



RAISE PRACTICUM EXEMPLAR ACTIVITY TEMPLATE

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Art Discipline: Literary & Performing Arts

Title of Activity: Theatrical Improvisation
Exemplar Focus: Warmup
RAISE Connections: ☒ Social-Emotional Learning ☐ Healing-Centered Education ☐ Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Pedagogy
RAISE Principles: ☐ Community Grounding & Routines ☐ Creative Choice & Voice ☒ Emotional & Somatic Engagement ☐ Interpersonal Belonging & Relationships ☐ Reflection & Radical Imagination
Summary: This is a five-minute warm-up designed to create class cohesion and unity while using breath, body, voice, and social interaction. It is a series of warm-ups that, when enough have been taught and revisited several times, can be taken over by, selected by, and led by students.
Rationale: This is a classroom activity meant to focus and unite the class before they work on creating scenes or playing theater games that require a level of comfort with their classmates. The students are engaged physically to create a sense of unified freedom and openness to risk-taking.
Goals: Students will be attentive and focused, with a sense of freedom and fun. They will feel comfortable being silly together, which will allow them greater potential to explore their physicality and vocality during the remainder of the workshop. All these warm-ups will be offered a la carte in upcoming workshops for students to lead each other, so it is also introducing to them a range of options for their own use.
Materials and Supplies Needed: The body and voice. Adaptations can be made for any limitations including wheelchair use, injury, lack of vocal control, etc. Instead of shaking, can be slow rotations, or small steps. Or changing the body part. Or using computer tools to create sounds. Using images or emojis as avatars and instruments instead of voices.

Outline:**Script:**

We're going to warm up today with a breathing exercise. I'd like you to close one nostril and breathe in to a count of four, hold for a count of four, and then switch nostrils and exhale on a count of four. If you have a cold, this will be challenging and you might have to make some adjustments. Breathe in one, two, three, four; hold one, two, three, four; switch & exhale one, two, three, four. Repeat two more times. How does that feel? Can you feel how quiet and calm everybody is? When you feel anxious, or upset, or nervous about something, if you take the time to breathe like this, it's like magic. It calms down your heart, your nerves, everything.

But we are also going to warm up our bodies, voices, and hearts. So let's stand up. Once again, don't do anything that you can't do because of an injury or otherwise. Be very gentle with yourself. Shake one hand, shake the other hand, shake a foot, shake the other foot, shake your booty. Remember this is about loosening your back muscles, not just shaking your hips. If you can't do it, do a slow hula hoop. Shake your shoulders. Shoulder roll forward, then back. Take your hands, put them together and we are going to warm up our jaw and voice. Shake your hands and make a noise...aaaaah.

Good. Today we're going to do a vocal warm-up. We have four chambers of our voice. Not real chambers, this is not actually how the voice produces sound, but it is a great way to imagine it. Our belly, chest, throat, and head chambers. Place your hands on your belly and give me a big ho ho ho. Like Santa Claus, or some deep laugh. Ho ho ho. Then place your hands on your chest. This is where we speak from most of the time, this should be your natural speaking voice. Instead of ho ho ho, we're going to say, "Hello, my name is __" and fill in your name. On three. One, two three. "Hello, my name is Melissa." Remember to use your own name. Great. Now place your hands on your throat. Can you hear how my voice is tight and coming from my throat? It's an exhausting way to speak all day, but some people do it. On three, "hello my name is." One, two, three. "Hello, my name is Melissa." Fabulous. Now put your hand on your head. This is a very high, polished opera singer style, or maybe you have just been yawning a lot. It's a very silly cartoon kind of sound. I tend to do it with a British accent, I don't know why. It feels very proper and old-fashioned to me. On three, "hello my name is." One, two, three. "Hello, my name is Melissa." Very nice high voices.

Lastly, we're going to do a meander. Remember, we learned that to meander is to walk around the room without a direct purpose, but to make sure we are not running into anybody and there is space for all our bodies to move, and we are not all walking in the same path. I'd like you to introduce yourselves to each other. I know you know each other. But you are going to introduce yourselves to each other using the four chambers of our voices. Meet four people and introduce yourself using a different chamber for each voice. Belly, head, throat, and chest. Alright, go. [Leader finds four people and models exchange and marks proper passage of time to accomplish goal.] Alright, we are returning to our places in five, four, three, two, one. Excellent warm-up.

Exercises:

Breathing exercise. One finger closes right nostril. Inhale for a count of four. Hold for a count of four. Release the right nostril and place finger to close left nostril. Exhale on count of four. Repeat exercise.

Goal: To calm down student bodies and help them transition to a focused environment; to sit and breathe together and create a sense of unity with the group.

Body shake. Shake both hands and feet (individually), shoulders, and booty (pointing out that this is really about loosening the lower hips). The final is a jaw shake and vocal release.

Goal: This engages the entire body and lets the teacher see who is tight, who is afraid, who is looking around to see if others are watching them, and who might have some physical limitations to be aware of. This is essentially a perfect assessment tool while simultaneously letting the students do a group physical activity that releases tension and allows for silliness.

Vocal warm-up. Using the voice and a neutral phrase (I use "Hello my name is ___), explore different ways of using the voice. Isolating to different chambers: belly, chest, throat and head, explores specific tensions and pitches that can be used in character creation. Also, this is a way to allow for silliness, which will pave the way for freedom of experimentation. Silliness is ok and welcome.

Goal: To assess student comfort and ability to utilize different vocal frameworks, and for students to practice what it feels like to change one's voice, pitch, and timbre.

Meander meet & greet. Using the four vocal chambers, interact with others with the neutral phrase.

Goal: To move the student beyond their own body sense and show how using their voice can affect their interactions with others. They make their own choices, and get to listen to peers as well as see how it feels to get a reaction from the voices they are making. It should feel overwhelmingly positive. Teacher can assess the student peer groups (they will tend to go to friends first) and willingness to actually meander or if they will need additional exercises to break through peer cliques.

Any Additional Comments:

The entire warm-up takes 5 minutes from top to finish when TA led. It takes longer when student led, but is more effective when student led. The sooner the TA can step back and let students lead, the better. This, being the second workshop and a month apart from the first, was more guided by the TA.