

A List of Favorite Theatre Education Materials, Resources, and Practices

A continuing work-in-progress compiled by Lissa Slay

Teachers are committed to students and their learning:

Knowledge of Students

1. “Student Reflective Practice”: <http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol6/625-murphy.aspx>
Building connections to concepts by utilizing reflective practice.
2. [Thinking Maps](#) exercise: “What is theatre?” I use this exercise in all of my classes to get a sense of what working knowledge students are bringing to the space.
3. Building Ensemble: Know your students! For the first few weeks of each course, I lead a series of structured icebreakers into theatre games to begin building a foundation for healthy ensemble practice.
4. National Theatre: Creating Chorus, Pace Exercise:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6anj5T_I5k Pace exercises are a great way to not only warm up actors, but to encourage them to work simultaneously on personal spatial awareness and ensemble work.

Responses to Diversity

1. [Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity & Justice, Vols. 1 & 2](#): These two texts are compilations of essays and articles that all revolve around the themes of rethinking schools and the role of education in a learner’s journey.
2. [Temporary Stages II: Critically Oriented Drama Education](#) by Jo Beth Gonzalez: An exploration of critical thought, innovative ideas, and rethinking various approaches in both classroom and production.
3. “When Shows Require Diversity but the School is Not Diverse”:
<https://www.schooltheatre.org/communities/community-home/digestviewer/viewthread?GroupId=133&MID=15345&CommunityKey=35d3756e-031c-447e-a020-14aeb57718f1&tab=digestviewer> An interesting discussion from a variety of perspectives.
4. [How to Teach Students Who Don’t Look Like You: Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies](#) by Bonnie M. Davis: Teaching strategies, essays, and thoughtful considerations on teaching students who don’t look like the teacher.
5. “We Don’t Want Your Statements, American Theatre or, The Solidarity We Actually Needed” by Kelvin Dinkins, Jr.: A response to how American theatres reacted in the wake of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement.
<https://howlround.com/we-dont-want-your-statements-american-theatre>
6. “Fighting for Gender, Race, and Motherhood in Theatre” by Carmelita Becnel:
<https://howlround.com/fighting-gender-race-and-motherhood-theatre> Sharpening the

focus on what inclusivity (and the lack thereof) looks like in a theatre space that shares its artists with motherhood.

7. Theatre: Its Healing Role in Education by Richard Morse: Actual stories and context for how theatre is helping society's young people overcome challenging conditions and situations in their lives.
8. Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain by Zaretta Hammond: an excellent work whose subtitle is "Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students" and is essential reading for all educators. With a specific lens on neuroscience, Hammond examines approaches considering students' cultures and how they might impact the brain and how students show up in the classroom.
9. UDL Now! A Teacher's Guide to Applying Universal Design for Learning (*third edition*) by Katie Novak: Novak sees students as partners in the implementation of UDL in the classroom; her text is rich with examples for the teacher as well as examples for students to consider. A must for navigating the 21st century classroom.
10. Equity by Design: Delivering on the Power and Promise of UDL by Mikko Chardin & Katie Novak: Pair this text with Novak's UDL text in #9 or with any of the books recommended in this section (or others - feel free to share your recs with me!) and take a deeper look at the link between social justice and universal design for learning.
11. Other People's Children by Lisa Delpit: Can teachers be "cultural transmitters"? Delpit suggests that miscommunication and misunderstanding are at the heart of issues often attributed to "other people's children". An essential read for educators.

Knowledge of content and instructional practices:

Subject Matter

1. Raising the Curtain by Gai Jones: I love this book for its friendly, practical, ensemble-based way of approaching theatre. When I get stuck, I look at what Jones has in her book and consider how it would work in my classroom. A terrific resource!
2. Spare Scenes by Diane Tillerman: The essential resource for completely neutral scenes.
3. The Actor's Scenebook: Scenes for Beginning Actors to Create by Mack Owen: These are neutral scenes with a specific focus (confrontation, focus, relationship, etc.).
4. The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods by Richard Brestoff: I love this book for its survey approach, and de-mystifying the great teachers. I loosely adapt the exercises for Theatre I & II.
5. Teaching Improv: The Essential Handbook by Mel Paradis: I enjoy how the lessons are outlined, and Paradis links pertinent videos that are wonderful for sharing. It's an "instant teach" kind of book - very little prep needed.

