 10-50

Description: Student mill & weave throughout space. Students introduce themselves to a partner and go toe to toe with them. This is their “toe partner.” Students find a new partner & introduce themselves and go elbow to elbow, this is their “elbow partner.” Students then find a knee-to-knee partner, a high-five-to-high-five partner, and a hip-to-hip partner. Teachers may call any command and have students mill & weave and connect with any of their 5 partners (*Ex: Find your TOE partner!*) For a challenge, have students connect with 2 of their partners at once. This is for Getting to Know You/ Ensemble Building/ Focus/ Physical & Spatial Awareness, Intermediate Level; Erica Giglio, ericagiglio@yahoo.com

60.Fainting By Numbers

Age Level: 12-99

Group Size:6-25

Description: Teacher will assign each student a number .While students mill and weave the teacher will call numbers randomly. When the student’s number is called they have to FAINT in a dramatic way. Those students around that person must come to their rescue and then help them back up. Teacher can call one or two numbers at a time. Purpose: Ensemble Building/ Focus/ Trust; Advanced Level; Erica Giglio, ericagiglio@yahoo.com.

61.Risk & Support

Age Level: 12-99

Group Size: 6-25 students

Description: Students create pairs of three with three varying heights (short, average, tall.) Each student creates a pose with the other two partners in their group that involves a “risk” (headstand, lean, etc) While one student is in the risk pose the other two must support the pose. After three individual poses the group will create one risk pose as a group (all supporting each other) Students will create an entrance, transition and an exit. Purpose: Ensemble Building/ Kinesthetic Exploration/ Spatial Awareness/ Trust; Advanced Level; Erica Giglio, ericagiglio@yahoo.com

62. Human Props

Age Level: any age

Group size: any size

Description: Tell students to walk around the room into the open space. Teacher will then call two things: a number and an object. Then the teacher will countdown from 5,4,3,2,1. If the students are not making the object with that amount of people (the number that the teacher called) they are out! Example: "a bird, 3 people"... students have 5 seconds to form a group of three and make a bird or else they are out. Other examples of “props” to make are: a wedding, marriage proposal, chicken laying an egg, dog peeing on fire hydrant, elephant, Eiffel tower, etc... I try to relate the “props” to either something we are studying or the current holiday season. Purpose: Movement; large ensemble; For beginners Corie Kanter;

CKanter2@schools.nyc.gov

63. Birdie on a Perch

Age Level: Middle-High School

Group size: Any

Description: Have students find a partner. Explain you will give them a task Example: “High five 10 people, touch 8 peoples elbows, blink at 5 people, do-si-do with 6 people, etc...” while the students are doing the

"task," at some point the teacher will yell "BIRDIE ON A PERCH", the students have to find that original partner and one person's feet need to be off the ground. (Students can find creative ways to do this... ex: piggy back ride, lift the person up, etc.) The last students to find their partner are out! Purpose: movement; large ensemble For beginners; Corie Kanter; CKanter2@schools.nyc.gov

64. Group Juggle

Age Level: High School

Group size: 5 to 20

Description: Identify area of focus addressed (i.e. good for--movement, directing, text, language, ensemble, etc.): Ice-breaker, focus, community. Note level of intensity (beginning, middle, advanced): Middle to Advanced. No more than a 50 word description (be concise, lead them thru how to "play"): In a circle, everyone raises their right hand. The first student, after loudly saying the name of another student, tosses the tennis ball underhanded to that student. Once the student has caught the tennis ball, their hand goes down. This progresses until everyone has caught the ball. The last to student to catch the ball tosses to the student who began the game and the ball is tossed again to each student in the same order. (A to C, C to E, E to B, B to A --A to C, C to E, E to B, B to A). Once this pattern has been established, add more tennis balls -- up to the number of students in the circle. Christopher Hartmann; CJHartmann718@aol.com

