

Studying the Teen Theater Troupe as a Roadmap **Handout #1**

Program Structures your Theater Troupe can Take

Four easy teen theater troupe structure options for the public library

- Easiest structure would be to do a dramatic reading of an already existing script like Shakespeare
- Guide them in writing a new (not too long) play and have them perform a dramatic reading (great if you have a creative writing background)
- Do the same thing and then, if time, turn it into a full play with blocking (having a full play to show an audience is a huge motivator for the teens). We accomplished this structure and did a full, original play with meeting only 7 times together (14 hours total) for our first show
- Find older scripts for short scenes that are no longer under copyright/write some new ones and have the teens perform a showcase (what we did for our fall troupe to focus on skill building)

Whatever you choose for your final show... focus on skill building (writing, projecting, public speaking, etc.) and fun games for group bonding throughout. These elements will keep the teens coming back for more and growing together. It will also help sell your program to the library and community as valuable in many aspects for the teens. If you can connect your show thematically with other signature programs like Summer Reading it will demonstrate you are helping tell the library's story to the community.

Handout #2

Safe and Inclusive Space Pillars to get them Coming Back

- Have snacks and water every meeting
- Have name tags until memorized (maybe every meeting)
- Establish the importance of correct names and pronouns (given by teen)
- Check in about access needs every meeting (in group or private)
- Show teens you respect them and thank them for their ideas
- Have a written feedback box
- Work on making your program a sensory safe space
- Develop and practice group rituals every meeting

Actor's Toolbox: Stories & Scripts

NWCT Drama Club Curriculum

Actor's Toolbox: Stories & Scripts

From the office of Leigh Mallonee, 2018

Kate's note: This wonderful outline of how to fully structure a theater camp or program series is by Leigh Mallonee and colleagues from my years at the Northwest Children's Theater. It is designed for younger groups working with a script, but I have taken inspiration from it. It has great structure and games and can be adapted to work for teens. Please make sure you do not encourage method acting or other potentially emotionally unsafe acting practices when working with youth.

Overall Goals: At the end of Drama Club, each student will have had the opportunity to participate in and perform a memorized play. Each student will understand the **SCORE** (setting, character, objective, relationship, ensemble) either explicitly or implicitly, and will have had the chance to practice basic actor skills such as cheating out, grounding, projecting, and memorizing lines.

Daily Schedule:

5 min - Transition, Snack time
10 min - Question of the day, Warm-up
10 min - First Activity
20 min - Main Activity
10 min - Wind-Down Activity
5 min - Closing Circle

Week 1: Intro to Theatre

Questions: Who are we? What are we doing?

Tools: Voice, Body, Imagination (optional: Tableaux or Stage Directions)

Week 2: Story & Script

Questions: What are the elements of story? What story are we telling? How are we telling it?

Tools: Story Elements (plot, characters, setting, conflict, resolution)

Week 3: Stage Pictures/Blocking

Questions: Where do we go during the story? How do we move and stand on stage?

Tools: Blocking, Cheating out, Levels, Tableaux, Stage Directions

Week 4: Character Building

Questions: Who are these characters? What do they want? How do they try and get what they want?

Tools: Objective, Tactics, Expression, Relationship

Week 5: Projection / Grounding

Questions: How can we be best heard, understood, and seen on stage?

Tools: Projection, Enunciation, Articulate, Grounding, Cheating out

Week 6: Ensemble, say yes!

Questions: Where's the Love? How can we help one another onstage?

Tools: Relationship, Awareness, Saying Yes, Active Listening

Week 7: Rehearsal!

Questions: How I can best support the play? How do I act offstage? How do I behave during the show?

Tools: Taking responsibility for yourself, responding to cues, knowing entrances and exits

Week 8: Final dress or Do a Show!!

Week One: Intro to Theatre

Questions: Who are we? What are we doing?

