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THEATER — 4TH GRADE

REFLECTION: PANTOMIME FOR ACTORS

What went well?

Warm-up

The students quickly adjusted to the pantomime workshop model. In the beginning they were hesitant to lead the physical warm-up. Once they started experimenting with the body and learned specific pantomime skills they felt comfortable and became eager to lead the warm-up.

Refining The Teaching Methodology to Teach Lecoq's Technique

I have taught this technique for ten years. This project forced me to create a pantomime workshop model and simplify the lessons. The videotaping helped me think strategically and plan the lessons accordingly so improvement could be documented.

Agenda: Organizing Content and Allocating Time

Since I have tried to teach so many skills and concepts in each lesson, I started writing my agenda or “work flow” on the board to help me stay on track. This was effective in making the goals visible to the students and sharing knowledge. Sometimes, they kept me on track and reminded me of the items we haven't covered yet.

The Teaser

As a strategy to instill interest in learning Lecoq's pantomime technique I have divided the exercises according to their complexity level. I found that showing the hardest exercises motivated them to want to learn the technique.

Planning: At-A-Glance Unit Chart

Having an At-A-Glance Performance Assessment Chart per unit has been very helpful. (See ACTION PLAN and RESOURCES). I can see all the lessons, exercises, performance indicators or variations, new skills, assessment strategies, videotaping days and the specific skills I'm videotaping on one single sheet.

What was so-so?

Time Management

Allocating time to teach a mini-lesson for each exercise or set of skills, giving them enough independent work time and including a reflection wasn't always successful. I very often felt I didn't have enough time.

What was the most challenging part of trying this?

Getting Them Interested

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At a very early stage I noticed that the students didn't seem interested in learning Lecoq's pantomime technique. Even though I was transparent and clear since the beginning, a few students were hesitant to learn, and questioned why they were just moving on the stage. "We are not learning math or science, or reading," a student said. I now understand this happened because the exercises themselves are not easy. The students that struggle the most tried to give up. I realized I needed to make time to talk about what we were doing and why, after each lesson; and little by little instill in them appreciation for the performing arts.

Time Management: Allocating time to include different forms of assessment on the same day was also challenging. Explaining the checklist consumed more time than videotaping performance or "Show and Tell" (turn-and-talk/peer assessment).

What was the impact of this strategy on student learning?

Checklist: The Walking

Most students were able to accurately identify their areas of improvement. As expected, there were exercises that some students could perform better than others, but I was not interested in them mastering an exercise. I wanted the students to learn (pantomime) skills and understand how to perform a specific exercise, and how a technique helps them become better student mimes/actors.

How did technology support or not support your efforts?

The videotaping process helped me track the students' progress. I have enough video footage I can use to create or refine future lessons.

How do the results of your action plan inform or revise your inquiry question? What new insights or next steps can you identify as a result of your implementation?

The results of this research project inform that I could have narrowed its focus to a few exercises from Lecoq's technique. It also informs that peer assessment was more effective than self, or perhaps because it was more immediate. A few students showed improvement through self-assessment, but most students improved when we used peer assessment. However, the one objective from my inquiry question I feel we highly accomplished was "supporting students into thinking and working like actors." The theater class became a pantomime/movement laboratory, and the students, the mime actors. Once they learned a few skills and how to implement them to execute the exercises (e.g. The Walking), they understood how pantomime help actors (artist) create the illusion of "becoming," which is a core component of acting.

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Documentation to bring:

The evidence of student learning I collected is checklists (The Walking, The Warm-Up) and video footage.