65. Waw

Age Level: 11-18

Group Size: 10 to 20

Description: Identify area of focus addressed (i.e. good for--movement, directing, text, language, ensemble, etc.): Focus, Movement, Ensemble, Energy. Note level of intensity: Middle. No more than a 50 word description (be concise, lead them thru how to "play"): In a circle, all students stand with their hands pressed together chest level (as if in prayer). Student begins by shouting "Waw" and pointing his/her pressed hands at another student. That student must immediately shout "Waw" and raise his/her pressed hands over their head imitating a tree. The two students directly to the left and right of the "tree" shout "Waw" and simultaneously make a chopping motion at the "tree's" midsection (without making contact). The "tree" shouts "Waw" and simultaneously points to another student and a new cycle begins. When a student misses, he is "dead" and sits down in his space in the circle thus making the "chopper's" job more difficult. Christopher Hartmann; CJHartmann718@aol.com

66. Tell Me Who I Am!

Age Level: Third grade and up

Group size: 10-20 Students

Description: Player A is in the center of a circle. All of the actors who are surrounding player A in the circle are Player Bs. All of the player Bs must quickly in their mind create a relationship to player A. The facilitator will allow 1 minute to come up with a relationship (i.e. a personal trainer and their client, a mother and son, a pilot and co-pilot). The facilitator will tag a player B into the center with Player A. Player B must immediately make clear what their relationship is to Player A (without saying "You are my doctor" instead they might say, "I think I broke my elbow"). Player A must accept whatever relationship player B has presented and continue the scene. The facilitator will then tag out Player B and tag in a new Player B. A new scene with a new relationship will be going. This can go on for as many rounds as you would like. The facilitator may also tag a Player B who has already come to the center back in and have them pick up where they left off with their original scene.

NOTE: Great for improvisation and ensemble work; great for middle to advanced actors; Noelle Gentile Durkeepepper@aol.com

67. Cross The Room If...As If

Age Level: 8 and up

Group Size: up to 40 or 50 (depending on space)

Description: This game enables students to learn more about each other. To build student comfort in the set-up so that the theater teacher may ease them into the sequel Cross The Room As If...Ask the participants to

form two equal lines facing each other. Explain that when they hear a 'category'- something that they might do/wear/say etc. they must cross the room and stand in the other line. Possible Categories: You have a pet; You are wearing black; You play a musical instrument; You have ever taken a dance lesson; You have ever been in a play or performance; You like to play a certain sport; You like to sing in the shower etc. Then you expand the game and get them to move in context and add concepts from text "Cross the Room as if": It is a very hot day; It is a very cold day; You are late for class; You have not slept in many nights; You don't trust the others around you; You are walking through the mud; You are a famous movie star on the red carpet; You are the King and Queen of the Castle; You know a secret no one else knows, etc.

NOTE: This game is good for ice breaker, building language, ESL students, and building an ensemble. This is a moderately intensive game that can be modified to suit your group. Ariella Toder; rela414@msn.com

68. Survivor: A Storytelling Game

Age Level: Elementary and up

Group Size:4-7

Description: To create spontaneous, imaginative stories as a group. Players sit in chairs in row or semi-circle facing audience. Pointer (teacher or student) points at any player and that player starts a spontaneous story. Pointer points at any player at any time and the new player must continue as if one voice. They may have to finish last persons word and then keep going. If any player messes up, the audience makes the wrong buzzer sound. Then the player acts out a brief, dramatic death scene. The audience applauds and the player joins the audience. Possible mistakes: pausing or hesitating too much, continuing to talk after pointer has switched to someone else, repeating any words(or parts of words said right before the pointer switched to you. Play until only one player is left. After player is out, start new story. Death scene ideas----run over by a truck, stabbed in a swordfight, poisoned or shot or drowned.

69. Radio: A Vocal Expression, Concentration or Spontaneity Game.

Age Level: Elementary and up

Group Size: 4-7

Description: Objective: To spontaneously recreate realistic sounding radio material and static sounds. Four to seven players in chairs in a row so all are visible. Teacher or student tunes in station by pointing directly to a player. That player immediately begins any material being broadcast on a radio frequency (can begin in the middle of it) player continues broadcasting until the pointer moves away. When pointer is searching for a frequency (finger is moving) audience makes the static noise. Pointer can tune to any radio frequency at any time so all players must be alert and ready players can be a different station each time they are tuned in,or continue where they left off. May be played as an elimination game--any player who hesitates when pointed out. Anne-Marie Davies; AMDRED@aol.com .

