

Directing: The Negotiation

If you want your students to devise a theatre piece in class, it's important to practice the act of collaboration as much as possible. Ideally, you should use the month beforehand getting students used to the idea of working together, crafting ideas together, and learning how to negotiate. Get your students used to negotiating and not just following one or two leaders.

Instructions

1. Divide class into groups.
2. Give each group a time limit and a topic – “You have one minute to plan a new world.”
3. Once the time is up, they have to immediately present. Don't give them more time, don't let them complain that they couldn't come up with anything. Each group has to do something.
4. Watch the groups present. Right away, give them another topic and another time limit. At the end of the time limit, have them present again.
5. Students will be frustrated. That's fine. As you repeat the exercise three or four times, they'll get the idea of what they have to do and adjust. The point of the exercise is to encourage students to negotiate with each other. There can't be one leader who always gets their say in a collaboration. Everyone has to work together in some fashion.
6. As you repeat the exercise, change up the groups – put all the leaders into one group – what happens then? If you notice one student taking charge time and time again, limit their power. They're only allowed to say one sentence during the time limit. Or what if you tell students that a person can only say one sentence at a time? After they say their sentence, they have to wait until everyone else has had their turn.
7. Afterward, discuss the process. What was it like to be under such a short time limit? Were they able to work together? Why or why not? And if they weren't able to work together, discuss the issues. Finally, discuss how they can change their work methods next time to eliminate the issues.

Since this is drama class, be creative with the topics. Some suggestions are:

- Create a new law
- Decide on a law to remove from existence, and explain why
- Create a school uniform
- Write a new school song
- Write a poem about feet
- Create a new superhero
- Create a new weather pattern
- Invent a machine
- Invent a new food

- Invent a new product that solves a problem
- Invent a new disease
- Write a scene for an action movie
- Create a commercial for a product that doesn't exist
- Decide what school will be like 100 years from now
- Invent a language. What's it used for?