

Arts Assessment For Learning

THEATER – 3RD GRADE

HOW TO & TIPS: IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER

- First we talked about what improvisational theater is and the three big rules of improv.
 1. Always say “Yes, and”
 2. Always make your partner look good.
 3. Say the first thing that come into your head.
- To teach these rules we played a variety of theater games. The goal of playing the games was threefold: to teach the rules of improv; to build the children’s courage in using their imaginations in front of each other and an audience....the courage to be silly in public; and to develop their ability to work as part of an ensemble. Theater games were used throughout the unit as warm up activities.
- Formative assessment was used after each game through a discussion of when and how well the three rules of improv were adhered to in the game. This helped the children learn the rules and use them as they played.
- The grade level focus for literature was a study of Greek mythology. This would also be the focus of our work with improvisation. Wherever possible in the theater games and warm up exercises we used ideas and images from Greek mythology. To build background knowledge we read and heard stories from Greek mythology.
- We began to focus on improv games that involved story construction, (*The Four Part Story*); tableaux, (*Thank You Statue, Parts to a Whole*); and an improv game that combines both storytelling and tableaux (*Slide Show*).
- Formative assessment was used in the playing of *Slide Show*. A checklist of criteria was used as well as a simple *I Like I Wish Protocol*. Positive peer feedback was given first (*I like*.)” Then what needed to be improved was mentioned (*I wish*). The goal of the assessment was to refine the children’s listening skills, physical control and expression, and knowledge of basic stagecraft.
- For a final project, the children were to write 4 part stories using the story of *The Labors of Hercules* as a model and act them out in tableaux form. *The Labors of*

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Hercules is a story cycle telling about the adventures of Hercules as he defeats a series of fantastic beasts, and accomplishes impossible tasks. The children invented new labors for Hercules.

NOTE: At this point the work ceased to be purely improvisational.

- Formative assessment was used to develop the stories. The children used a Ladder of Feedback protocol to discuss the stories. Plot lines were clarified, details were added.
- The students worked together as small ensembles to act out those stories in tableau format. One person told the story while the others created tableaux. Student directors were assigned to help the other students get improv their work by watching what they did and offering ideas on how to make it better based on the Slide Show criteria. Directors were encouraged to base their comments on the criteria, use the I Like I Wish Protocol, but also feel free to come up with inventive ideas on their own that would improve the staging.
- The ensembles performed for each other at different stages of the rehearsal process. Their peers gave them feedback for improvement based on a *Ladder of Feedback* of protocol as well as the criteria for Slide Show.
- The children videotaped each ensemble during one of these shared rehearsals. They watched the tapes and set goals for improvement as a means of self-assessment.
- The children performed their work for other classes.