70. I Love Myself (a game brought to my classroom from the Moscow School of Acting by teaching artist Peter Gil Sheridan; it is the Rolls Royce of warm-ups and ice-breakers)

Age Level: Elementary and up

Group size: 15 or more or less

Description: Objective: a physical and vocal warm-up as well as a breakdown of inhibitions. First assign 2 kids as the Theater Police: they help me with the elimination process (who gets "out") and what the police says goes.Children find a space in the room and stand in actor neutral. They start to walk around the room as if they had somewhere to go. Teacher yells "one" they freeze throw their arms around themselves and yell "I love myself". Teacher yells "disengage" they do so and continue purposeful walking. Teacher yells "two" they find someone wrap their arms around each other and yell "I love myself." Then, "disengage" walk again. Yell "three" they find 3 other partners wrap their arms around each other and yell "I love myself" any left over are eliminated. For safety's sake I never go beyond the number five. The theater police help me with elimination. I jump around the numbers a lot and the children are told the first group that falls over will be eliminated and not play again. This works very well. If the children don't put their arms around themselves or others or do not say, "I love myself" they are eliminated. Anne-Marie Davies; AMDRED@aol.com

71. The Cat and the Mouse

Age Level: 4th graders and up

Group Size: min. 10, max. 25 players

Description: Students will stand in a circle, and will be divided into groups of two. A couple of students stand in the middle of the circle. The teacher assigns the role of the cat to a student, and that of the mouse to another student. Once the student who plays the cat hears the signal, he/she will follow the student that plays the mouse, while the student who plays the mouse will walk away from him/her. In order to save his/her life, the mouse must hold the hand of any of the players standing in the circle. Once this happens, the partner of the student that has been touched by the mouse will become the cat, and the former cat will become the new mouse. If the student that plays the mouse is touched or caught by the cat, then, they exchange roles. The cat will become the mouse and vice versa. A demonstration of this game will be provided with a small group setting and in slow motion.

NOTE: Cat and Mouse is a variation of the game Bomb and Shield (Bomba y Escudo) found in Rosa Luisa Marques' theater games book *Brincos y Saltos*. Level of Intensity: Middle

Area of Focus: Movement and (Directing); Kalitchi Figueroa (kfigueroa@schools.nyc.gov)

72. Chase the Dragon's Tail

Age Level: PreK-2nd graders

Group Size: min. 10, max. 20 players

Description: Tell players that this game originated in Asia, and versions of it are played in Vietnam, China and Thailand, as well as many other countries....Have players line up, with each other holding on to the hips or shoulders of the player in front of her. Explain that the first player in line is the head of the dragon, while the last player is the dragon's tail. Invite the head to try to tag the tail....Encourage all the players to hold on tight. The line must not break or the dragon will 'die.' When the head tags the tail, have the head move to the end of the line to become the new tail. Begin a new round with the next player in line as the dragon's head."

Level of Intensity: Beginning; Area of Focus: Movement; Source: *101 Movement Games For Children* by Huberta Wiertsema; Kalitchi Figueroa (kfigueroa@schools.nyc.gov)

73. Don't Touch

Age Level: PreK-2nd graders

Group Size: min. 10, max. 25 players

Description: Use tape to mark the boundaries of a small play area....Have players spread out and move to the music without touching each other. Call out different ways for players to move. You might have players move in the following ways: walk on tiptoes, walk with outstretched arms, walk backwards, crawl on hands and knees, walk on their heels....Remind players of the main rule in this game: *They cannot touch anyone*. Each player has to concentrate his attention on his own movements." *You can make the game more difficult by choosing music with a faster tempo or by repeatedly making the play area smaller. Level of Intensity: Middle; Area of Focus: Movement; Source: *101 Movement Games For Children* by Huberta Wiertsema; Kalitchi Figueroa (kfigueroa@schools.nyc.gov)

74. Four Students

Age Level: High School

Group Size: 4

Description: Choose FOUR students; seat them next to each other, facing the audience. Either they can choose venue (setting) or they can be assigned to a bus stop or doctor's waiting room. Assign the following movements to be done in order: Look Right; Look Left; Raise Right Arm; Raise Left Arm. Students must interact with another of the four players each time that they conduct a movement. Second Round: (Intermediate) Students may build an activity into their basic movement (i.e.: Lift Right arm and scratch head).

