Sample Lesson Plan

Directions: Complete this lesson plan for a sample student residency. Fill out all the areas that apply to your lesson.

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| **Course Title:**  **Theater of Possibility** |  |
| **Course Type:**  *(please check all that apply)* | X□ Integrated arts residency  □ Cultural arts residency |
| **Partnering Course:**  *(for an integrated arts residency, name the partnering subject area, i.e. – language arts, math, science, social studies, etc.)* | Language arts – writing and communication |
| **Teaching Artist Name:** | Lauren Goldman Marshall |
| **What grade(s) is the residency for?** | I work with grades 2-12. Sample plan below is for upper elementary (e.g. grade 3-5). Activities are adjusted for different grade levels. |
| **Schedule Information** | 12 Number of sessions  90 minutes Length of each individual session (Plus 2 hour performance event)  20 Total hours (Note: this is my ideal curriculum, but program can be tailored to needs of school. If limited to 50 minute class periods, I recommend 15-20 sessions total to get to performance. Depending on classroom goals and time, I can also do 1 ½ - 2 hour one-time introductory sessions, or anything in between this and a 20 hour full curriculum. |

Course Description:

Theater of Possibility (“TOP”) offers an introductory program in generative theater, highlighting communication, self-regulation and relationship skills. Through acting, improvisation and collaborative play-creation, students learn how to turn their ideas and emotions into powerful, funny and moving works of theater. In early sessions, the emphasis is on trusting in one’s creative impulses, respecting the contributions of others and building ensemble though playful theater games. In later sessions, attention turns to collaboration and scripting, as students work together in small groups with the teacher to craft and present original scenes on topics of their choosing. Drawing on elements of Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed, the scenes are typically presented as “Forum Theater” in which participants step into the scene to try out different solutions to a conflict. But these are not mere role plays. Though grounded in real-life conflicts, the emphasis is on powerful playwriting and the scenes are often couched in fantasy or metaphor. Throughout the program, students practice interpersonal skills, such as empathy, perspective-taking, problem-solving, collaboration and leadership. TOP may be tailored to any age group. It is especially suited for classes of mixed abilities, including disability inclusion programs. The curriculum is designed to engage different types of learners and to value each person’s unique creative gifts. .

Materials & Space:

An empty room, clear of chairs and desks and free of outside noise distractions, with space for 10-30 students to move about safely. The full 20 hour curriculum culminates in an interactive performance for classmates and/or family and friends, so for that, we would need an auditorium or large open room that can serve as a performance space.

Big Idea:

Together, we can create something more wonderful than any of us can create alone.

Another important idea, which comes out of Forum Theater, is: You have the power to change a bad situation by changing your own actions.

Lesson Objectives and Student Learning Assessment

*Provide two learning objectives and two assessments for your lesson plan. Be sure to include at least one* ***21st century learning skill in your objectives*** *(creative and critical thinking, communication, collaboration, persistence and growth mindset). See* [*glossary*](http://www.creativeadvantageseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Glossary-of-Terms.pdf) *for more information on 21st century skills.*

