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Improvisation: Skills for Theatre and Life

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Improvisation: Skills for Theatre and Life

Stage 1 – Desired Results			
<p>Established Goals (e.g., standards)</p> <p>(1)(A) understand the value and purpose of using listening, observation, concentration, cooperation, and emotional and sensory recall; (J) identify the principles of improvisation. (2) (A) model safe, appropriate techniques to allow for physical, vocal, and emotional expression; (B) demonstrate creativity as it relates to self and ensemble and its effect on audience; (D) use physical, intellectual, emotional, and social awareness to portray believable characters and convey a story when applying acting concepts, skills, and techniques; (F) create, write, and refine original monologues, improvisations, scenes, or vignettes that reflect dramatic structure to convey meaning to the audience through live</p>	Transfer		
	<p><i>Students will independently use their learning to...</i></p> <p>Improvise a scene in a small group, employing the seven steps to improvisation. Afterward, they will write a reflection on how improvisation skills can apply to living a positive life.</p>		
	Meaning		
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<p>performance or media forms. (5)(B) defend theatre as an art form and value self as a creative being;</p>	<p>Improvisation is not a natural gift only available to elite performers.</p> <p>The Way of Improvisation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play 2. Let Yourself Fail 3. Listen (Listening is the Willingness to Change.) 4. Say Yes 5. Say Yes And 6. Play the Game 7. Relax and Have Fun <p>Vocabulary:</p> <p>Improvisation Listening Responding Characterization Tactic Status Offer Sharing control Clarity Cohesiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Articulate how the principles of improvisation lead to a positive life ● Perform on stage without a script while being seen, heard and understood ● Sustain an improvised scene for at least five minutes
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Stage 2 – Evidence

<p>CODE (M or T)</p>	<p>Evaluative Criteria (for rubric)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 7 Steps to Improvisation: Playing, Listening, Letting yourself fail, saying yes, saying yes and, playing the game, relaxing and having fun ● Performer will also be evaluated on being seen, heard and understood. ● In reflection, student will be evaluated on meaning, connections, analysis and spelling and grammar
		<p>Performance Task(s) <i>Students will demonstrate meaning-making and transfer by...</i></p> <p>Improvise a scene in a small group, employing the seven steps to improvisation, character, setting and dramatic structure. Afterward, they will write a reflection on how utilizing improvisation skills and principles can lead to living a positive, meaningful life.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Other Evidence (e.g., formative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theatre Journal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have students write reflectively in journal throughout the unit. They may draw upon this source when writing their final reflection. If desired, instructor can have periodic meetings with student to go over their journal entries. ● 7 Steps to Improvisation Quiz ● Group Self-Evaluation

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verbal feedback from instructor on group warm ups and exercises and during rehearsals and games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All verbal feedback should be aligned with rubric and principles to improvisation. It is important to always focus on the positive first, followed by what may be improved. ● Practice Performance (assessed using performance rubric) ● Self-assessment using rubric (watch video of performance) ● Improvisation - Skills for Life Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Reflection Prompts</u> Discuss how the principles and steps of improvisation can directly apply to a situation, event or reality in your life. How can practicing what you do as an improviser benefit you off the stage? How can you align your choices with the steps to improvisation, and how can that have a positive impact? Is there a situation in your life where you did use these principles and it helped in some way?
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Stage 3 – Learning Plan		
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CODE (A, M, T)	Pre-Assessment <i>How will you check students' prior knowledge, skill levels, and potential misconceptions?</i>
A	Pre-Quiz: What's your definition of improvisation? What do you think of when you hear the word improvisation? List your guess as to what our seven steps to improvisation might be. Do you think the skills someone uses in improvisation can apply to life too? If so, how?

	Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Unless otherwise indicated, start each class with five to ten minutes of vocal, physical and improvisation warm-ups (I Am A Tree, Yes-Yes-Yes, Yes Let's, Machine, etc.).</i> ● <i>After each game (or each round of each game), have an open discussion of the class related to how the steps to improvisation were employed. What did they do well? What could we change?</i> ● <i>There are many, many TED talks about improvisation. I encourage the instructor to seek them out and choose ones that believe to be beneficial. Unit may be extended to include watching these TED talks and reflecting on them in journal. TED talks can also be assigned as homework if students have access to the appropriate technology at home.</i> 	Progress Monitoring (e.g., formative data)
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A	<p>https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqjWloqJ-2MjZKqz8zqJDqWRm7NpumOoA</p> <p>Week 1 Day 1 Do Now: Pre-Quiz Video: Have students take notes (List the 7 Steps of Improv) during the video, The Way of Improvisation - TEDxVictoria Dave Morris - Youtube Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUO-pWJ0riQ</p>	Pre-Assessment
M	<p>Games (Steps 1 & 2): Machine - Players one by one form parts of a machine using body movements and sounds. Goal is to find a group rhythm, be in the moment (play). I Am A Tree - Players form a circle. The first person starts by jumping in the middle, shaping their body like a tree and saying, "I am a tree." The next person jumps in as another object that might be in the scene (perhaps an apple), then a third person (perhaps the grass). The first player says, "I'll take the..." and chooses between "apple" and "grass." Let's say he chooses "grass." Those two step back into the circle, and the player who is left starts with "I am an apple."</p>	
M	<p>Day 2 Warm Ups Games & Exercises (Steps 4 & 5): The Ad Game The Ad Game - Usually played with six to eight actors. The group has five minutes to create an ad campaign for an ordinary product with an unusual quality. For example: cereal that plays music when milk is poured on it. The group must come up with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An idea for a product ● A name for the product ● A package design ● A slogan ● A spokesperson ● A jingle 	<p>Verbal Group Feedback Discussion Go to questions (more may be added):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What did we do well? ● What could we improve? ● How can these steps also apply to life?
M	<p>The only way to do this in five minutes is through complete and total agreement—no negative thinking is allowed. Every idea is accepted enthusiastically, and remembered, each step is built off the previous idea. In order to properly brainwash the actors with this theory of acceptance, the director may want to force them to over-accept, screaming "Yes!" "Terrific idea!" "Great!" and other praises of brilliance after each idea is stated. This over-acceptance—particularly of stupid ideas—only makes the game funnier. Most of the time, the players dramatize the game with lots of pacing, thinking, and enthusiastic shouts of agreement. Lifework: Say "Yes" to something you normally wouldn't say yes to--it must be legal and safe obviously.</p>	<p>Journal entry: What do you think of improvisation so far? What are your feelings around getting up on stage with no script or plan?</p>
A	<p>Day 3 Warm Ups</p>	

M	<p>Discussion: Giving/accepting offers in scenes. Explain the importance of saying yes to anything your scene partner gives you. This is not always a literal yes. The characters may disagree on something, but the actors must <i>always</i> agree on what's happening in the scene.</p> <p>Games & Exercises (Steps 4 & 5):</p> <p>Freeze - Two players begin a scene. Another player (offstage) calls out "Freeze!" The players onstage freeze in the exact position they're in at that moment. The new player tags out one of them and starts a brand news scene from their precise position.</p> <p>Three Line Scenes - Players try to establish character, relationship and setting in just three lines.</p>	<p>Verbal Group Feedback Discussion</p> <p>Verbal Group Feedback Discussion</p>
A	<p>Day 4</p> <p>Warm Ups</p> <p>Discussion: Being in the moment & listening. Provide TJ & Dave's Pearls of Wisdom handout. Use this as a starting point for the discussion.</p>	<p>Journal entry: What did you say yes to? Write about that experience.</p>
M	<p>Games & Exercises (Steps 3, 4, 5):</p> <p>Yes-Yes-Yes (aka One-Word Story, aka Confucius Says)</p> <p>Players stand in a circle and tell a story one word at a time while holding the tips of their fingers together (like Confucius). When the groups feels they have come to the end of a sentence, they bow toward the middle and whisper "yesyesyesyeesyes."</p> <p>Story-Story-Story (aka Conducted Story)</p> <p>Players stand in a line on stage. Instructor points to a player who begins the story and periodically switches to other players. Players must immediately pause and accurately pick up from exactly where the story left off.</p>	<p>Verbal Group Feedback Discussion</p>
A	<p>Day 5</p> <p>Warm Ups</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review seven steps to improvisation. ● What is a scene? <i>Relationship, Environment, Event</i> ● Open Mind, Start in the Middle, Show Don't Tell 	<p>Journal entry: What are your greatest strengths as an improviser? What do you think you could work on?</p>
M	<p>Games & Exercises:</p> <p>Three-Line Scenes</p> <p>ABCD</p> <p>Four players stand in a square formation with two downstage and two upstage. The first pair is "A," when the square pans clockwise, the next pair is "B," etc. Assign pair each pair their prompt. A - relationship. B - location. C - object. D - word. Scene starts with "A" and host periodically switches between all the scenes until each one has gone about three times and all have found endings.</p>	<p>Verbal Group Feedback Discussion</p>
M	<p>Week 2</p> <p>Day 6</p> <p>Warm Ups</p> <p>Continue games and exercises</p>	