6. A Sense of Direction by William Ball: Directing essays and philosophy that will inspire you.
7. Mis-directing the Play by Terry McCabe: How do you think about a play in terms of analysis and direction? This will make you think anew about how to tell the story.
8. Creating a Character by Moni Yakim: His physical approach to acting is so joyful. A great read.
9. Exploring Theatre & Education edited by Ken Robinson: including the work of Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, and Bill Gaskill, this text explores actual sessions of theatre work with students. There is a lot of value to be found in this book; don't let the 1980 date fool anyone into thinking otherwise. There is so much about theatre which remains timeless and universal.
10. The Stage and the School, Ninth Edition: An essential foundational textbook. I currently use this for all Theatre I courses.
11. Theatre Arts in the Elementary Classroom: Grade Four through Grade Six, 2nd edition by Barbara Salisbury Wills: A textbook with student-friendly exercises and script selections.
12. The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre, 2nd edition by Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett: Practical devising exercises and related essays.
13. Devised and Collaborative Theatre: A Practical Guide edited by Tina Bicât and Chris Baldwin: Exercises, diagrams, and interesting ways to consider both the actor's and director's approaches to devising work.
14. A Practical Guide to Ensemble Devising by Davis Robinson: It is what its title suggests, a practical guide with bullet points, overviews, and detailed exercises for the devising classroom.
15. *American Theatre* magazine, published by Theatre Communications Group: An excellent resource for essays, articles, scripts, and thoughtful looks at what is happening in professional American theatre.
16. Art as Experience by John Dewey: Constructivist philosophy and making meaning.
17. Theater Games for Rehearsal: A Director's Handbook by Viola Spolin: Theatre games from the director's perspective, complete with sidecoaching for the actors.
18. Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook by Viola Spolin: Theatre games from the teacher's perspective, complete with sidecoaching for the students.
19. 100 Acting Exercises for 8-18 Year Olds by Samantha Marsden: Classroom-tested exercises and games for the theatre classroom.
20. The Theater Duke: Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen and the German Stage by Ann Marie Koller: The Western origins of directing in the theatre, from just before and during the duke's reign.
21. Painting for Performance: A Beginner's Guide to Great Painted Scenery by Sean O'Shea: An excellent, illustrated resource and essential guidebook for beginning scenic painters & instructors

22. Scene Painting: Projects for Theatre by Stephen Sherwin: A wonderful project book to support scenic painting instruction.
23. Scenic Art for the Theatre (any edition) by Susan Crabtree and Peter Beudert: The essential text for any theatre instructor's library, featuring interviews, examples, techniques, history and more.
24. "Slings & Arrows" - Acorn Media: Everything about this show is magical, smart, and guaranteed to make you think about why you theatre. Recommended for theatre people and enthusiasts; mature language and themes.

Learning Environments and Instructional Practices

1. Responsive Classroom for Music, Art, PE and Other Special Areas by Responsive Classroom: Focusing on positive language, positive reinforcement, and structured practices, this is an essential guide for "specials" teachers.
2. Adventures in Theatre: The ISTA Method edited by Dionos Aristidou: ISTA believes that through their methodology, student artists are better able to understand who they are and how they fit into the broader context of the world and what they can bring to it. This book is a series of lesson plans and how-tos in writing curriculum the ISTA way.
3. Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education by Ken Robinson: Sir Ken Robinson's TED talk "Do schools kill creativity?" is one of the most-watched TED talks of all time. If you liked the talk, read the book.
4. Drama Teacher Academy: <http://dramateacheracademy.com/>
5. *Dramatics* magazine: <https://dramatics.org/>
6. *Teaching Theatre* magazine: <https://www.schooltheatre.org/publications/teachingtheatre>

Teaching & learning by design:

Assessment

1. "What Do They Know? The six steps of successful theatre class assessment" by Susan K. Green and Stephen Gundersheim:
<https://higherlogicdownload.s3-external-1.amazonaws.com/SCHOOLTHEATRE/Green%20and%20Gundersheim%20successful%20assessment.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAVRDO7IEREB57R7MT&Expires=1576046317&Signature=93xhzCaf%2B3wq3lsyNO6q50GuI98%3D>
2. "Assessing Theater Education or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Grading" by Wyckham Avery: <https://howlround.com/assessing-theater-education-or> A thoughtful consideration of how to approach the philosophy of grading from a former teaching artist-turned-theatre teacher.
3. Arts Assessment in Learning (website): Formative assessment tools for the theatre classroom. <http://artsassessmentforlearning.org/theater/theater-tools/>

4. “Why are standards important?”
<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/why-are-standards-important/> An entry point to consider the importance of standards in education.
5. *Teaching Theatre*: “The role of cornerstone tasks”:
<https://jaymctighe.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Teaching-Theater-Vo.-23-No.-4-Summer-2012.pdf> Cornerstone tasks and the role they play in assessing student learning.
6. Drama and Education: Performance Methodologies for Teaching and Learning by Manon van de Water, Mary McAvoy, and Kristin Hunt: A solid, thoroughly-researched text with methodology geared towards both the artist as teacher and learner.

