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Curriculum Plan for Acting I: High School (all years)

First six weeks of year-long course, meeting 4 times weekly in 55 minute periods. Most students will be Frosh or Sophomores, some may be older, with 20-25 students.

Within these 6 week, students will address the following **Massachusetts Curriculum Framework Standards:**

- 1.14 Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices
- 1.17 Demonstrate an increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble

Essential questions:

What can an actor do to help them be present onstage in a way that feels honest and unforced?
What value does theatre bring to our world?

Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand that awareness of self and others is key to acting.
Students will understand that artistry requires emotional risk-taking and a brave space.

Students will know how to:

Warm-up their bodies and voices
Communicate an idea, characteristic or image with their body (statue, tableau, character walk)
Improvise a scene, demonstrating “Yes, and” concept and establishing character and relationship
Provide positive, constructive feedback
Identify 5 Ws, Conflict, Objective, Obstacle and Tactics in a scene
Use stage direction terminology

Vocabulary:

5Ws (Who, Where, When, What, Why) and

How

Active Verb

Blocking

Center Stage

Cheating Out

Conflict

Costume

Cross

DownStage

Enter

Exit

Lighting

Mill & Seethe

Moment Before

Objective

Obstacle

Plot plan

Prop

Raise the Stakes

Relationship

Set

Stage Left

Stage Right

Subtext

Tableau(x)

UpStage

Yes, and

	Weekly Focus	Monday			
Week 1	Introductions, Ensemble Building, Getting into your body	Stop/Go/Jump/Clap (10) Name sound & movement (10) Introductions: 6 questions (15) Discuss class expectations (5) Reinforcement (10) Introduce “no one gets up alone” (3)	Introduce and do check-in (20) Shark name game (10) West Wind Blows (5) Interview your partner, introduce in 6 words (10) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in (15) Zombie Name game (10) Sociograms: Find group that you agree with most (15) Discuss: Value of Theatre (5) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in (10) Name game (active) (10) Bombs and Shields (15) Put hand on the shoulder of the person you would want... (10) Reinforcement (10)
Week 2	Continue building ensemble and vocal/body relationship; Use pantomime to create place	Check-in (10) Introduce and do physical and vocal warm-ups (20) Name game (5) Mill & Seethe in atmospheres/ locations (10) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/Warm-up (20) Stage Directions Race (5) Mirroring to Follow-the-follower (15) Groups of 3-4 create Tableaux of quotes about acting (10) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (20) Intro Character: Mill & Seethe, lead with different parts of body, create character from walk, characters interact (20) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (20) Charade Telephone (Who/ What Where) (10) Death by Supermarket (10) Reinforcement (10)
Week 3	Introduce Improvisation & performing	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) View clip of “Whose Line Is it anyway” (5) Brainstorm core improv concepts: Yes And, Stay in Present, Make Your Partner Look Good (10) Energy Ball (15) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Transformation (How many things can this handkerchief be?) (10) Park Bench (20) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Introduce Relationship (10) Yes, and game (focus on relationship) (20) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Discuss Character (10) Wink Murder (20) Reinforcement (10)
Week 4	Self-scripting	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Polaroid Families (10) Statue Garden in pairs (10) Each Actor sculpt statue of someone in your life, and add a line. Share to partner	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Quickly rehearse statues (5) Discuss Conflict (10) Give group of 4 a location, create Tableau of statues there, group decides conflict	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Rehearse and perform Tableaux, audience guesses Conflict (15) Rehearse, View (15) If time, create new Tableau	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Group adds lines (max 2 per character) to create “realistic” scene based on tableaux, lines and conflict (15) View (15)

		(10) Reinforcement (10)	(15) Reinforcement (10)	with new Conflict, same lines Reinforcement (10)	Reinforcement (10)
Week 5	Blank Scenes; Introduce 5 W's	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Where am I improv game (15) Break into groups of 3-4, give Blank Scenes. Each Group reads scene blankly, decides 5 Ws (15) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Groups draw out plot plan for scene (10) Groups create 3 tableaux of scene and present to class (20) Reinforcement (10) <i>Homework:</i> Actors write about their character and relationships (at least 1 paragraph for each relationship)	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Morning Routine Improv with characters (10) Rehearse scenes (20) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Rehearse (10) Present scenes: Each group responsible for feedback to another group (20) Reinforcement (10)
Week 6	Blank Scenes	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) If You Love Me, Won't You Please Please Smile? (10) Discuss Objective/ Tactics (10) Tactics game (Don't go into that room, I need my keys) (10) Reinforcement (10) <i>Homework:</i> Actors write their objective and 5 possible tactics	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Groups share Objectives & tactics, suggest more active versions (5) Rehearse & present (25) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Groups brainstorm a previous scene with these characters (10) Each group improvises backstory scene in front of class (20) Reinforcement (10)	Check-in/ Warm-up (15) Groups present blank scenes. (30) If time, do each scene once again in Gibberish. Reinforcement (10)

Day plan 1: Week 1 Wednesday

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework Standards:

- 1.14 Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices
- 1.17 Demonstrate an increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble

Essential questions:

What value does theatre bring to our world?

Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand that awareness of self and others is key to acting.
Students will understand that artistry requires emotional risk-taking and a brave space.

Goals:

Students will get better at identifying their emotions
Students will become more comfortable with their ensemble-members
Students will recognize theatre as a change-maker in the world

Check-in (15 minutes)

Remind students of the purpose of Check-in (which was explained the day before): For us all to become more present and aware of ourselves and our ensemble-members. Teacher starts the first few days to model.

In a circle, one person speaks until finished. Everyone gives complete and generous attention.

Once finished, speaker “passes it on” by name or by touch to arm to either side (first person chooses).

A participant may choose to pass, but will be encouraged to think of something to share.

When the circle is complete, we will return to anyone who passed, and anyone who may need to say more (teacher may coach).

Zombie Name game (10 minutes)

Purpose: Reinforce names, raise energy, create playful atmosphere

First, ask who thinks they remember all the names, and have one or two people announce all the names around the circle so that everyone hears them at least once, and have entire group repeat all names around.

All students are standing in a large circle with one volunteer “zombie” in the middle. Zombie chooses one “victim” to walk towards, slow shambling walk (encourage noises). Victim must call out someone else's name before Zombie reaches them. If they do not, Victim and

Zombie switch. If they do, Zombie turns to face and shuffle towards the person whose name was just called.

Sociograms: Find group that you agree with most (15)

Purpose: Get students talking to others they don't know; find common ground; reflect on value of acting and theatre; for teacher to learn students' backgrounds

I will make a statement. Students will consider it and give a “thumbs up” when they have a clear opinion on it (30-60 seconds). All will turn to the person nearest them and share their opinion (this step will be omitted after the first or second time). They will then walk around the room, talking with everyone, seeking others who share their opinion, forming as few groups as possible (but as many as needed). When the groups are set, each group will announce to the class their shared opinion on the topic (usually starting with one stand-out group, either largest or smallest). People can change groups at this point if they discover they are with the wrong group. Repeat for other topics.

Topics:

What is your opinion on cats?

Do you go to theatre?

Why are you in this class?

What makes a good actor?

Does acting require some inborn talent or can anyone be a good actor?

What value does theatre bring to our world?

Discussion on value of theatre (5 minutes)

Group in circle. Questions: What do you think was the first theatre? My answer: cave people teaching each other how to hunt. Theatre has always been a powerful way to communicate the most important lessons of our society. Short discussion.

Reinforcement (10 minutes)

In a circle, every person answers (again, first person passes to left or right, actor can skip but we'll go back to them at the end).

One deliberately positive lesson, moment, or concept that you want to keep with you from today's class, in the format “I reinforce...”

Day plan 2: Week 4 Tuesday

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Essential questions:

What can an actor do to help them be present onstage in a way that feels honest and unforced?
What value does theatre bring to our world?

Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand that awareness of self and others is key to acting.
Students will understand that artistry requires emotional risk-taking and a brave space.

Students will know how to:

Warm-up their bodies and voices
Provide positive, constructive feedback
Identify the conflict in a scene and heighten it with acting choices
Communicate an idea, characteristic or image with their body (statue and tableau)
Work together in pairs and small groups

Goals:

Students will get better at identifying their emotions
Students will reveal some truth of their lives
Students will understand Conflict
Students will create a story based on a tableau, a location and given lines

Check-in/ Warm-up (15 minutes)

After Check-in circle and physical/vocal warm-up, I may add a game depending on the needs of the group. Examples include Rabbit and Fox for raising energy or Zip-Zap-Zop for increasing focus.

Quickly rehearse statues (2)

Grab your partner from yesterday and together remind each other of the statues you made and the line you wrote for that character to say. See if you can get it even more into your body, make it bigger and more specific.

Discuss Conflict (10)

With permission, use one pair's statues as an example. Set them up in relationship to each other, saying their lines, in a way that creates a story. "What is going on here?" Rearrange to create another story and ask again. "Yes, you recognized a Conflict between these two. What does Conflict mean?" Generate definition and post on board. Brainstorm conflicts we know from stories and write them on the board.

