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INTRODUCTION

Drama is humanity's oldest art form. Long before the creation of musical instruments, painting, sculpture, and written literature, human beings were acting out informally or ritualistically the important events, feelings, and ideas in their lives.

Drama is the child's first art. He enters the world "acting-out" his feelings and continues this instinctively to understand himself, others, and his environment. His sensory perception and self-awareness constantly compel him to explore, experience, experiment, and finally discover the answers to the questions posed by the myriad of impressions he is ever gathering.

Creative Drama is primarily concerned with "process" rather than "product." What is happening to the child as he engages in this activity is most important. Allow the child to experiment and introduce ideas, using the material in this book as simply a guide for the creative drama situation.

As the class progresses in its ability, it may wish to share its experience with another class. This should be in the nature of an informal demonstration, since there are no costumes, scenery, or props used that would suggest a theatrical production.

As a developmental tool, Creative Drama helps the child understand multiple facets of humanity through:

1. **Physical Coordination and Flexibility:** The child's awareness of self is closely involved with the use of his body. He runs, leaps, jumps, touches, tastes, hears, sees, and smells. If a child is healthy and physically active, he feels good about himself. This leads to feeling good about others.
2. **Emotional Stability:** Learning about his emotional capacities and how to control them gives the child a sense of well-being. Literature used in Creative Drama presents many opportunities for exploring a wide range of feelings, including the negative ones. By being a mean giant or witch, a child can legitimately exercise his own feelings in a play situation.
3. **Mental Growth:** This third stage occurs most successfully after activities that stimulate the body and the emotions. Then ideas are introduced, discussed, and put into action. The Creative Drama playing of stories develops sequential thinking, and the ability to solve problems in a social setting.
4. **Social and Communication Skills:** Working effectively with others for a common goal is important in all areas of life. Being able to think on one's feet and communicate ideas to others is essential. Language development and vocabulary building are enhanced. A class working together harmoniously is something to be achieved.
5. **Spiritual Enrichment:** Creative Drama has been called "The Art of the Soul." Each child is a unique human being, a creative artist, given the opportunity to develop to his fullest potential. Individual differences should be appreciated and acknowledged.
6. **Aesthetic Appreciation:** Artistic pursuits have always been the sign of an advanced culture. The quality of leisure time activities is essential to a good life. Bringing artistic awareness into the classroom creates the climate for further artistic responsiveness.

Certain subject areas lend themselves to dramatization. The physical, emotional, and mental stimulation of a session will transfer into enthusiasm for regular curricular tasks. Language arts, reading, social studies, history, and science can all incorporate Creative Drama activities for greater understanding and retention of ideas.

Through Creative Drama, teachers have an opportunity to bring humanistic values into the classroom. The children learn effective democracy, self-realization, and mental and emotionally healthy attitudes toward themselves and others in the school environment.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The material in this book has been designed to give the teacher specific activities and an opportunity for her own creativity. The children listen to the drama ideas or to a story, and using their own dialogue and movement, create and expand on the material presented. The children may take any direction and place an emphasis in an entirely different situation than anticipated. The teacher needs to be flexible.

It is important for the teacher to understand the nature of Creative Drama. It is informal, improvised, and spontaneous rather than memorized dialogue and directed action. The children should be guided to plan their own conception of the language and movement of the characters in the stories.

It is suggested that a minimum of two sessions a week is desirable. The child's retention of previous experience will help in future sessions if they are frequent.

The new words are introduced only if the teacher feels they will enhance the session and be of value in vocabulary growth.

The teacher should find the most convenient time of day for these activities, based on the mood and attitude of the students and her own schedule. Restlessness and stress are often relieved by a short Creative Drama activity. The records that accompany warm-ups and activities are found in the school music resource center or a public library record recollection. Any record can be used solely for the purpose of relaxing the children in preparation for the activity.

Re-playing the same story several times is of great value because each child sees a different point of view of the characters played, everyone has an opportunity to play the part that he wants, and the story sequence becomes stronger. Each playing leaves the child feeling more successful.

"Curtain" is the signal used to both start and end the activity. It is an indication to the audience that the dramatization should not be interrupted. Children who are observing the performance assume the role of the audience. This helps them interpret and call on their own skill in developing a character.

Evaluation and discussion are very important to the Creative Drama process. They sharpen the child's critical skills and help him develop high standards for his work. The role name is always used rather than the child's given name when evaluating to avoid making the criticism seem personal.

The teacher may follow-up a session with other correlated activities by observation of the direction the children take while performing.

PROCESS

An explanation of sections in each session

Focus: The basic theme of the lesson.

New Word: The words are used for vocabulary building which is one of the values of Creative Drama.

Warm-Up: The children work as an ensemble so each one has an opportunity to try the ideas from the story. It involves all of the children.

Activity: The drama itself. When the book or story is readily available, it will appear as a reference and the teacher will prepare for the session from the reference. Other stories are included in the book.

Characters: These are listed in order of appearance in the story. The children volunteer for the roles. Other children are audience or become a part of the environment such as trees, clouds, statues, doors, rocks, ants—as appropriate for the scene.

Group Planning: The children review the plot, action and dialogue of the story as well as plan the location or setting in the room.

Observation: This points out the specific value for the child in the session.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Characterization: Understanding and portraying a role different from yourself.

Creative Drama: The art of informal dramatization of appropriate materials using spontaneous dialogue and improvised action for the benefit of the participants.

“Curtain”: This signals both the beginning and the ending of a scene.

Dialogue: Direct spoken communication between characters.

Improvisation: Acting out spontaneous ideas or concepts.

Pantomime: Communicating an idea through action without words.

Role: Playing the part of a character other than yourself.

Scene: A segment of a story that takes place in one setting and is one part of a complete story.

Side-Coaching: Interjecting information during the playing of a scene. The scene runs without interruption unless the players need help to continue the playing.

Session #1: ME

Time: 15 minutes.

Space: Sit at the desk or stand by the desk.

Focus: Self-awareness.

New Word: Pantomime . . . movement without words to communicate an idea.

Warm-Up: The children tap or clap their names. The teacher introduces the warm-up by clapping her name first. Each child will then take a turn. Encourage the children to tap or clap out a natural rhythm instead of a steady beat. There may be long and short pauses between the claps. Clap both loud and soft. Continue or vary the warm-up by clapping the number of syllables in their names, showing the accented syllable with a louder clap.

Activity: “Move it”

The children stand by their desks. Start the activity by asking the children to roll their heads. The teacher says, “Let’s find out the different ways we can move parts of our body. First, without moving the rest of your body, roll your head in a complete circle. Go slowly and make the circle as big as possible. Relax! move your left arm only from the shoulder while keeping the rest of your body still. Now see how many ways your arms move from your shoulder.” The activity continues with the elbow, wrist, and fingers on the left hand and then the right hand and arm. The children bend at the waist in the circular movement. They make circles with first the left and then the right leg. Develop the warm-up activity and vary it by asking the children to do it faster or slower using the whole body.

Follow-Up Activities:

1. One child begins with a simple movement such as picking up a foot, or wiggling a finger. Note: Keep the movement very simple. The second child repeats that movement and adds a new one. The next child repeats the first and second movement and adds a new one. Continue until all children have become involved in the action. Encourage the children to use different parts of the body.
2. Get acquainted game . . . each child pantomimes one favorite thing s/he likes to do. Examples: baking cookies, riding a bicycle, fishing, hop-scotch, baseball.

Observation: The child develops self-expression through movement.

Session #2: YOU

Time: 20 minutes.

Space: The largest available space in the room with no obstacles.

Focus: Getting acquainted.