Third Round: (Advanced) Students may add ONE word of dialogue for ONE of the four movements; this word must stay consistent with the movement (i.e.: Lift Left Arm, saying "jolly good").

Reflect: Both participants and observers should critically analyze their own performances and the performances of their peers

NOTE: Purpose: Body expresses emotion and characterization Movement reveals something about the character; Connection to partner; Engaging; Intention; Eye contact; Taking directions; Focus; Roberta Raymond, robertaraymond@gmail.com

75. Roll Up and Become

Age Level: Grade K/1

Group Size: 25-30

Description: Students roll up in ball on floor when drum beats and teacher says, "roll up". Teacher continues with, "and become a little turtle looking for a stream." More details may be given to guide the actor. Drum beat and "roll up" command brings actor back to ball position for next image.

NOTE: Beginning Level, movement and imagination exercise; Stephanie Karpell; stephaniekarpell@gmail.com

76. I am a house

Age Level: Grades 1&2

Group Size: 25-30

Description: Actors enter the stage area, one at a time, using their bodies to create elements of a setting, such as a house, playground, classroom etc. Actors announce what they are as they take their position, e.g., "I am a door", "I am a chair", "I am a wall," etc.

NOTE: Beginning level; Ensemble/Imagination; Stephanie Karpell; stephaniekarpell@gmail.com

77. A/17

Age Level: Grades 2/3

Group Size: 25-30

Description: Class is divided into two groups and given two separate areas in which to work. Teacher writes a letter or number on the board. First team to form that letter or number using all the actors' bodies on their team, wins. Can lie flat, sit, kneel, stand.

NOTE: Beginning level; Movement/Ensemble; Stephanie Karpell; stephaniekarpell@gmail.com

78. One Knows

Age Level: Grades 4/5

Group Size: 2 actors

Description: Actor A sits on stage having no idea of his/her identity. Actor B knows their relationship and must communicate it to Actor A upon entering, e.g., waiter/customer, movie star/fan, baby/babysitter/dog trainer/dog, dance instructor/student, etc. They continue the scene.

NOTE: Advanced Level; Language/Improvisation; Stephanie Karpell; stephaniekarpell@gmail.com

79. Bean Eater

Age Level: Grade 5

Group Size: 3 actors

Description: The same dialogue, character relationships and plot is varied by using different acting adjustments, such as: laughing, covered by itchy rash, opera, commercial, fire, underwater, hot, shy, tired, etc.

Bean Maker is on stage stirring. Bean Eater enters.

Bean Eater: What ya doin'?

Bean Maker: Makin' beans.

Bean Eater: Can I have some?

Bean Maker: Sure. *(hands him some. Bean Eater eats, dies dramatically).*

Bean Maker: Is there a doctor in the house?! *(doctor enters)*

Doctor: I'm a doctor!

Bean Maker: Do Something!

Doctor performs some mysterious healing action/s.

Doctor: He's cured!

Beam Eater: I'm cured!

They bow.

NOTE: Middle Level, Ensemble/improvisation exercise (more than 50 words but comes with dialogue!)

Stephanie Karpell; stephaniekarpell@gmail.com

80. Life with the Wright Family

Age Level: Grade 9–12

Group size: 20 maximum

Description: Students sit in a circle. Pass out one piece of scrap paper to each student.

Have them roll it up into paper ball. Practice saying “right”, “left” etc. as students pass their ball to the person on their R or L (one pass at a time.) If paper ball drops, or student is missing hi/hers, or has two, STOP!

Student or teacher calls “Restore.” Teacher reads story aloud, (see below) clearly. (Stop to *restore* as needed)

Students pass ball to R or L as they hear the words “right” or “left” in the story. Have students throw balls into a trash basket (preset in center from beginning) when ‘The End’ is spoken.

NOTE: Teacher stands outside circle to read. Each paragraph can get progressively faster (optional); Focus Area: Ensemble/Listening/Thinking outside the box; Advanced level; Marlene May; Maymar47@aol.com

Life with the Wright Family – THE STORY

One day the Wright family decided to take a vacation. The first thing they had to decide was who would be left at home since there was not enough room in the Wright family car for all of them. Mr. Wright decided that Aunt Linda Wright would be the one left at home. Of course, this made Aunt Linda Wright so mad that she left the house immediately yelling, “It will be a right cold day before I return”.