Create Tableaux (18)

Split into groups of about 4 (split up pair used as example). Each group chooses a location from a hat. Ask each group to show each other their statues with lines and decide on a Conflict, suggested by those statues and lines in that location. They can use one of the examples on the board or those can just be inspiration. Then create a tableau, using those statues. If time, share all tableaux with the class.

Reinforcement (10)

Day plan 3: Week 6 Monday

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework Standards:

- 1.14 Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices
- 1.17 Demonstrate an increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble

Essential questions:

What can an actor do to help them be present onstage in a way that feels honest and unforced?
What value does theatre bring to our world?

Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand that awareness of self and others is key to acting.
Students will understand that artistry requires emotional risk-taking and a brave space.

Students will know how to:

Warm-up their bodies and voices
Identify Objectives, Obstacle and Tactics in a scene
Work together in small groups
Look for Objectives deeper than the obvious
Perform a short scene

Goals:

Students will get better at identifying their emotions
Students will understand Objective, Obstacle and Tactic
Students will observe and begin to experience what it means to act a Tactic (Active Verb)
Students will deepen the complexity and believability of their Blank scenes
Students will think critically about layers of Objectives as well as Internal and External Obstacles, in theatre and life

Check-in/ Warm-up (15 minutes)

If you love me, Won't You Please Please Smile (10 minutes)

One person in the middle of the circle has to get someone on the edge of the circle to smile. Center person faces one person at a time, saying "If you love me, won't you please please smile" and does anything (that doesn't involve contact and that is school-appropriate) to get the person to smile. If the person says "You know I love you, but I just can't smile" without smiling, the center person goes onto the next in the

circle. When they get someone to smile, that person becomes the one in the middle and has to start at the same place in the circle. (Should tactics used start to echo street harassment, students will be reminded that objectification of other students is not respectful and not ok in class.)

Discuss Objective, Obstacle, and Tactics (10 minutes)

So what was the Objective of that game? (Get someone to smile, to say the line without smiling). (Note that we're keeping the objective positive, something to do, not something to avoid doing.) What was the Obstacle? We will identify external (e.g. other person was trying not to) as well as internal (I didn't know how to do it, or, I got frustrated.) Objectives and Obstacles create Conflict. This is the "Why" of the 5Ws. A good tactic is something you do to or get from your scene partner, and it has to be achievable right now. "I want ____ to ____."

Thinking about the Improv work we did last week, what other Objectives and Obstacles can you identify from other scenes?

Often an Objective may be deeper than the obvious. What different scenarios might these lines be said in (parent-child, romantic partners, street harassment)? What other objectives might there be in these scenarios? Get you to go out with them, cheer someone up, make themselves feel more powerful, put you in your place, distract you while someone steals your wallet, impress your grandmother, etc.

Back to this game- what did you see people doing to try to achieve their Objective? What Tactics did they use? This is the How of the 5Ws

(yes, a bonus 6th question word!)

Introduce using Active Verbs to describe Tactics, distribute Active Verb list. Every actor has different active verbs that speak to them, use what feels meaty to you. Discuss difference between active and passive verbs. What Tactics did you see people using in "If you love me" game? Split into four groups and have each team list as many as possible in 3 minutes (timing them), then, Scattergories-style, read aloud and each team gets a point for each verb not listed by another team that qualifies as an actable Tactic. Review printed list to see if we can imagine other ways we might use listed tactics in "If you love me" game.

Tactics game (10 minutes)

Group breaks up into pairs, A and B. A's line is "Don't go into that room", B's is "I need my keys." Each chooses a few verbs from the list and acts out a scene, where they can repeat these lines 2-3 times. Try a few times with different verbs, then switch roles and try a few more.

Reinforcement (10)

Homework: Based on the blank scene we have been working on, each actor writes out their objective for the scene, and 5 possible tactics that they might try on different lines (specify lines).

Blank Scenes

4-person version

A Are we there
B I don't know, maybe
C What is that
D Can't you tell
C Why can't you just tell me
B You know why
A Do you need me to get it
D Yes
A There, what do you think of that
B Oh, that's great
D You know, some days I wonder about you
C I never wonder about you. Here, take this
B What do you want me to do with this
C That's your problem now

3-person version

A Are we there
B I don't know, maybe
C What is that
A Can't you tell
C Why can't you just tell me
A You know why
B Do you need me to get it
C Yes
B There, what do you think of that
A Oh, that's great
B You know, some days I wonder about you
C I never wonder about you. Here, take this
B What do you want me to do with this
C That's your problem now