

Using Beginnings Workshop to Train Teachers of Preschoolers and School-Agers

by Kay Albrecht

Drama: A Rehearsal for Life! by Julia Gabriel, **Starting With a Story** by Ruth Stotter, and **Helping Teachers Become Comfortable with Creative Dramatics** by Naomi Leithold

Reflection: Ask teachers to reflect on their early childhood creative drama memories. Do they remember feeling like the little girl described by Leithold? Do they recall a teacher who incorporated creative drama in their classroom?

Getting Started: Break the ice with a rousing round of “If You’re Happy and You Know It” as described by Leithold (p. 59). Ask teachers to identify feelings from their daily experiences in the classroom to include in the song (like joy, confusion, excitement, fatigue, etc.) Or use Stotter’s Mood Game (p. 55) as an opening activity, perhaps sending the director out first!

Exploring Ideas: Divide teachers into pairs. Brainstorm possible roles that each teacher might incorporate into his or her teaching repertoire. The role could be a character (like He Who Must Be Obeyed or Old Mother Hubbard), an animal, insect, or creature (like a firefly, tiger, or dinosaur), or even a personality (like Mr. Green Jeans or Mother Goose). Have some fun with this step! Take the time to describe and expand the role, the name of the character, and the personality it might have.

Dressing the Part: Help teachers further flesh out their roles. Provide markers, paper, crayons, watercolors, and collage materials for teachers to illustrate their ideas. Share the illustrations. Then make plans to collect the materials and props to support the role they have identified. If the workshop format is being used, it will be necessary to provide props and supports for teachers to select from to dress for the role developed.

This issue of Beginnings has something for everyone! New teachers will love the ideas and suggestions for incorporating creative dramatics while experienced teachers will be challenged by the extension and expansion ideas. Early childhood specialists will glean educational applications from Sidlovskaya’s discussion of using fairy tales in a therapeutic setting. And all teachers will celebrate Haugen’s ideas for accommodating children, regardless of disability or temperament, into creative drama activities.

Creative drama is not new — fingerplays, oral storytelling, songs, creative dramatics, and poetry are comfortable and familiar staples to many teachers. New teachers may, however, feel real kinship with the trembling teacher described by Leithold! This edition of “Using Beginnings to Train Teachers” focuses on introducing creative dramatics to teachers by exploring, planning, and practicing in the classroom. Use it as an independent study with two or more teachers, in a workshop format, or as multiple sequential staff meetings.

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Cueing the Crowd: Explore with teachers how children will know when the teacher is in the new creative drama role. Is there a special cue like putting on a hat or tying on an apron? Or perhaps use a special transition activity like turning your back to the children only to reappear in the new role. Brainstorm other ideas to help teachers adopt the role and help children know the teacher has assumed the role.

Present, Clarify, Repeat, Extend: Give teachers a creative drama assignment. They must use the role they created in **Dressing the Part** to plan and implement a creative drama activity using Gabriel's four-step process (see p. 48). Suggestions and ideas are readily available in Stotter's, Leithold's, and Gabriel's articles. Ask teachers to demonstrate their activity to others at the next meeting. Encourage them to try out the idea with children in their classrooms before the next meeting.

Sharing Experiences: Share experiences. Ask each teacher to give a creative drama demonstration using what she has learned in the workshop or staff meeting series. Celebrate the drama demonstrations with lots of applause and bravos.

Parent Newsletter: Discuss introducing how children learn from creative dramatics in your school newsletter. List topics that might be included and assign articles to interested teachers. Make a list of sample activities to share with parents, perhaps using some of the great ideas developed by teachers!

Glossary: Create a glossary to support this *Beginnings*. Include words like paralanguage, communication support, stage presence, vocal pitch.

Fairy Tales Enhance Imagination and Creative Thinking

by Olga Sidlovskaya

Sidlovskaya describes a psychological therapeutic approach for using fairy tales with children. Teachers are not therapists, but they can use many of the techniques Sidlovskaya explains in educational form.

Add the Nose: Brainstorm ways to add scents and aroma to creative drama activities. Make a list of fragrances that can be put in scent jars to enhance tales. Ask for a volunteer to prepare the scent jars and add them to the props teachers may use for creative drama.

What Do You Hear: Brainstorm sound makers that could be added to prop boxes for enhancing creative drama activities. Ask for a volunteer to collect some of the sound makers you identify.

Using Creative Dramatics to Include All Children

by Kirsten Haugen

Practicing Emphasizing People, Abilities, and Practical Needs First: Haugen's wonderful proposal to emphasize people, abilities, and practical needs can be just the tool sensitive teachers are searching for. But, for most of us, it takes practice to be comfortable with using the right words. Create a practice session to work on describing children, both with and without special needs, using Haugen's suggestions. Ask teachers to write down descriptions of children in their classrooms. Then use the three guidelines to assess whether the description focuses on people, abilities, and practical needs first. If not, discuss how to modify the descriptions.

Talking About Differences: Continue this practice session by exploring how to talk about differences. Role play ways to describe differences between children, focusing on using words to point out practical, compensating strategies that children can use with each other.

Resources for Teachers on Creative Drama

Child Care Information Exchange resources . . .

Developing a storytelling culture in our programs.
Margie Carter, January/February 1997 (Issue #113).

The value of fairy and folk tales, *Beginning Workshop*,
July/August, 1992 (Issue #86).

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