

## High Impact Strategies: Coaching for Classroom Teachers

**Overview:** An enormous body of research supports the fact that learning through the arts enhances academic achievement. Teachers who incorporate learning strategies from theatre into their daily practices are able to differentiate curriculum, engage and motivate students, and provide parallel connections to other content areas.

*"In a national sample of 25,000 students, those with high levels of arts-learning experiences earned higher grades and scored better on standardized tests than those with little or no involvement in the arts – regardless of socioeconomic status."*

-Education Commission of the States, *The Progress of Education Reform; The Arts in Education*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (2004)

**"High Impact Strategies"** residencies provide teachers with the most effective tools and strategies from arts-integrated learning. A work-embedded, flexible coaching model supports experimentation, reflection, and the creative application of theatre.

Teachers work in collaboration with our teaching-artist-coaches through a process of experiential staff development, model teaching, co-teaching, and reflection.

Through these residencies, teachers learn new methods to support the development of arts integrated curriculum, and to efficiently and effectively incorporate arts-learning strategies into existing curriculum and lessons.

Some teaching strategies from the theatre may include:

- Tableau
- Improvisation
- Role drama
- Character elaboration
- Pantomime

**"High Impact Strategies"** residencies empower educators and their students with tools, techniques, theory, and skills from the interdisciplinary, differentiated, and dynamic approach to learning through theatre and drama. More than just an "arts experience," **"High Impact Strategies"** residencies give teachers the opportunity to see new strategies in action as they are applied to academic learning.

*"Using arts processes to teach academic subjects results not only in improved understanding of content but it greatly improved self-regulatory behavior."*

-The United States Department of Education, *Schools, Communities, and the Arts: A Research Compendium* (1995)

*"Music, dance, drama and visual arts programs open children to new ideas, new experiences and new challenges and instill the habits of mind that last a lifetime – confidence, perseverance, a drive for excellence, the ability to analyze and solve problems."*

-Susan Sclafani, Former U.S. Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education

## **Linking to the Standards : High Impact Strategies**

### **Example #1**

#### **Academic Content Area:**

An intermediate classroom teacher is blending her reading and writing curriculum with social studies standards and decides to create a unit on “Biographies of Eminence in the United States.”

Her students are immersed in a process of exploration, biography selection, research and analysis. However, she wants a teaching and learning strategy that will evoke a deep sense of who the subjects were as individuals, and to create a more dynamic process for uncovering their lifelines, attributes, contributions, and perhaps even the controversy of their work.

#### **Theatre Teaching Strategy:**

##### **Character Elaboration:**

After students have selected their biographical subject of eminence, the theatre teaching strategies for character elaboration can be applied. Students begin this process by imagining an interviewing scenario and are asked, “What if you could bring your subject back to life for just ten minutes? What would you ask him/her?” After brainstorming along these lines, students begin the process of “bringing the character to life.”

Actors often use an inside-out, or outside-in technique in character creation. Even young students can accomplish this task with astonishing creativity because it draws on their capacity for play and “make believe”. Students begin with exercises that allow them to imagine the physicality of their character: the voice, the posture, the quality of movement, and the “body consciousness” of the character.

They then move into a series of activities that allow them to get inside their characters’ hearts and minds, gaining even deeper insight in the elaboration process. Finally, culminating activities and critical response allow the student to synthesize insights into the character; this final phase can be used as a celebration, evaluation, or a differentiation piece for high-ability, kinesthetic, or intra-personal learners.

#### **Link to Standards:**

##### **MN Social Studies Standards, Grade 3:**

##### **I.A. United States History**

The student will recognize people and events that made significant contributions to U.S. History. (K-3)

**MN Language Arts Standards:**

- I.B. The student will use a variety of strategies to expand reading, listening and speaking vocabularies
- I.C. The student will understand the meaning of texts using a variety of comprehension strategies and will demonstrate literal, interpretive and evaluative comprehension.
- I.D. The student will actively engage in the reading process and read, understand, respond to, analyze, interpret, evaluate and appreciate a wide variety of fiction, poetic and nonfiction texts.
- II.D. The student will locate and use information in reference materials.
- III.A. The student will demonstrate understanding and communicate effectively through listening and speaking.
- III.C. The student will critically analyze information found in electronic and print media, and will use a variety of these sources to learn about a topic and represent ideas.

**Example #2**

**Academic Content Area:**

A 5th grade science teacher wants to support his students who are struggling to grasp concepts in the Earth Structures and Processes unit. Many of his students are failing to sequence more complex processes, and have low motivation for engaging with the subject matter. He needs a more dynamic, hands-on approach to teaching the content of geological processes.

**Theatre Teaching Strategy:**

**Tableau:**

In order to bring to life the sequence, cause and effect, and inter-relatedness of geological processes, the theatre teaching strategy of Tableau could be applied. Students practice thinking and moving symbolically with initial tableau exercises, then use the “frozen picture” method to create a series of events which others in the class must interpret and respond to.

Students practice viewing tableaus by making observational statements, free of subjective comments (as scientists would do). Finally students must synthesize their understandings of water erosion using an open-ended tableau structure which they create and then present in readiness-level differentiated groups.

This strategy requires no extra materials, while providing critical learning opportunities for all learning styles and intelligence types. Furthermore, Tableau often challenges students to think on a very high, symbolic/abstract level by

engaging imagination and interpretation skills. The fun inherent in this exercise is yet another reason why learning through the arts produces academic achievement.

**Link to Standards:**

**MN Science Standards, Grade 5:**

- 5.3.1.2.1. Explain how, over time, rocks weather and combine with organic matter to form soil.
- 5.3.1.2.2. Explain how slow processes, such as water erosion, and rapid processes, such as landslides and volcanic eruptions, form features of the Earth's surface.