Tools: Voice, Body, Imagination (optional: Tableaux or Stage Directions)

5 min: Transition / Snack time

- Give your students time to transition from the school day. You may need to pick them up from somewhere, or they may arrive in your classroom one at a time. Establish a place for backpacks, possibly give them time to eat a snack, chat and get to know them for a few minutes before class begins.

10 min: Question of the Day / Warm-up

- Start each day in a circle with a question of the day. Ask a question and allow each student a chance to give his or her answer. You can call roll, go in a circle, or pass a ball around to students sitting quietly to hear all the answers.
 - *Examples:* Would you rather live in a treehouse or a houseboat? What is your favorite animal? If you could teleport to anywhere in the world, where would you go? In which book or movie would you most like to be a character?
- Warm-ups should take place in the circle. Establish something that you do the same every class. This will help your students find a routine and settle into class. Talk to your students about what you are doing. Explain and discuss the tools you are activating: **voice, body, and imagination!**

- Do some simple stretching, or your favorite body warm-ups. Maybe you like to do an 8-count shakedown, or pat down every body part, or reach for your favorite food on an unreachable shelf.
- Try out your favorite tongue twisters or vocal warm-up. Buzz your lips, make siren wails, etc.
- Play a quick circle game to engage the imagination.
 - *Example: Pass the Brain!* Similar to magic energy ball, the teacher reveals his or her imaginary brain and tells students that there are 3 levels to this game. All they must do is follow simple instructions to pass each level *as a team*. Level one - pass the invisible brain once around the circle, using two hands, passing with gentleness and respect. Level two - pass the brain again, but now it is as heavy as a bowling ball. Show how heavy it is without falling down. Level three - Pass the brain around again. This time, each student has the opportunity to change something about the brain and show (not tell!) the rest of the class. The brain can become light, sticky, square, long, breakable, smelly, etc.

10 min: First Activity

- On day one, your first activity should be to establish your class agreements/guidelines/rules. These should be discussed as a class, though you can guide the discussion to arrive at the rules you intend to enforce. You can write these down and post them for every class, or put one rule on each finger. Revisit these guidelines every class, even with the best behaved classes.
 - Example: *Thumb* - Be Respectful! *First finger* - Be Kind to One Another! *Middle and Ring Finger are Glued Together* - Listen, and don't talk when other people are talking! *Pinkie* - Keep your Hands to Yourself!!
- Talk to your students about what your expectations are for class. What will happen if they don't follow the class agreements? Perhaps you will establish a three strike system.
- Answer the question: **what are we doing??**
 - What is drama or theater? Who has done it before? What was that experience like?
 - What do they think will happen in this class?
 - What project is the class going to work on? Let them know that they will be acting out a story. What will that look like?

20 min: Main Daily Activity

- On the first day, pick a tool you will be revisiting later in the week and introduce it with a fun game.
 - *Example: Family Portraits!* Divide the class into four groups. Tell them they will be creating Christmas card photos for some very strange families. Each picture must have levels, and you must be able to see everyone's face. No straight lines! Tell them they have 30 seconds to create each Family Portrait/Christmas card. Call out each one: Rockstar Family, Monster Family, Sports Family, Monkey Family, Family of Babies! After 30 seconds they must freeze and you can take an imaginary photo of every family and call out elements you want them to notice. "There are so many levels in this family!" "Everyone's face has so much expression in this family! I know exactly how everyone is feeling!" At the end, let each group choose a family secretly and have the other groups guess which Family Portrait they are creating.

- Family Portraits can be expanded to *Three Scene Fairytales* if your class is clicking right along. Give each group a fairytale in secret and ask them to create three photos of important moments in that story (same elements as Family Portraits: levels, everyone must be in each photo, although not everyone has to be a character. Two students could work together to be the beanstalk). Other groups will watch the three pictures and guess the fairytale. You can then ask why they picked the three moments that they turned into **tableaux**.
- Another idea would be to teach **stage directions** in a game of *Director Says*. Similar to Simon Says, the Director stands in the audience and gives instructions to the actors onstage. If they preface the instruction with “Director says ...” the actors obey! If they do not, the actors do not. Give every student the chance to be the director.