The Wright family now bundled up the children, Tommy Wright, Susan Wright, Timmy Wright and Shelly Wright and got into the car and left. Unfortunately, as they turned out of the driveway, someone had left a trash can in the street so they had to turn right around and stop the car. They told Tommy Wright to get out of the car and move the trash can so they could get going. Tommy took so long that they almost left him in the street. Once the Wright family got on the road, Mother Wright wondered if she had left the stove on. Father Wright told her not to worry - he had checked the stove and she had not left it on. As they turned right at the corner, everyone started to think about other things that they might have left undone.

No need to worry now, they were off on a right fine vacation. When they arrived at the gas station, Father Wright put gas in the car and then discovered that he had left his wallet at home. So Timmy Wright ran home to get the money that was left behind. After Timmy had left, Susan Wright started to feel sick. She left the car saying that she had to throw up. This, of course, got Mother Wright’s attention and she left the car in a hurry. Shelly Wright wanted to watch Susan get sick, so she left the car too. Father Wright was left with Tommy Wright, who was playing a game in the backseat.

With all of this going on, Father Wright decided that this was not the right time to take a vacation, so he gathered up all of the family and left the gas station as quickly as he could. When he arrived home, he turned left into the driveway and said, “I wish the Wright family had never left the house today!”

81. Emotional Symphony

Age Level: All grades.

Group Size: 6-15

Description: Brainstorm 3 emotions with the class. Equally divide up actors into 3 groups and assign each group an emotion. Have actors state assumed emotion before *concert* begins. Tell actors to always watch the

conductor (you) for quick changes in volume/pace. The sounds actors make should be mostly gibberish with only a few words of English at climatic moments. Have actors use their whole bodies to convey the sounds. NOTE: This exercise is a great way for actors to experiment with different levels of emotions. Sometimes actors get so caught up in the words, we forget about the emotional connection behind them. Having said that, it is also important not to *play* the emotions, but rather *discover* them. Beginning to Intermediate level; Erin Paige McKenna; emckenna3@schools.nyc.gov

82. When I clap, you jump

Age Level: all grades

Group size: small or large group

Description: The leader in the middle of the circle introduces a series of commands and responses one at a time. Leader continues to give the commands randomly. Children are challenged to respond quickly and correctly.

NOTE: Good for focus, concentration and discussion of cues; level can be adjusted and can be used well with ELL students. Katherine Cooley; kcooley@schools.nyc.gov

83. Yes

Age Level: all grades

Group size: small or large group

Description: The leader briefly explains the game: "I have the 'yes' and I will pass it to one of you simply by eye contact. When you receive it say the word 'yes'. By saying yes, you are giving me permission to come to your spot in the circle. You must pass the yes to someone else and get permission to leave your spot."

Together the ensemble tries to make this exchange happen quickly, silently (except for the yes) and smoothly.

NOTE: Good for developing ensemble, concentration, use of eye contact, good for all levels

Katherine Cooley; kcooley@schools.nyc.gov

84. Breaking the News

Age Level: grades 8-12

Group size: 3 players

Description: Played like "Oscar Winning Moments," a scene that features the monologues that would have made the highlight reel at the Oscars. Begin with the suggestion of the News (good or bad) that is to be revealed in the scene. Two actors begin onstage and set up the Platform; the context within which a third actor, who is waiting to enter, will Break the News. Both "The Platform" and "The News" have "moments." The third actor has a moment that serves to reconstruct the dynamics of these characters' relationship within this Post-News world.

NOTE: Good for learning to give and take focus and helps actors "deliver."/ Best for more advanced players.

RobinSelfridge@hotmail.com

85. On the List

Age Level: grades 8-12

Group Size: 4-8 players

Description: Mad popular in every level of drama class, this improv game has a "bouncer" who has to guess the celebrities trying to gain entry to the club because they are "on the list." The bouncer waits outside while actors are given suggestions of celebrities to impersonate. It's fun to include the Principal or the Dean.