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| Learning Objectives  *What I want my students to know and be able to do.*  *[This is the heart of teaching and learning. At the end of the day, “What do I want my students to understand? What do I want my students to be able to do?” Think backwards when planning.**Start with these questions and let them guide the learning objectives that will inform instructional choices and learning experiences for students.*  *Line up the “Student Learning Objectives” to the “Assessment Criteria” to create a one-to-one relationship that checks teaching and learning.* ***IF*** *I want my students to know...* ***THEN*** *what I will see and/or hear is...]* | Assessment Criteria  *What I will observe in my students – traits that can be seen and/or heard.*  *[The Assessment Criteria lists the traits that show if a student understands and can apply what is being taught – where they are on the path to learning.*  *Assessment Criteria is concrete for the instructor and student – it is observable through performance-based work and in written response to work e.g. reflections, graphic organizers, etc.*  *Assessment criteria and objectives are based on individual students. When looking for the traits that tell you what students know and can do, look at each student as an individual.]* |
| ***Example Objective:***  *Communication – Students will actively listen and observe others.* | ***Example Assessment:***  *Students will make direct and clear eye contact with partner; Wait for partner to finish before speaking; Take time reading and speaking to partner.* |
| **1.**  Students will understand and apply the improvisational theater concept of “yes, and,” by being willing and able to build collaboratively on the ideas of their peers. | **1.**  Students will respond positively to the ideas of their classmates, by contributing ideas of their own that augment the initial concept. For example, in a theater improvisation, if a student comes in as an elephant, his/her scene partner will offer peanuts, rather than saying “no, you’re a horse.” |
| **2.** Students will be able to contribute to the goals of the larger group by assessing “what’s needed” in a given situation and responding accordingly. | **2.** Students will demonstrate this by adjusting their own actions to serve group goals. For example, this might be demonstrated in an improvisational exercise by the actors adjusting their body positions to draw focus to the main action of the story. By emphasizing this concept from day 1, starting with notions as simple as what’s needed to gather in a circle (or “pizza”) on the floor, we create an environment where students become more flexible at choosing their parts for their scenes, and are willing to contribute what’s needed to make our play shine! |

**Vocabulary (optional):**

“Frozen statues” and “thought bubbles” – creating frozen images with our bodies to represent a character in action, and then adding a thought bubble (a one-sentence statement of what that character wants or is feeling). I introduce these concepts early on and them use them as building blocks for numerous exercises throughout.

“Snapshots” or “Still Images” – creating a dramatic tableau of 2 or more characters using frozen statues and thought bubbles. These concepts, adapted from Boal’s Image Theater, allow us to distill a dramatic situation down to its essence, and are very useful for generating ideas for scene material. After creating still images, we might for specific purposes “animate” them with action and dialogue.

“Yes, and” – building on one another’s creative ideas (rather than nay-saying), so important to successful collaboration in theater and life. We also practice the related improve concept of “offer and acceptance.” The person starting the improv is making the offer; the scene partner(s) must accept the offer by responding in kind. (E.g. if A comes in and says B is her daughter, then B responds as her daughter.)

“What’s Needed?” – assessing what’s needed in a given situation and responding accordingly to serve the goals of the group as a whole—for example, adjusting one’s body position in an acting scene to draw focus to the main action of the story.

“Come Step in My Shoes” (a term I use when teaching Forum Theater to students K-8): In this exercise, a conflict is first presented as a dramatic scene. Students then step into the shoes of the protagonist to try out a different solution to the conflict.

[State Standards](http://www.k12.wa.us/corestandards) (Complete only for Integrated Arts Residency):

*[Choose 1 – 2 of the most relevant state standards to guide your instruction,* [*http://www.k12.wa.us/corestandards*](http://www.k12.wa.us/corestandards)*]*

Communications GLE 2.2.1:

Understands how to show respect for others input (grades K-5); or Uses communications skills that demonstrate respect (grades 6-10)

Communications GLE 2.2.2:

Applies skills to contribute responsibly in group setting (grades K-10)

Instructions:

*[Record the instruction flow – what happens, when, and why with as much detail as needed to deliver the lesson plan and make adjustments based on the students. Do this for just DAY 1.]*

Sample DAY 1:

* Opener : “Let’s all gather in a circle to form a big giant pizza.” As the students gather in a circle on the floor, I encourage them to do “what’s needed” to make our pizza a nice round one—e.g. do they need to move forwards or backwards to improve the circle? After the kids have formed a circle, we do a brief collaboration exercise, collectively envisioning what’s on the pizza. There are some things we might all agree on (such as tomato sauce and cheese) and some things only some people want on their slice (like anchovies or bubblegum.) Afterwards, I congratulate them on their first successful collaboration. I point out that in collaboration, we need to all buy into the big idea (that this is a pizza) but there is also room for individual variation. Then we take a bite of our imaginary pizza and transform into our acting selves, ready to play and do theater! In this opening exercise, I have already introduced many important collaboration concepts that we will be incorporating throughout our program.
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*[Include a way to enter into the learning – transitioning from classroom space to art space. Could be an introduction statement of what will happen that day, an exercise, a ritual to start class, writing warm-up, etc.]*

