

Arts Assessment For Learning

THEATRE —5TH GRADE

REFLECTION: MONOLOGUE CREATION

What went well?

The students took to using the feedback protocol right away. They also seemed excited about the work and weren't afraid to give/get feedback. As a result of the peer feedback I saw growth in each student from rehearsal to rehearsal. Being able to choose for goals/criteria to work on each rehearsal made the work manageable. They used the sheets with ease and were honest in their reflections.

What was so-so?

The students sometimes got off task while working with a partner, especially if I was engrossed with another partnership. Sometimes it took longer than I expected to complete the reflection sheets. In addition, the students tended to get overly excited when rehearsing, so naturally the volume in the room was sometimes an issue. During the performance day the students were rather nervous about remembering their lines and being filmed.

What was the most challenging part of trying this?

Most had never acted before so I was starting from scratch. In addition, I had never used so many types of task/reflection sheets. Managing the paperwork was a challenge – as I previously had relied on verbal feedback. Also, you have to be willing to go with the flow. You can't move on if something was not completed the class before. It is important to remember this is a process and you have to adjust when you hit bumps along the way.

What was the impact of this strategy on student learning?

The students were able to really express themselves in their reflections. They made discoveries about themselves, which maybe they never would have if all of the feedback came from me. The students are beginning to think critically about each other's work and discussing their findings in a professional and courteous manner. They are showing greater understanding of character creation and the actor/character relationship. They are making corrections to their own work and setting goals for themselves.

What questions were raised for you as you implemented the assessment practice?

- Did the students enjoy the process of giving and getting feedback?
- What part of this process was most challenging for the students?

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- How can I better support my students through the peer assessment process?
- How can I use the time I have effectively so the formative assessment process can benefit my students and me?

What new insights or understandings are forming as a result of this experience?

My newest insight based on this work is that it really does work! I have seen it carry over from year to year and I am amazed at how much more the students retain as a result. They are also able to access prior knowledge and make conclusions based on experiences.

How do the results of your action plan inform your inquiry question?

My original question was: *How does peer and self-assessment help to inform student learning and improve performance skills in created monologues?* I realized that this process was a necessary part of the process when working with novice actors. It helped them have a focus and better understanding. With further inquiry I would like to explore the idea of a rehearsal checklist or rubric to aide in the process.

Documentation to bring (student work, photos, writing, teacher journal, etc.):

I have photos, video, and the original drafts and final student plays as evidence of the work.

Additional Thoughts and Reflection:

I have chosen a 5th grade class to focus my first action plan on this year. I chose this class because they have never acted before and I thought it would be interesting to see how they would take to the assessment strategies while still beginning to act for the first time. I am permanent in the school this year, but last year I only taught theater to grade 3. They seemed pretty excited, the first time I walked in the door and took to the structure of the class rather well. Some of the student's told me that they took outside acting lessons, and some have had absolutely no exposure.

I started with cold readings of short scenes just to evaluate their ability levels. By doing this I noticed that most of the students lacked physicality and freeness in their body. I knew I wanted to do a unit on character creation so we started by creating walks that focused on a specific body part. Then we created 3 walks to perform with a partner and discussed and used "I like, I wish" feedback protocol. Most of the students took to the method rather quickly; the others had to be reminded. However, I was determined to keep it consistent. We also discussed the performance rubric and how the criteria are critical to

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an actor's success. This concept seems hard for them to grasp, we are still working towards it. They then chose one walk to build a character from.

The next week we began using the voice to help us with character creation. We used a theater game called "May I please have some chocolate?" to help us free the voice and find a voice that would help us fit our walk. They were then asked to write a "Who am I?" explaining the ins and outs of their new conference with the students about their pieces, while the others worked with a partner and shared their ideas. I found it hard to manage the partnerships while I was doing individual conferences because I am sure that there were students who were getting completely off task. In fact, I caught a few in the act. It helped me pick the partners more wisely the next time around and I decided to make them more accountable by having them document their work on a formative assessment form.

After the "Who am I?" piece was complete I brought in examples of monologues and acted them for the students and we noted the characteristics of a monologue. This helped the students pick the moment of their character's life to focus on. Some ideas were clearer than others some needed a lot of coaching. As they wrote I had conferences with the students individually and we used technology to publish our pieces. When the pieces were complete which took around 3 class sessions, longer than I anticipated, I felt we had a very diverse group of characters and I was pleased with what the class came up with as a whole. I had them work in peer partnerships and had them document their peer-assessment on a form using 4 criteria as a focus for the rehearsal. I found that having the students working in partnerships, it allowed me to circulate and assist more students. The students also had a better time focusing their monologue when they were acting it to someone. I only assisted when I found they students were getting off track or when they needed to focus their ideas.

After 2 sessions of rehearsal the students were informed they had to memorize their scripts, and they were going to be filmed for the use of self-assessment. I think that this made some students nervous, even a few refused to get up in front of the class. Some surprised me by their willingness to try despite their nerves. When we watched the final performance back, the students were somewhat embarrassed to see themselves perform; I told them it was a necessary part of performing. They then filled out a self-assessment sheet/checklist and wrote reflections. I feel that all in all it was a good experience for the students and myself and that it is only going to strengthen their performance skills. I hope they enjoyed it as much as I did.