

Start a Drama Club at your School!

Drama is about life. A school that seeks to educate the whole child as preparation for life wants to help foster involved, disciplined, highly creative and innovative learners. The way to achieve this kind of education is to ensure a balance that includes an active arts culture and arts education programme in the school. Drama can play a critical role in an arts education programme.

How do you do this?

The first thing that you must consider is the values that need to drive the project of creating an active arts culture in your school, namely:

1. To respect the place of arts and culture in the education of the whole child;
2. To respect the value of arts and culture as the soul container and expression of a community's values;
3. To value the right of engagement and involvement of all people in arts and culture activities and projects.

How do you ensure a healthy set of arts values in your school?

1. Talk to the Head, the staff, students and parents about the value of the arts;
2. Invite performers, theatre directors, designers, arts educators and so forth to come and speak to your staff and student body;
3. Invite arts practitioners to volunteer arts workshops for your students;
4. Find arts education articles and share them with your colleagues.

The next stage is about action. You need to start somewhere. Let's focus on drama:

1. Select a small group of learners who have shown an interest in performance and who you know have the self-discipline to attend group meetings.
2. Do some research about practical ideas for running a drama workshop with young people. Look on the internet. Get phone numbers of other drama teachers. Go to your education department - they should have an appointed arts and culture person there to help you. Make contact with the Grahamstown Foundation Arts Education Team.
3. Think about what you would like to do in the drama sessions. Imagine what it would be like and what the outcomes could be. You need to be interested in what you do.
4. Meet regularly, at least once a week for no less than an hour and no more than two hours. Teenagers have busy lives!
5. Together with your drama group, draw up a contract that helps guide the way you will all work with one another. You want to emphasise that respect, trust and safety are important. You want to draw attention to punctuality. Above all you want to ensure that people can be free to be creative and that means free to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes.
5. Plan a performance project. Make it a small manageable project that can be well rehearsed and presented with confidence to an audience of staff and students. You want to present a piece of drama that means something to you and all the participants - in other words: make it a relevant, self-motivated and fun performance for your group!
7. You have a responsibility to your drama learners: be motivated, have energy, be punctual and regular, and above all share your love of the arts with them.6. When other students and staff see the creative energy, team work, and fun you are all having, they will want to join. Make sure you have space for them or you can help them start groups too.

To summarise: Take the risk and put your plan into action. Believe in your value as an arts educator, dream into what you would like to achieve and reach out for support.

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