Sometimes I ask for a celebrity that a particular actor could *never* impersonate. This can take the pressure off having to do a good impersonation!

NOTE: Good for rewarding cultural knowledge, Great for showboating! / All levels of players can enjoy.

RobinSelfridge@hotmail.com

86. Surprise Guests

Age Level:

Group Size:

Description: Set Up: One person volunteers to play "Host." Host steps out or covers ears, etc. The facilitator asks "audience/others" to generate creative suggestions for "Surprise Guests"; the more outlandish the better!

Surprise Guest Examples:

(i.e. Guest #1: An astronaut with a severe fear of heights; Guest #2: An over-worked Elf from Santa's toy shop
Guest #3: An apathetic cheerleader)

Once the Guests have been established, the Host returns and the improv game begins. First, the Host pantomimes getting ready for the party, then Guest #1 "knocks" on the door. The Host lets him/her inside and they begin to interact. A new Guest will arrive in about sixty seconds, so that in a very quick amount of time the Host will be interacting with three (generally, or up to 5) different "guest characters." AND, the guests must interact with one another....The Host wants to figure out the identity of each Guest. However, this isn't just a guessing game. The Guests should offer discreet clues that become more and more obvious as the improv game continues. The main point of the activity is to create an ensemble performance, develop clear, quirky, unusual characters and reveal relations—and to laugh! Peter Avery. pavery@schools.nyc.gov

87. A-Ding-Dong

Age Level: Grade 3 and up

Group Size: 6-20

Description: Students will stand in a circle. One student will tell the student standing to their right a one-syllable word. Teacher will teach the class the beginning to the song: "A ding dong dong dong dong, a ding dong dong dong dong, a ding dong dong dong dong, A ding dong, (solo)my momma don't wear no socks, (everyone) a ding dong, (solo)I saw when she took em' off, (everyone) a ding dong..." Then the student who receives the word will use it to create a rhyming verse accompanied by the whole group singing the "a ding dongs." Each student will give his/her neighbor a one-syllable word with which to rhyme. Annie Sugarman, asugarman@schools.nyc.gov

88. 1-2-3 :

Age Level: K-2

Group Size: 6-30

Description: In a circle, students standing, we count continuously 1-3. Student A says 1, Student B, says 2, Student C says 3, Student D says 1, etc. If you say the wrong number or hesitate you're out and the count begins at the next student at one. My kindergarten and 1st graders love it. Laurie Greenwald;

Omearain@aol.com

89. Opposites

Age Level: K-2

Group Size: 5-35

Description: I say Red - Students say Blue, I say blue-red-blue, the students say red-blue-red. WE add jump (word and action) quiet (word and gesture) as opposites, and stop (word and gesture) and go (word and gesture). As the students get better you mix them up and also do multiples.

90. Crow

Age Level: 5th grade and up

Group Size: 2-3

Description: 2 - 3 students are given the Where and must come up with an improv that demonstrates the Character-Relationship-Objective. E.g.: Cemetery. two gravediggers, one conscientious and the other lazy. As the students become proficient I add mannerisms that help communicate the emotional nature of the character. .e.g. paces, taps foot, clears throat,

NOTE: This is a Character, Relationship, Objective, Where improv game

Laurie Greenwald; Omearain@aol.com

91. Woosh, Bang, Pow!

Age Level: 5-12

Group Size: 10-30

Description: Participants stand in a large circle. Energy is sent around the room by swaying the arms in one direction accompanied by a “woosh!” sound. This energy can be sent the other way by anyone at anytime by making an X with the arms and saying “bang”. The energy can also be sent to anyone across the circle by clapping to them and yelling “pow!” Interesting combinations of these movements can arise, and new ones can be invented.

NOTE: This is a Beginner level, Spatial Awareness, Group Dynamic game

Jim Sabo; jimrsabo@aol.com

92. King of the Court

Age Level: 9-12

Group Size: 8-20

Description: One player for each round is chosen to be the king or queen. The king sits on a throne (chair) and has dominion over the courtroom. Players may enter the space whenever they choose as different characters (perhaps townspeople, servants, entertainers, etc.). The king may “behead” (send out) any player in the courtroom for any reason (or even for no reason). The last player to survive becomes the new king.

