



Spontaneous Story with Jayden Pfeifer

Overview

Join theatre artist Jayden Pfeifer as we explore the skills of improvisation! Jayden will work with the students to exercise their improv muscles. Students will practise listening, accepting, supporting, and creative expression in a supportive group environment.

This active and spontaneous storytelling workshop will teach the elements of basic improv story structure. Students will learn how to build narrative, invent fun and unique characters, and insert plot twists into their stories!

Artist Bio

Jayden Pfeifer is a Regina-based improviser, teacher, and performer whose work in improvisation, as creator and performer, has spanned the last 20 years. He was the host and creator Red Hot Riot with Jayden Pfeifer, a comedy variety show which ran 7 seasons in Regina, and hosts TALKIES, a monthly movie-commentary show at the RPL Film Theatre. He teaches improvisation at the University of Regina, where he recently earned a Masters degree studying Improvisation and Group Facilitation. Much of his creative and community-based work is rooted in collaborative partnership with movement and improvisation artist Johanna Bundon. Jayden is also an Artistic Associate for Curtain Razors Theatre, and most recently appeared in their productions of *Live Duet*, *Bad Blood*, *Carmen Angel*, *Burnt Sienna*, and *Untitled Peter Tripp Project*.

Strand: Drama
Grades: 7 & 8
Content: 45 minute broadcast + hands-on activity

Classroom Setup:

- Students will need room to move around and stand in a circle.
- Computer
- Projector
- Speakers (good sound level is important for this lesson).
- White board or black board.

Materials:

- Writing utensil
- Paper

Curriculum Aims & Goals

Aim:

The aim of K-12 Arts Education is to enable students to understand and value arts expressions throughout life.

Creative/Productive:

Students will inquire, create, and communicate through dance, drama, music and visual art.

Critical/Responsive:

Students will respond to artistic expressions of Saskatchewan, Canadian and International artists using critical thinking, research, creativity and collaborative inquiry.

Cultural/Historical:

Students will investigate the content and aesthetics of the arts within cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts, and understand the connection between the arts and human experience.

Creative/Productive

CP7.5

Use drama elements, strategies, negotiation, and collaboration to help shape the direction of the drama and/or collective creation.

CP8.3

Choreograph one section of group choreography.

CP8.4

Demonstrate how dramatic characters interact in relationships within the drama and/or collective creation.

CP8.5

Investigate how theatrical elements (e.g., story, character, design, space) are combined to achieve dramatic purpose.

Critical/Responsive

CR7.2

Investigate and identify ways that the arts can communicate a sense of place.

CR8.1

Respond to professional dance, drama, music, and visual art works through the creation of own arts expressions.

Cultural/Historical

CH7.1

Investigate how artists' relationship to place may be reflected in their work.

CH8.4

Examine and respond to the work of artists who incorporate more than one art form in their work (e.g., combining poetry and music).

Recorded Broadcast Program (45 min.)

Here is the list of the activities students will be doing during the video program.

You can familiarize yourself with this resource before class if you want to. You may wish to refer back to these at a later time without watching the video to incorporate them into your classroom. Jayden will be explaining each of these during the video.

Activities to encourage acceptance, communication, and sharing:

ACTION-REPEAT

Students stand in a circle. One player offers their name accompanied by a large physical action, loudly and with high energy. That statement & gesture gets repeated by the whole circle, with everyone matching the original energy and tone as closely as possible. Then the next student in the circle player offers a new gesture and with their name, and so on. As the rhythm is established, the action should move faster and faster without compromising the original energy and tone offered. Once the whole group has had a turn, try going around again, this time using loud gibberish words instead of the student's names.

ZOOM

Invite students to stand in a circle. Ask the group to repeat the words ZOOM three or four times, and to imagine that they have a bolt of energy in their hands, which they can send across to someone else in the circle (using hands, body, eye contact and the word ZOOM). Explain that the next person takes the energy and passes it immediately to someone else using the same word and action. Encourage all students to use their whole body to send energy and to make eye contact. They can send the energy to whomever they want but the goal is to include all players.

YES LETS

Have the students take a place in the room. Ask a volunteer to call out an activity for everyone to embody, preceded by the word "Let's" (ie. "Let's go fishing", "Let's build a bridge", "Let's cut each other's hair"). All other students accept this offer by replying "Yes, Lets!". As a group, the students physicalize the activity, using their bodies, sounds, and voices (ie. playing pretend). Continue with this activity until another student suggests a new activity.

- Encourage students to accept their classmates' offers with enthusiasm.
- Encourage students to commit to the offers boldly, and to continue the imaginary activity until a new one is suggested.

Activities to encourage supporting creative expression:

This set of activities will allow you as a teacher to encourage your students to really think about how they are expressing an idea. These activities create a supportive environment where students are challenged to accept each others' ideas.

Ask them to think about:

Where are they?

Who are they?

What is in their imagination?

Will you share something from your imagination and make it real?

How can you respond to others in order to build the story?

Give them a prompt. How about on a topic they are learning about?

