

Drama Education

A Universal Form of Human Expression

- Drama is a universal form of human expression found in cultures all over the world and throughout history. Examples include Greek tragedies, Japanese Noh dramas, Italian commedia dell'arte, Balinese shadow puppet theatre, Native American mask rituals, and the French farce comedies. Go to [Glossary of Terms](#) for definitions of genres and styles.
- Observation and imitation are primary mechanisms for learning throughout infancy and childhood.
- People enact a number of different roles during their lifetimes, or even during the course of a single day.
- Preparing, rehearsing, and performing for important life events (e.g., a job interview, college application, or wedding) is a natural part of the human experience in any culture.
- Emotion, gestures, and imitation are universal forms of communication understood in all cultures.
- Theatre is a basic part of human existence; it should therefore be part of a basic education.

Develops the Imagination

- Albert Einstein said, "imagination is more important than knowledge." He advanced the existing knowledge of his day by using his imagination. He turned the knowledge upside down and inside out, and dared to think outside of the box. As a result, he created new knowledge. Without imagination, education becomes a kind of intellectual recycling of the same knowledge passed from teacher to student and back to teacher on the test. Education should do more than simply transmit information; it should develop skills such as imagination that evolve our knowledge and move us forward as a species.
- History demonstrates the importance of imagination to human progress. The scientists, artists, activists, and politicians who dared to think differently are the people who have made the most lasting impact on the course of human history.
- Imagination is at the core of innovation, invention, problem solving, science, and the arts.
- Imagination develops students' writing, speaking, and creative self-expression.
- Drama teaches students to imagine, explore, create, and share in front of others.
- Drama teaches interpretation, personal creativity, and new ways of looking at the same information (e.g., how to act out a familiar role or story such as *Hamlet* or *The Tortoise and the Hare*).
- Students learn to trust and develop their creative imaginations by playing engaging drama games.

A Multi-sensory Mode of Learning

- Drama is hands-on, experiential learning that engages mind, body, voice, and emotions to interpret and convey to others information and ideas.
- Each sense that is engaged provides an opportunity to remember the information and the experience. Memory can be triggered from what the students saw, smelled, heard, touched, or tasted during the game--even if it was pretend or simulated. Each sensory input provides another opportunity to learn and retain the information.

- Research has demonstrated that the emotional involvement in drama activities promotes a deepening of understanding and improved retention of the information.
- The emotional and energetic nature of drama provides a personal connection to the material--one that embeds it more firmly in the mind. For example, the historic Boston Tea Party becomes meaningful on a personal level if acted out in a production.
- Comprehension and retention greatly increase by using drama. For example, a student acts out the vocabulary word "slippery" in front of the class. She now has a much improved chance of remembering the word and what it means than if she had to memorize it for a written test. Rote memorization generally diminishes within a few weeks. Most people have first hand experience with this process. How many times have we studied intensely to learn and memorize a large amount of information for a test, only to forget most of it within a short time thereafter.
- Bodies are alive and moving, energy is created and released, and muscles are exercised during drama games. All of these factors increase the students' motivation and attention for learning.
- Drama provides a rich experience that engages body, emotions, and senses in dynamic learning.

Reaches Students Who Struggle in Traditional Schooling

- By acting out the material, students who have difficulty with reading and writing can avoid struggling with pen and paper, and may expose a previously unnoticed intelligence or ability. The following groups typically struggle academically, but often shine and demonstrate their knowledge and creativity in drama. They can gain much needed self-esteem and improve literacy skills by playing drama games.
- Limited English Proficient (LEP), English as a Second Language (ESL), or English Language Learner (ELL) students.
- Learning Disabled (LD) students who have dyslexia or other learning disabilities that cause them to struggle with reading, writing, and/or numbers.
- Special Education students who may have physical or mental disabilities that make reading or writing difficult.
- Drama is a kinesthetic (movement) teaching method that benefits those students who learn best by doing (moving their bodies). In traditional approaches, students sit down for long periods. Research provides ample evidence to support the importance of movement for learning. Not only does movement reach the kinesthetic learners in the group, it refreshes and energizes all participants. Switching learning modalities as a teacher is a key to maintaining the attention and motivation of the students. Go to [Multiple Intelligences](#) to learn about different learning modalities.
- Drama is an effective Total Physical Response (TPR) method with second language learners or learning disabled students.

Provides Long-Term Benefits that Spill Over into School and Life

- The skills learned through regular exposure to drama extend well beyond the drama lesson.
- Drama develops skills such as concentration, imagination, cooperation/collaboration, and listening. These skills are essential in other school subjects and generally improve academic performance.
- The benefits of drama education (such as self-confidence, empathy, and communication skills) are invaluable in the work place and in everyday interactions with people.

- There is ample and persuasive research evidence that students exposed to theatre arts training perform better in school, have more consistent attendance, demonstrate more empathetic behavior towards others, and have greater self-esteem.
- The positive long-term benefits of regular drama instruction from elementary school and up spill over into all areas of school, career, and life.
- To learn more, read the summary descriptions of the [Drama Skills](#) and [Benefits](#).

A Method of Learning Through Play

- Research shows that young children learn primarily through play. They develop social skills, physical coordination, and cognitive understanding of their environment through play. Many educators argue for an increased allotment of time for children to play during the school day, especially in preschool, primary, and elementary grades.
- Benefits of using play as an instructional tool:
 - Activates vitality and stimulates players physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually.
 - Provides hands-on learning by doing, feeling, and experiencing.
 - Reduces stress and provides a healthy outlet for expression of emotions.
 - Brings fun, laughter, and bonding into the learning environment.
 - Increases motivation for learning and participating.
 - Stimulates imagination and spontaneity in the moment.
- Drama games use noncompetitive play as the basic mode of learning. The games encourage cooperation and collaboration in a creative context. Students work together rather than compete against each other as in many sports. To learn more, go to [Teaching Philosophy](#).
- The games provide a shared play experience for adults and students together. When students and teachers play a game such as [Walking In...](#), they experience, discover, experiment, respond, create, and share with each other.

Conclusion

Drama is a powerful teaching and learning tool with profound positive effects on a student's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. The benefits of regular drama instruction spill over into all school subjects and everyday life. Drama is sound pedagogy that reaches students of multiple intelligences and different learning styles. It is a multi-sensory mode of learning that engages mind, body, senses, and emotions to create personal connections to the material that improve comprehension and retention.

Drama is an ideal strategy for differentiated instruction. Students with language difficulties, learning disabilities, or physical or mental disabilities can shine in drama, whereas they often struggle in traditional schooling. Gifted, talented, and highly motivated students who need to be challenged can demonstrate their abilities and synthesize learning in drama. From the shy to the confident, from the ELD/LEP to the linguistically gifted, and from the inexperienced to the advanced student, drama games include all levels of differentiated abilities in a positive successful creative experience.

In order to present material to others in class or for a full-scale production, the participants must not only understand the material, but also find a way to communicate it creatively and effectively to the audience. Therefore, knowledge is not enough; imagination, creativity, and communication are required to make effective theatre.

Drama transforms the traditional teacher-student relationship from one of authority-recipient to one of shared experience of discovery and creative exploration. (To learn more, go to [Modeling Creativity](#).) Easy to use as a teaching tool in any school subject, drama provides a practical, effective, and empowering approach to teaching that transforms the learning environment.

Taken from.

<http://www.dramaed.net/whydramagames.htm>

Another useful website (examples of drama games):

http://scs.une.edu.au/Drama/2004_Photos/Documents/Drama_Games.pdf