10 min: Wind-down Activity

- Transition into either a more focused activity, an activity with more group control, or an activity that allows them to blow off a little steam. This can also be an incentive time - if they follow the class agreements, they get to vote every class on what the last activity will be!
 - *Examples:* Four Corners! Statues! Improv games like Taxicab or Three-Headed-Story-Monster!

5 min: Closing Circle

- Establish a closing routine. Let your students know what they will be working on the following class or review what was learned today. Give them time to debrief or ask questions.
- Create a clear check-out procedure if parents are picking up students. Keep students in place until they have been securely picked up! Minimize chaos by having students stay in a circle until you call their name, or lining up and walking like robots or spies to the pick-up location.

Week Two: Story & Script

Questions: What are the elements of story? What story are we telling? How are we telling it?

Tools: Story Elements (plot, characters, setting, conflict, resolution)

5 min: Transition / Snack time

10 min: Question of the Day / Warm-up

- *Example: What is a story you have read recently that you liked?*

10 min: First Activity

- Read in a circle the narrative version of the story. One sentence at a time. After read through discuss “what happens” in the story and introduce the idea of **story elements (plot, characters, setting, conflict, resolution)**.
- Reread story with the teacher acting as the narrator and let the students act out the narrative silently with their bodies. (i.e. if the story has running in it we all run in place, if singing we pretend to sing etc.)

20 min: Main Daily Activity

- Read in a circle the script version of the story. Each student taking turns to hear the whole script as a group. After read through, again discuss the story elements of the script. How were they the same or different than the narrative version of the story?
- *Slideshow*: Play slideshow, telling the story from the perspective of another character. Model the narrator part once, then pick a responsible student. The narrator tells a story, facing the audience, while 4 - 5 students act it out behind him or her. When the narrator says "Click!" the students in the slideshow freeze. The narrator must then describe what is happening in the tableau.
 - Baba Yaga - tell the story from Yaga's POV
 - Seuss - Cat in the Hat's POV
 - Snowmen Zombies - Mad Scientists POV or Zombies POV
 - Fables - Cats' POV, Lion's POV
 - Oz - Wizard's POV or Lavender Bear's POV

10 min: Wind-down Activity

- *Example: 3-Headed Story Monster*: Pick three students to link arms in front of the audience and tell a story one word at a time. Or, pick a "pointer" who points at one head for several sentences and then points at another head to pick up the story in the exact same spot. Try to get the story monster to use all 5 **story elements**.

5 min: Closing Circle

Week Three: Stage Pictures / Blocking

**** Today will be the day you "cast" your show.**

Questions: Where do we go during the story? How do we move and stand on stage?

Tools: Blocking, Cheating out, Levels, Tableaux, Stage Directions

5 min: Transition / Snack time

10 min: Question of the Day / Warm-up

10 min: First Activity

- You could revisit the *Family Portraits* game from the first day and expand it. An example is to ask the groups to create a frozen picture (**tableau**) of kids on a school bus. Reiterate the elements you want to see: levels, no straight lines, everyone's face. Then expand! You want to see how each person feels about someone else in the picture. Give them only 30 seconds to a minute to create the picture. Share these pictures. Have other students talk about what they see in each picture.
- From here, you can create frozen pictures of your story. Give each group a moment from the story you are working on and ask them to create a tableau of that moment. Share.

20 min: Main Daily Activity

- Give out the parts for your show. Take some time to talk to your students about how you cast it and how important each part is to the story.
- Begin blocking your story. Teach the students what **blocking** is. If you have taught **stage directions**, review them. Otherwise, take the time to teach stage directions!
- If your students are older, you may want to ask them to write down their blocking.

10 min: Wind-down Activity

- Especially if blocking requires some students to be sitting and waiting today, you may want today's wind-down activity to be something that gets everybody up and moving!

5 min: Closing Circle

Week Four: Character Building

Questions: Who are these characters? What do they want? How do they try and get what they want? How do we show the audience?

