

Empathy Lesson

Overview and Purpose:

While empathy is an intrinsic part of theatre, it's important as educators to be intentional about teaching empathy as it relates to the whole student then translates to the acting process. This introductory lesson will help students develop team-building and empathy skills.

Educational Standards

National: Anchor standard #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Arkansas: Perform.P.4.5.2, P.4.6.2, P.4.7.2, P.4.8.2 Apply a character's motivation, objectives, and tactics in a drama/theatre work to overcome obstacles by making vocal/physical choices

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- [Use proper protocol for Zoom meetings](#).
 - Understand commonalities they have with others in the class.
 - Begin to empathize with others in scenes based on real-life situations.
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Materials Needed:

- [Zoom norms](#)
 - [Teacher questions for Zoom norms \(virtual\)](#) and [Cross the Line \(in person\)](#)
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Strategies/Activities:

- Teacher will read statements for students to react. This will help them get in touch with their own thoughts and feelings and allow other students to see how other students are feeling about the class, COVID, changes in learning, simple things in life, etc.
 - Virtual- turn camera on if...
 - Cross the Line if this is true for you (maintain social distance and must wear a mask)
- "I Am Awesome Because..." theatre activity. (Examples: I am awesome because I was born in the summer. I am awesome because I have two sisters. The student who is 'it' will come up with the next 'because' statement. If students say they can't think of a reason they are awesome, give them time to process, then give them an example they can use, such as "I am awesome because "I have on a blue shirt."
 - Virtual- students will turn their camera OR use chat. The last one to turn their camera on or respond to chat will be 'it'.

- In-person- students will use chairs or possibly 'dots' outside using social distancing and making sure to avoid touching or coming too close to other students.
- Whole group Action Consequence Discussion
 - Students will watch the following [slides](#) and discuss why the individuals reacted the way they did. (NOTE: you will have to download the slides from the 'resource' page. It will not allow direct sharing without a Microsoft account.)
- Breakout Sessions
 - Students will be randomly assigned to groups with three or four. They will have five minutes to discuss the following points. Thinking about action and reaction for one or more of the following situations.
 - A friend told you an inappropriate joke.
 - You received an award at school.
 - Your sibling punched you.
 - Someone called you a rude name.
 - (Create your own situation)
- Whole Group Discussion of Breakout Sessions
 - What did you notice?
 - How did that feel?
- Partner (or group) Breakout Sessions. Students will be randomly assigned partners.
 - During these partner sessions, they will each think of a situation where they were extremely frustrated or angered by someone. Each pair will have five minutes to create a 30 second to 1 minute scene.
- Partner Performances for the whole group. (Praise only. No 'grows', ONLY 'glows'.)
- Breakout Sessions with partners. Think about what others did and you did during the previous performances that you want to incorporate into your new performance. This time. The person who was 'angered/frustrated' has to play the aggressor.
- Partner Performances for whole group. (Again, 'glows' only.)
- Unpacking time. Students will unpack the performances they saw today. Students will respond in chat how what they experienced today relates to the concept of 'empathy'.

Additional Resources:

- [Empathy Toolkit](#)
- [Developing Empathy Lesson from the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

Possible Assessments

- Journaling reactions
- Google form questions for reactions (for comparison in a spreadsheet)
- Improv a new scene

Possible Next Step Lessons

- How Action/Reaction in life leads to Action/Response with characters in Theatre
- How could this scene be the beginning of another scene (eventual story arc for playwriting)