YES AND

Put the students in pairs. One student will start by making a statement such as, "We are going on a vacation." The other will follow up by first saying, "Yes, and..." agreeing with the first statement and adding new information. "Yes, and we are spending a week in Paris." The players will go back and forth making "Yes and" declarations until they reach a natural conclusion. Encourage the students to respond to what was just said and expand on that idea, as opposed to listing a series of disconnected ideas. "Yes and we arrive at the Eiffel Tower.", "Yes and we take the stairs all the way up.", "Yes and we can see the whole city." It allows a story to reveal itself. Also, you could encourage the students to physicalize the actions of the story and make statements in the present tense. This game can also be played in a circle or in small groups.

SENTENCE AT A TIME

In pairs or around a small circle, have the students tell a story adding one sentence at a time each. They should listen clearly to the offers of the students who come before them, and add a sentence that naturally builds on the story that's being told. Encourage them to move slowly through the narrative, adding detail and an organic 'next-step', rather than wild jumps forward or taking the story on an unrelated tangent. That being said, their ideas are never 'wrong', and its ok if things get crazy. The group can always start a new story if things get confusing.

LOCATION CREATION

The teacher calls out a location. In groups of 10-12, the students use their bodies to create the specifics of the location called. The team should use the whole space provided and try to complement each other's ideas by building one cohesive environment. Encourage the use of levels and creating useful objects (rather than characters) that would specifically be found in that location. If the group gets very good at the game, ask them to try building the environment without speaking to each other.

ZOOM-IN

Get the group to suggest a location for everyone to help create (ie campsite, kitchen, playground). One person steps forward and describes in detail one object or element of that location. One by one, the remaining group members will step forward

and add more details of the other objects, items, or features of this environment until everyone has contributed to describing the location.

- Students can go up in pairs to cooperate in describing something if they want
- Ask them to provide as much detail as possible (sounds, smells, colours, shapes, history)
- Remind the students to accept the offers previously made when adding their own ideas.

TYPEWRITER

One of the students is the Narrator. They have a (mimed) typewriter or laptop and starts the scene by reading aloud as they type. The Narrator begins by describing the Setting and the rest of the team creates this. The narrator then introduces one or more characters. As soon as the Narrator has given a few elements, the players can take over and start playing the scene. The goal is to create a back-and-forth storytelling game between the narrator and the players (the team can have fun physicalizing what happens to their characters when the narrator describes it, or the narrator can tell part of the story that is added through the physicalizing of the location, characters, etc.)

Teacher Guided Post-Broadcast Activity (45 min.)

Prepare for the Activity

NOTE: The teacher should participate and lead these exercises at the same time. Here are some tips for you:

- It's not important to get everything right the first time
- Try it for a while, pause and add any needed motivation or encouragement.

Include feedback to enhance their commitment between games. It is important to let students try for a while before giving them help, so they don't mistakenly think they did something wrong.

Let them try it before you direct them.

Play is the point.

Don't look for the perfect ending.

Once the students are committed to the game and you observe them genuinely connecting to each other, considering moving to the next exercise. The goal is to be spontaneous and playful. Students should be enjoying it. If they are not, move to the next exercise, and the challenging exercise at a later time.

These activities will get your students working together. Practicing basic skills of listening and responding will set the stage for dramatic productions to come. Use these to teach students about dramatic roles and how to support others creative expressions. Encourage students to work together as a team to see how far they can go!

Proposed Activity

1 – 2 – 3

The spirit of the activity is collaborative and cooperative (not competitive). Observe students for indicators of listening (ie. breathing together, eye contact) and support (ie. tone of voice, posture).

- Have the students find a partner, and have them face each other.

The task is to count to three together, one at a time.

- Person A says "One", Person B says "Two", Person A says "three".

Repeat this a few times.

- Now, have them replace the number one with a finger snap, then replace the number two with a clap, and number three with a foot stomp.

- Encourage the students to listen to each other closely and maintain eye contact to ensure they are connected as partners.
- Once they've had a chance to work with these simple actions, you can ask them to come up with other actions or sound-action combinations to replace 1-2-3.
- If they're really adept, increase the number to Five and assign actions to those numbers as well.

BONUS ACTIVITIES:

Dance Diamond

- Stand in a group, in a diamond shape, with everyone facing the same direction. - Assign one person to stand at each point of the diamond (4 people in total). These four people will act as leaders when the group eventually faces in their direction.
- The leader starts to move slowly. The rest of the group copies the movement by following the leader (and those around them).
- When the leader is ready, they turn to one of the other three directions of the diamond, thus passing leadership onto a new person.
- Try getting students to try different kinds of movement (fast and slow, small and large)
- Ask students to switch out with the leaders every few minutes, so everyone gets a chance to lead.

Blind Counting

- Have the group sit in a circle, as close as is comfortable (shoulder to shoulder is ideal), facing away from each other.
- Ask them to count to 20 as a group, one voice at a time, without setting any patterns.
- If any two people say a number at the same time, take a breath as a group and start over at 1.
- If the group can reach 20 easily, increase the range of counting (ask them to count to 100).
- If the large group has trouble focusing on the task together, separate them into smaller groups of 5-8.