Tools: Objective, Tactics, Expression

5 min: Transition / Snack time

10 min: Question of the Day / Warm-up

10 min: First Activity

- *Hi, How are You?:* Put your class in pairs. Have them choose one person to be A and one to be B. A says, "Hi, how are you?" B replies, "Fine, thank you very much." Instruct them to approach their partner, shake hands and say their line (all partner groups go at the same time). Then give them a series of new ways to say the same line. Like Aliens! Like you are enemies! Like you are hyped up on sugar! Like you are very tired! Like you are cheerleaders!
- *Get out of that Chair!:* One student sits in a chair. We'll call him or her A. Another student (B), approaches. B - "Get out of that chair!" A - "No." (or "Why?" Or "Why should I?") B then gives a reason. A must tell B why he or she does not accept that reason. B gives a second reason, or elaborates on the first reason. A must accept this second reason and vacate the chair. A must also tell us why he or she accepts this second reason. B becomes A and a new student becomes B! Talk about **objective** and **tactics**! Objective - B wants A to leave the chair so he or she can sit in it! The tactics are the ways B tries to get A to leave.

20 min: Main Daily Activity

- Review Stage Directions!
- Finish blocking your show, or rehearse, reviewing your blocking.

10 min: Wind-down Activity

- *Magic Pudding!:* There are 3 characters. The pudding maker, the taster, and the doctor. The pudding maker sits center stage and mimes mixing pudding. The taster enters and asks to taste

the pudding. After they do, they say, "It tastes like (insert whatever they want), but I think I'm going to faint." The taster faints. The maker calls for the doctor, who enters and asks what the problem is. The maker says the taster has fainted. The doctor walks over to the taster, gets an idea, pulls out a magic wand, says some magic words and then says, "You're alive!" The taster sits up and says, "I'm alive!" The maker says, "You're alive!"

- The three characters do the scene twice. The second time, give them a fun theme: Like Robots! Or Like these characters from our story!

5 min: Closing Circle - consider sending home a character sheet, so students can dive deeper!

Week Five: Projection / Grounding

****By this time, you should have a gauge on how much time you need to spend on projection/grounding with your students. If you want to touch on projection/grounding and fill out the rest of the day with games they enjoy, or other activities you didn't have time to do in past weeks, feel free!**

Questions: How can we best be heard, understood, and seen onstage?

*Tools: Projection, Enunciation - the process of forming sounds into words that are clear and distinct
Articulate - being able to express one's self clearly, Grounding, Cheating out*

5 min: Transition / Snack time

10 min: Question of the Day / Warm-up

10 min: First Activity

- *Candy Store, or The Oldest Woman in the World!* One student enters the stage as the oldest person in the world. Once they sit, a second student enters and starts searching through the candy store for his or her favorite piece of candy. After a moment they approach the oldest person in the world, **ground his or her feet** and ask, "Where are the (Gobstoppers)?" The oldest person must say, "What?" or something else to indicate he or she does not understand. The second student must repeat himself or herself twice more, becoming **clearer and louder** (without yelling). After the 3rd time, the oldest person gives directions to the candy. The second student then becomes the oldest person and a new student enters the candy store.

20 min: Main Daily Activity

- Rehearse your play, focusing on projection and grounding.
- If you can find a larger space, i.e. the hallway or the playground, and have students pick one of their lines and practice saying it loudly and clearly so other students can hear and understand them from far away.

10 min: Wind-down Activity

5 min: Closing Circle

- Let students know you will be running the show MEMORIZED during the next class! Talk about memorizing techniques.

Week Six: Ensemble, say yes!

Questions: Where's the Love? How can we help one another?