* Activity title and description The first day focuses on ice-breakers and foundational concepts. The activities are whole group activities. I introduce partner and small group exercise in later sessions, once the students are comfortable with one another and I have a better feel for them. Here is a sample opening day progression:

*[Write bullets or numbers for what will be taught. This is your starting place, as things can and will change in the moment]*

1. Introduce TOP and guidelines (typically taking suggestions from the group and adding my own, such as “safety first” and “ask before touching”)
2. Name exercise - typically Name Signals (introducing self with gesture, expression and sound, thus orienting them to the actor’s tools of body, face and voice). We then pass the name signals back and forth across the circle.
3. Stand By Me (finding common interests within the group – e.g. “Stand by me if you like Pokemon”)
4. Kitty Wants a Corner (a fun, silly game that focuses on eye contact. The kitty in the middle of the circle wants a spot, but no one will give up their place, However, if two people make a nonverbal agreement to trade places, the kitty can try and steal a spot. But they can’t trade places until they’ve made an agreement. This game also allows kids to be silly and take on characters and voices; it further introduces the notion of strategies, as the kitty in the middle can try different strategies to ask for a spot in the circle. Here too, we can talk about being sensitive to what’s needed. If no one takes any risk, the game is no fun. If the kitty is stuck in the center too long, people need to trade places more often and give the kitty a chance.)
5. Museum Guard. In this dramatic variation of red light/green light, everyone becomes a statute in a museum. After choosing a theme for the museum (e.g. science fiction museum), each person forms a frozen statue with a thought bubble representing their character. The Guard (initially the teacher) sits in a chair at the other end of the room with back turned and keys on the floor. The statues try to advance to steal the keys and get them back to the other side of the room without being caught moving or holding the keys. They need to work together, passing the keys back and forth to fool the Guard to be successful. This fun, always popular game introduces the tool of frozen statues and thought bubbles, which we will use in various ways throughout, and also stresses collaboration concepts. (Note: if someone gets caught moving, they go into “storage,” but another team member can tag them to bring them back into the game.) If kids all try to be the hero and run for the keys, they will get caught, but if they work as a team, focusing on what’s needed (blocking the Guard, rescuing their team mates, pretending to have the keys even if they don’t), they will fool the guard and all the statues will be freed!
6. Closer: I have various closers, but for the first day, my favorite is “roses and thorns”. I ask each of the students to share something form the day that was a rose for them and something that was a thorn (e.g. challenging or hard). We reflect on the fact that there can be no roses without thorns. This exercise also helps me to know what the students really liked and what, if anything, they struggled with. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*[A way to exit the learning plan for the day – transitioning from art space back into*

*classroom space. Could be a reflective check-in with students – verbal or written, a ritual to*

*end class, etc.]*

Remaining Sample Sessions:

*[Daily planning and notes about your class – adjust this section to reflect your timeframe, as necessary. For each session, write the daily goal of the day, and sample activities to support it.]*