NOTE: This game can be blatantly unfair, which is part of point in learning about status roles and power (There is no rule that the ruler cannot be benevolent, I have just never seen that happen). This game is wonderfully open ended, and with storylines and plays-within-plays arising, each game is entirely unique; Status

Intermediate (Involves power dynamics); Jim Sabo; jimrsabo@aol.com

93. The Magic Ball

Age Level: 9-12

Group Size: 8-20

Description: Players stand in a circle. The group uses an invisible “magic ball” that can be morphed and sculpted into any shape. Each player shapes the ball into a different object or thing. The player then interacts with it in some way before presenting it to the next person, who takes it and turns it into something new. These need not be related, although they may. The main goal is the believable physical manipulation of space.

NOTE: Focus of game: Showing; Intermediate level; Jim Sabo; jimrsabo@aol.com

94. Rasaboxes with Sound and Motion

Age Level: 10-15

Group Size: 8-15 (solo or pairs)

Description: A large square consisting of nine boxes is drawn on the floor with chalk. Each square represents a different physical space for a specific feeling: surprise/wonder, love, fear/shame, disgust, courage, laughter, sadness/compassion, rage, and peace/bliss in the center. Players may begin by drawing or writing in the squares. Each player moves individually between the boxes, changing themselves physically to mirror each feeling, and adding a sound or expression. A pair may also travel on opposite sides, using each conflicting pair of emotions as an impetus for dynamic interactions.

NOTE: Focus: Physical Expression; Advanced level; Jim Sabo; jimrsabo@aol.com

95. Shakin’ It Out

Age Level: Any

Group Size: Any

Description: While standing with students, have them shake out their arms in different directions. Some ways to shake it out are: Arms above your head, Arms down to the ground, Out to the side, Behind you, Over your head as you turn around in a circle, Over your head as you shake your whole body, etc.

NOTE: Objective is to warm up the body, let go of any existing inhibitions

Beginning level; Jamie Almeida (jlo1981@msn.com)

96. The Wiggles

Age Level: Any

Group Size: Any

Description: Have students get a case of “the wiggles” in various body parts. Try to see if they can isolate a particular body part as they wiggle it. Good parts to wiggle are: Fingers, Eyebrows, Nose, Wrists, Hair, Hips, Elbows, Ears, Knees, Shoulders, Lips, Toes, Chin, Belly Button

NOTE: Objective is to warm up the body; let go of any existing inhibitions; Beginning level; Jamie Almeida (jlo1981@msn.com)

97. Remember Who Your Friends Are

Age Level: Any

Group Size: 6 or more

Description: FREEZE. Have students casually walk around the performing space as a group. At random moments call out for them to freeze. HIGH FIVES. After the students have gotten used to the idea of freezing at your direction, it's time to add some fun to it. Walk around the performing space with them, but this time when they hear the word *freeze* they are going to go up to someone and give them a high-five. Do this variation a few times and encourage them to find a different student for each turn. HAND SHAKES. This is the same concept as the high-fives, but this time when you say freeze, students will go up to someone and shake his or her hand. INTRODUCE YOURSELF. This time when you say freeze, have your students find one person and tell him or her their name. OTHER VARIATIONS: Tell someone your favorite color; Tell someone your favorite animal; Tell someone how old you are; Name a color of something you're wearing; Tell someone your favorite food.

NOTE: The objective is to encourage interaction among students; to introduce the concept of working together Beginning level; Jamie Almeida (jlo1981@msn.com)

98. The Walks of Life

Age Level: Any

Group Size: Any

Description: Have students utilize as much of the performing space as possible as they use their bodies in various ways throughout this activity. Have them try walking in as many different ways as time and their interest allows. Possibilities include: SLOW WALK; FAST WALK; MOUSE STEPS; ELEPHANT STEPS; MARCH; SIDEWAYS; BACKWARD; SKIPPING; HOT SAND; TRAMPOLINES; AIRPLANES; IN A POOL OF PEANUT BUTTER; THROUGH HONEY etc.