M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce Group Self-Eval and practice as a class using scenes during period 	
M	<p>Day 7 Warm Ups Discussion: Group Mind (Step 3) How to actors listen to each other? How do we pay attention? This usually looks like literally looking at scene partner--listening with more than ears (eyes, sixth sense, etc.) Games & Exercises: Mingle Mixer (aka Cocktail Party)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Several different conversations at a cocktail party come in and out of focus. They start to organically/naturally connect without actors forcing it. Listening is extremely important in this game. 	Verbal Group Feedback Discussion
M	<p>Day 8 Warm Ups Discussion: Environmental Awareness (Specificity) Discuss the importance of being present in the environment and paying attention to where objects are. (Don't walk through the table!) Games & Exercises:</p>	Verbal Group Feedback Discussion
M	<p>Object/Line Each time a player says a line, they must create a new pantomimed object and use it in the scene.</p>	As a class, end with collectively doing a group self-eval
M	<p>Day 9 Warm Ups Games & Exercises: Freeze - Observe and discuss how well class is giving and accepting offers and saying yes as improvisers even if characters disagree at time. Conflict Scenes - assign pairs scene that would normally contain conflict (burglary, break-up, etc.) but instruct them that the characters must not argue and they must agree on everything.</p>	Group Self-Eval Worksheet
M	<p>Day 10 Warm Ups Games & Exercises: Reflective scenes Pairs perform scenes back to back with each new scene somehow being inspired from the previous scene--even if it only the smallest or most subtle connection.</p>	Instructor watches each group's rehearsal at least once and gives them verbal and written feedback on their performance.
M	<p>Week 3 Day 11 Warm Ups Random Group Improv Rehearsal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pass out Suggested "Improv Game, Exercises and Scenes for Group Rehearsal" handout 	Group Self-Eval Worksheet

M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Put students in groups of two or three, purposefully giving them partners they may not have worked with before. Give them multiple groups during class. ● They may play games, improvise scenes from given scenarios, make up their own scenarios or just discover scenes on their own and see what emerges when they start without suggestions. 	Group Self-Eval Worksheet
M	<p>Day 12 Warm Ups Assign Groups--Group Improv Rehearsal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I recommend allowing students to choose their own improv groups. Improvising with people we know and trust usually leads to a better scene. ● All groups can be rehearsing at the same time in different parts of the classroom. Instructor can give them possible scenarios, they may think of their own, or they may wish to discover the scenes as they go 	
T	<p>Day 13 Warm Ups Group Improv Rehearsal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Could add a third day of group improv rehearsal if desired or if needed 	
T	<p>Day 14 Warm Ups Group Improv Performances (video record all scenes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Performers should have the option to be given a scenario from instructor or start scene with no suggestion and discover it themselves. ● After each improv scene. Ask improvisers what they did well and what they could work on. Then ask audience members the same, followed by verbal and written feedback from instructor. 	Instructor may wish to evaluate or check the feedback the student are giving each other.
T	<p>Day 15 Warm Ups Group Improv Performances (video record all scenes)</p>	
M	<p><u>Week 4</u> Day 17 Warm Ups Continue Group Improv Performances</p> <p>Day 18</p>	