Program Design and Management

7. Real-World Theatre Education by Chip Rome: An essential how-to guide on everything from program design, budget management, how to interview, and more.
8. Theatre in the Secondary School Classroom by Jim Patterson, Donna McKenna-Crook, and Melissa Swick Ellington: An excellent guidebook for a theatre teacher of any experience level.
9. Teaching Drama in Primary and Secondary Schools: An Integrated Approach by Michael Fleming: Theory and practice in the classroom, complete with sample lesson plans, connections to both educational theorists and theatre practitioners.

Postsecondary Readiness

1. “Why Theater Majors Are Vital in the Digital Age” by Tracey Moore, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: Inner life and connection are crucial to success in living life beyond a screen.
2. Local college & university colleagues: Reach out to see what kinds of outreach and education opportunities are available to your students. Field trips, tours, workshops? Professors hosting master classes via Zoom or in person? There are so many possibilities!

Reflection and growth:

Reflective Practice

1. Happy Teachers Change the World: A Guide for Cultivating Mindfulness in Education by Thich Nhat Hanh: A lot of wonderful work in here, including exercises you can use right now and ways to think intentionally about how and why you teach + connected to you as a human.
2. The Reflexive Teaching Artist: Collected Wisdom from the Drama/Theatre Field by Kathryn Dawson and Daniel A. Kelin, II: I reviewed this book for *Youth Theatre Journal* and I find it to be very accessible and affirming for the theatre teaching artist.

3. The Heart of Teaching: Empowering Students in the Performing Arts by Stephen Wangh: There are great passages about giving feedback, and what I appreciate is that this whole book is about teaching from someone who is actually in the arts (as opposed to general teachers speaking to general practice).
4. The 5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman: This book changed my life in terms of how I consider relationships and what people need from one another. Though not a teaching/education book, it is still powerful stuff for considering all things human.
5. The Gifts of Imperfection & Dare to Lead by Brené Brown: Brown does a lot of work in shame and vulnerability. Reading her work makes me think about how much of what we create can stem from or be rooted in shame, or come from incredibly vulnerable places. I don't write this summary to offer any answers, but her work does make you stop and consider the whole person.
6. The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien: O'Brien's essential work is flawless in narrative, but what I find specifically inspiring and formative in this work is his chapter about "How to Tell Tell a True War Story" - for those of us in pursuit of the director's mandate to tell the story, this chapter is quite illuminating in its inherent philosophy.
7. Educated by Tara Westover: Westover's searing memoir has a lot to say about the value of education, the true nature of education, and the price we pay to attain it.

Professional Development: Building Your Community

Partnerships and Collaborations

1. High School Theatre Directors and Teachers:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/364403460304412/> An excellent resource group and community of high school theatre teachers and directors.
2. Educational Theatre Association: EdTA is the parent organization of the International Thespian Society. It offers resources, conferences, and professional development webinars and opportunities. www.schooltheatre.org
3. California Educational Theatre Association: <http://cetoweb.org/ceta/> California's association for educational theatre, with conferences, meet-ups, and festivals throughout the year.
4. Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival:
<https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/opportunities-for-artists/pre-professional-artist-training/kcactf/> I have been a part of KCACTF for a number of years, first as a participant, then as casting director and workshop presenter. This is a wonderful way to scout post-secondary options for my high school students as well as networking with others in the theatre community.
5. University of California, Irvine: Teaching Artist Project:
<https://sites.uci.edu/classdraft/programs/teaching-artist-project/> This year, I applied for an

opportunity to be matched with a teaching artist intern from UCI in an effort to reach out and form partnerships. This is an excellent way to support your own students by adding another voice of support - and supporting an intern also!

6. Segerstrom Center for the Arts: <https://www.scfta.org/Arts-Teach/Home.aspx> This organization serves five counties and brings the arts into the lives of over 300,000 people a year. They have a strong education program with many residency and workshop opportunities.