NOTE: The objective is to get students to respond quickly to direction; to improve the students' ability to think on their feet; to continue to encourage the students to work as a group; to begin the journey into the world of make-believe; Beginning level; Jamie Almeida (jlo1981@msn.com)

99. Slow Motion Freeze Tag

Age Level: Any

Group Size: 3 or more

Description: STEP ONE: Appoint someone “it” (This person will “chase” the rest of the students in slow motion); STEP TWO: All the other players will be instructed to run, breathe, duck etc. in very slow motion. (They should really exaggerate these movements.) STEP THREE: When someone is tagged, they become the new “it.” The person who tagged him/her must freeze in the exact position that the other person was in as they were tagged. STEP FOUR: All untagged players must continue to move in slow motion until everyone is frozen.

NOTE: Objective is to explore expression and exaggerate physical movement Beginning level; Jamie Almeida (jlo1981@msn.com)

100. Family Photo

Age Level: Any

Group Size: 3 or more

Description: STEP ONE: Divide the class into two groups. Group A gets together as if they are about to have a family photo taken. STEP TWO: Give the students in Group A a “given circumstance” to which they will react when you “take their picture.” For example, “You have just won the biggest soccer game of the year!” or “You have to go to the bathroom very badly!”; STEP THREE: Count to three and then pretend to take the group’s picture as they pose for the photo. STEP FOUR: Allow the students from Group B, to be the subjects within the family photo. The viewing students can also take turns creating the circumstances.

NOTE: Objective is to introduce “given circumstances” and practice responses to those circumstances. Jamie Almeida (jlo1981@msn.com)

101. The Circle Name Game

Age Level: K-12

Group Size: 5 or more

Description: Have students gather in a circle facing the center of circle and each other. The leader explains that each person will need to say their own name and then pass to the next person who will say the first person's name and then their own name, and so on all around the circle. When it gets around to the first person again, they will say all of the names going around the circle until it comes back to themselves. The repeating of all names should go around twice until all students have said every name in the circle.

This exercise can also be done using topical words instead of names as a concentration exercise. It is a good ice breaker and start for any group that will make name tags unnecessary. Max Maxwell, max50@aol.com

102. The Empty Vessel

Age Level: any

Group Size: any -- It can be done w the whole group or in smaller circles.

Description: 1 person is the empty vessel. The people in the circle one at a time bombard them with sound & movement/ movement only / or language and gesture. They and the empty vessel interact with one of these modes above until interrupted by another person from the circle. The interruptions happen quickly.

A new vessel is chosen after a bit. The members of the circle want to carry and contrast what they do to give the vessel new experiences, to expand their movement, sound, & language vocabulary. It's a warm-up for further movement theater improv. Stacey Cervellino, SCervellino@schools.nyc.gov.

103. Chaos Tag with Death Scenes:

Age Level: MS and up

Group Size: 5 or more

Description: In chaos tag, everyone is “it” and trying to tag everyone else (while also trying not to get tagged). We tag on the back or shoulder. When tagged, you must give us your best, most dramatic 10 second death scene a la Shakespeare. Each time you are tagged, you must do a different death scene. As a challenge (or alternate version), participants can be asked to say a Shakespearean line during their death scene. Mara Richards, mrichards@NEW42.org

Some options are below, but any line will do:

"O happy dagger" (JULIET in *Romeo and Juliet*)

"Et tu Brute" (JULIUS CAESAR in *Julius Caesar*)

"The rest is silence" (HAMLET in *Hamlet*)

"Thus with a kiss I die" (ROMEO in *Romeo and Juliet*)

"I am dying, Egypt, dying" (ANTONY in *Antony and Cleopatra*)

"O farewell" (DESDEMONA in *Othello*)

104. Star Jump

Age Level: 3rd grade and up

Group Size: 10 or more

Description: This is a warm up. There are three rounds. Participants begin in a circle. The activity starts with one person crossing the circle and making eye contact with someone. Person 1 then takes Person 2's spot. Person 2 crosses the circle, makes eye contact and the activity continues. In round two, participants now need to cross the circle make eye contact, and then both people jump together and clap hands before they switch places. That round continues. In the final round, participants make eye contact and jump in the shape of a star together. They can also add a 'WHEE' sound effect to help make it more fun. Mara Richards, mrichards@NEW42.org