Tools: Relationship, Awareness, Saying Yes, Active Listening

5 min: Transition / Snack time

10 min: Question of the Day / Warm-up

- *Example: What are your favorite teams? (think outside the box: could be sports teams, could be Harry/Ron/Hermione)*

10 min: First Activity

- *Here are three activities for ensemble building:*
 - *Stop, Go, Melt:* Have students silently walk "the grid" (walk in straight lines all over the room, turning at 90 degree angles). When you call out "stop" they freeze. When you call out "go" they start up again. When you say "melt" they begin to melt down to the ground in slow motion. Play at this level until students are comfortable with the directions. In round two, each student is allowed to say one command once. They may pick any of the three. If they speak at the same time as another student, both lose their turn (keeps it from getting muddled). In the third round, students must stop, go, and melt together without anyone saying anything!! In each round, ask them to be continuously **aware** of everyone else in the room. In the final round, emphasize that you want them to move together, so discourage someone trying to lead the movement.
 - *Stop/Go Opposites:* When you say "go" students stop. When you say "stop", students go! Other opposite commands you can add in are "Touch the Ground/Jump" and "Shake/Spin Around." This is a surprisingly tricky exercise for students.
 - *Concentration:* Bring up to six balls with you to class. Have students sit in a circle, making sure there are no gaps. Create a pattern with one ball, making sure every student has the ball rolled to them once. You are the beginning and end of the pattern. Once the pattern has been established, you can play the game. Here are the rules: you must always send the ball in the same pattern. The ball cannot go outside of the circle. If there is more than one ball, they can never touch. There is no talking. That's it! Add more balls as you like. I've personally gotten it up to six, but that was with a very focused group!!

20 min: Main Daily Activity

- Rehearse Show memorized! Focus on how students can help out one another. How can they make their fellow castmates look like Rockstars? What are the **relationships** between the characters onstage?

10 min: Wind-down Activity

5 min: Closing Circle

Week Seven: Rehearsal Skills!

Questions: How I can best support the play? How do I act offstage? How do I behave during the show?

Tools: Taking responsibility for yourself, responding to cues, knowing entrances and exits

5 min: Transition / Snack time

10 min: Question of the Day / Warm-up

10 min: First Activity

- Look back at past weeks and skills where your students may need extra help. Pick an activity from one of the other weeks to revisit, or add in your own to give your students another chance to practice that specific skill.
- Spend some time talking about backstage etiquette, how we support a show even when we are not onstage. Now is usually when some student actors will begin directing others. Talk about taking responsibility for oneself and remind students that you are the only director and you will make sure everyone does what he or she is supposed to do.

20 min: Main Daily Activity

- Run your show once, regularly. Then run it a second time, either as a speed through or do an "Italian Run." In an Italian Run, periodically freeze the actors and then call out a theme: Now like Robots! Do it like you're incredibly angry! Have a crazy accent! They must continue the regular lines and blocking, but now in that new theme.

10 min: Wind-down Activity

5 min: Closing Circle

Week Eight: Final Dress or Put on a Show!

**** For many classes, there will be a demo during this class. If you do not have a demo Week Eight, use this last class as a final rehearsal and debrief.**

5 min: Transition / Snack time

10 min: Question of the Day / Warm-up

10 min: First Activity

- Prepare for your show! Get chairs out, do a quick line-through or run your show.

20 min: Main Daily Activity

- Today's main activity is the demo! Invite families in, and deliver a prepared introduction along these lines:
 - Hello! My name is Lisa, I work with the NW Children's Theater, and I have been teaching this class the past eight weeks! I have had such a great time with your kids and am very excited to show you what they have been working on. This term, students learned basic theater skills such as being able to be loud and clear onstage, or knowing how to create an interesting character that has objectives! As we learned and practiced these skills, we worked with a script and put together the short play you are about to see! Before we begin, I wanted to also let you know that we will be back next term and we would love to see your students again! Now, without any further ado, please enjoy (insert name of show!)

10 min: Wind-down Activity

- May not be applicable if you have a demo. If your show is quite short, I often like to share other activities or games that the students have particularly enjoyed and explain to parents which skills were learned during each activity.

5 min: Closing Circle

- May not be applicable if you have a demo!