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| **Day** | **Daily Goal** | **Supporting Activities** |
| 2 | Introduce Partner Activities; introduction to Forum Theater (“Come Step in My Shoes?”) | We continue with ice-breakers and introduce some safe, easy, and brief partner activities as warm ups. The games are designed to gently release inhibitions and help the students feel safe taking creative risks together. If the group seems ready for it, I might give them a taste of Forum Theater, so they can see where we are heading long term. For example, we might construct an improvisation based on the three little pigs and then explore: what strategies could the wolf use if he just wanted the pigs to come out and play? With middle school kids, we might use a scenario from Toy Story as our launching point (what can you do if your best friend now has a new best friend?). With teens, I use other samples suited to their age level. If the group has trouble attending and isn’t ready for forum theater, I continue with ice-breakers, building trust and foundational skills and save FT for day 6 or 7 when we are ready to begin developing our scenes. |
| 3 | Physical Theater sequence – Day 1  More extended partner activities | We do a series of physical and image theater activities, working with frozen statues and thought bubbles, exploring how the physical body reflects character and emotional state. For example, in “Freeze Frame,” actors move about the room, then freeze in active poses. We pick two characters to analyze. What can we infer form their positons in relation to each other? What could the story be?  In “complete the image,” one person forms a frozen image and the partner completes the image by forming an image in relation to it and speaking a line that establishes a context. The first person responds in kind. This is our introduction to the notion of “offer and acceptance.” We’re also working here on getting over shyness and block and trusting in one’s creative impulses. By working first with a partner and not in front of the whole group, students are less inhibited, and the focus is on authenticity rather than performance. |
| 4 | Physical theater sequence – Day 2  Introduce small group work | Continue with image theater activities and start to explore how they can be used to generate scene material. For example, students break into small groups to create images around a theme (say “family”), and then we share images and take note of dramatic tensions and common themes that come up for the group. |
| 5 | Emotions sequence – day 1;  Express feelings; introduce notions of objective and subtext | Through various activities we practice expressing emotions and introduce the notion of objectives and subtext. For example how would you say “Pizza is my favorite food,” if you had been stranded in the desert for three weeks with no food and water and a helicopter arrived with a nice hot pizza for you? What if you just dropped it on the floor, face down? What if you had eaten nothing but pizza for a week and were really hoping for spaghetti tonight? This is a great exercise for talking about sarcasm. In “open scenes.” students working in pairs act out the same four lines of dialogue two different ways, representing different contexts. |
| 6 | Emotions sequence day 2 - introduction to Rainbow of Desire | This day ideally culminates in an introduction to Boal’s Rainbow of Desire, in which actors use frozen statues and thought bubbles to represent the range of feelings in a given conflict situation. I often use well known stories or myths to demonstrate the technique. For example, with a teen group, we explored what Dedalus and Icarus might be feeling when Icarus wanted to fly toward the sun. E.g. D: “I was like that when I was his age.” I: “I wish my dad had more faith in me.” |
| 7 | Collaboration & Story Creation – Day 1 | Now we focus on story-creation, exploring the arc of a dramatic scene, through various improvisational exercise. We also really stress the idea of Yes, and”. For example in the game “I am a Tree,” we build a collective story, one image at a time. (E.g. “I am a tree, wanting more sunlight.” “I am a bigger tree, blocking the sunlight.””) It’s important that each person joining in the image contributes to what has already begin and doesn’t take it in an entirely new direction. |
| 8 | Collaboration & Story Creation – Day 2 | After distilling the elements of plot down to 7 steps (old normal, the problem, inciting action, etc.), students each have the chance to write (or draw or narrate for younger or disabled students) their own 7 sentence story. We then share these stories and identify relationship conflicts and themes in them that resonate strongly with the group. Through a guided collective decision process, we chose 2-3 main themes to develop into our final scenes, and form small scenes groups. It is emphasized that we are not choosing the specific stories, but rather relationships and ideas distilled from them. |
| 9 | Begin developing scenes  Exercise in group mind. | Students work in small groups with teacher support to develop their scenes, using the tools we have learned throughout, such as image theater and various improvisational and co-creation tools. Warm up activities focus on group mind and consensus building skills. |

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| 10 & 11 | Shape & Rehearse scenes | Students continue to develop their scenes with teacher support; practice forum theater and rainbow of desire interventions. |

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| 12 | Present scenes for invited audience | Ideally, this is a long day, with a 90 minute rehearsal followed by a pizza break, and then a performance. For the performance, student first hep to introduce and lead a sampling of their favorite theater games, warming up the audience to be “spect-actors” (not mere spectators.) Then students present their scenes. Each short scenes is followed by a further exploration, using techniques such as forum theater and rainbow of desire, with group participation. In this way, several 3-5 minute scenes can be fleshed out into a remarkable 90 minute evening of theater, and the students get to show off their skills in improvisation, as well as collaboration and problem solving. They become the experts, teaching their parents, siblings and friends what they have learned! |