

Integrating Improv!

Critical Thinking, Collaboration,
Communication and Creativity

Or.. The Art of Using What You Know, and Making Up
the Rest

Quick! Finish the joke...

Two wigs walk into a restaurant.

“I’m sorry,” sniffs the Maitre’d. “We don’t serve wigs here.”

The wigs replied, “....

Hey! What are you doing?

Before you answer, please know that you have to reply -- RIGHT NOW -- with something totally different than what you are actually doing.

Congratulations!

You just did improv.

You (and everybody else) improvises every day.

I use it in the classroom All. The. Time.

Who Are You, Again?

Rachel Nelli

- Teaching 15 years, all in Gifted Ed.
- Did theater work in College and Community Theater
- “Global” and Abstract Random (for those of you into learning styles.)
- I tend to talk fast and jump around a lot (mentally)

Outline for Today

I. Rationale for using improv in the classroom

II. Activities to use

III. Questions and Resources

Why Does Improv Even Need a Rationale?

1. Improv looks like playing, and fun. “Fluff and Feathers”
2. Not explicitly in the Common Core (neither is creative thinking.)
3. Not on “The Test.”

Why it's OK to Play

- Play links sensory-motor, cognitive and social emotional experiences.
- Learning improv games is a student-centric process of problem solving.

Just a Few More Benefits of Play*

Cognitive Development

- Creativity
- Abstract thinking
- Imagination
- Problem-solving
- Mastering new concepts

Attentional Development

- Attention regulation
- Concentration
- Persistence

*from Play = Learning,
Oxford Press

“Theater games are a process applicable to any field, discipline or subject matter which creates a place where full participation, communication and transformation can take place.”

--Viola Spolin,
foundational creative theorist in
improvisation

Ok, But What About Common Core?

Improv can build Common Core skills!

Language Arts

“When we think of literacy, we often think it is primarily about the written word. Literacy is much greater; it is anything that creates story.” --McKnight and Scruggs, 2008

Improv requires:

- Prediction
- Sequencing
- Vocabulary
- Inferencing
- Reflection

Improv as Pre-writing

- Explore ideas
- Create characters
- Experience an environment
- Use an object (real or imaginary)
- Tell a story
- Have a conversation
- Solve a problem

Speaking and Listening

- These skills are often given short shrift in the classroom. (Not on the test!)
- Improv requires the audience and actors to both speak and respond.
- Fear of public speaking is one of the most common fears -- rated higher than fear of dying for many!

Benefits of Improv*

Self-Confidence

Fun

Creativity

Complex Thinking

Critical Thinking

Problem-Solving

Structure

Decision-Making

Sense of Humor

Writing

Empathy

Memory

Tina Fey's Rules of Improv

Rule 1: Agree. Say “Yes.”

-- In life, as in improv, you aren't always going to agree with what your partner says, but you can respect what they have created and work with it.

Rule 2

Don't just say Yes. Say "Yes, and..."

--Contribute something to the team.

Being agreeable is good, but you have to do some of the heavy lifting, too.

Rule 3

Make statements.

--Don't just ask questions. It's draining to everyone else to have to think up the answers all the time.

Rule 4

There are no mistakes, just opportunities.

--What you think is going on isn't always going to be what others think is going on. You have to stay positive and learn to adapt. Quickly.

A Few Caveats...

Improv takes TIME.

They will be awful at it at the beginning.

Improv is outside many people's "comfort zone" (including administrators)

Improv isn't always funny.

Some “Sidecoaching” Tips:

Instead of...

Don't say no.

Stop mumbling!

Don't turn your back.

Don't be so silly.

Be more specific.

Great!

Try....

Say, Yes! And...

Share your voice w/us

Stage picture!

Work together

How heavy is that?

Keep exploring that!

On to the Games!

Simple Games/Warm Ups

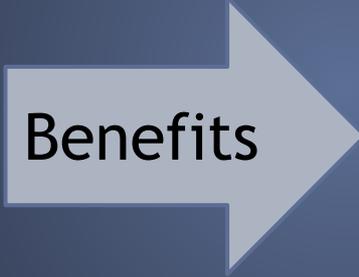
Mirror Mirror

Bunny Bunny

Letter Point

Alphabet

Mystery Leader



Benefits

- Builds attention
- Teamwork
- Sense of space and boundaries
- Great for younger kids
- Can be very quick

Story Building Games

Bus Trip

Beginning, Middle, End

String of Pearls

World Wide Web

Conducted Story



Benefits

- Incorporate more content
- Teamwork
- Require story elements:
character, setting,
problem, resolution
- Inferencing

Foundational Skills Games

Broccoli Cauliflower (Yes/No)

Space Walk

Give and Take

Object Work/Clay

Play/Pantomime

Emotional Parade

Machine



Benefits

- Teamwork skills
- Expression via tone, body language, gestures
- Explores using the senses/adding detail

Advanced Games

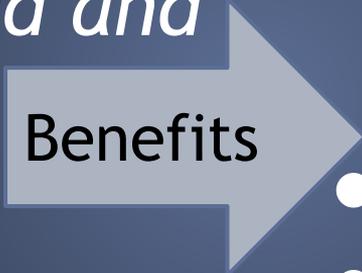
Panel of Experts

*The Good, the Bad and
the Ugly*

Slide Show

Yes, But...

Freeze!



Benefits

- Quick recall and connection of information
- Creative thinking
- Collaborative storytelling

Reflection Questions for Improv

How did you react to what _____ did?

What was the best part? What was boring?

What surprised you?

Did you try to plan or predict what would happen?

What would make this work better next time?

When you were watching, what did you notice that you'd like to try when it's your turn?

Resources

- The Second City Guide to Improv in the Classroom Using Improvisation to Teach Skills and Boost Learning by Katherine S. McKnight and Mary Scruggs
- Improvisation: Use what you know, make up what you don't! 2nd Edition, by Brad Newton
- Bossypants by Tina Fey

Questions?



Thank You!