

LYNNSEY'S THEATRE CENTER

A N U R B A N
C O M M U N I T Y Y O U T H
T H E A T R E F O R H I G H
S C H O O L S T U D E N T S

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

CHARACTERISTICS OF DEAF STUDENTS THAT IMPACT PARTICIPATION IN THEATRE

The official definition of deafness from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is "a hearing loss so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification" (Sec. 300.8 (c) (3))

The following potential barriers for deaf students in learning environments come from a Public Input Summary from Gallaudet University. The first challenge they state is the lack of collaboration and communication between American Sign Language (ASL) users and oral speakers. This could pose a potential barrier in our theatre work because there might be students who are more comfortable with different modes of communication than others. Another potential barrier they offer is issues with literacy skills. This is because ASL and English are separate languages with different grammatical structures and syntax which may pose some difficulties to students who are only familiar with ASL. Finally, another challenge they present is social concerns. Deaf students often miss out on developmental social skills because of the attention that needed to be given to their hearing loss.. Gallaudet offers that these students may be "socially immature and not develop close friendships" (Gallaudet 3-5).

A journal from the George Institute of Technology shares that deaf students often excel with different types of memory recall, including free recall, visuospatial recall, and imagery (Hamilton 10-13). These characteristics and skills can be useful for engaging in theatre work and aesthetics.

PRACTICES

1. Provide Alternative Modes of Communication

In "Creative Access," Adkins McRae introduces this idea of radical hospitality and being flexible. She offers that including options for visual, written, and verbal communication can support the deaf and hard of hearing community (Adkins McRae). When producing promotional videos, there can be multiple modes of communication such as verbal, ASL interpretation, and closed-captioning. Additionally, ASL interpreters would be present throughout the entire theatre making process and ASL proficiency would be asked of all theatre center employees. By advocating for this practice, our communication will reach a wider group of people and people with differing ability statuses may feel more welcomed in our environment.

2. Facilitate Discussions To Optimize Student Comprehension

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training offers that setting up a workspace where all participants can clearly see each other can help to support students who lip-read. Additionally, facilitating the discussion so that only one person is speaking at a time will ensure that the students' attention can be fully focused on the entirety of the conversation ("Inclusive Teaching"). This facilitation style will support students by creating an environment where all participants can be seen and heard as well as making sure that students are able to comprehend the discussion

3. Providing Written Notes From Discussions and Rehearsal

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training also offers that it can be difficult for deaf and hard of hearing students to keep up with a class discussion while also taking notes ("Inclusive Teaching"). To help support these students, there can be volunteers to be note takers who's notes can be distributed to all the participants after class. Additionally, there can be pre-made handouts with information that students can reference throughout the discussion. Another alternative may be recording the discussion so that students can revisit it later. This will support the students by releasing them from the pressures of trying to simultaneously keep up with the discussion and take thorough notes throughout.

DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPIST

A dance movement therapists guide to working with adolescents with Cerebral Palsy in a dance studio setting.

What is Cerebral Palsy?

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is a congenital disorder of movement, muscle tone, and posture (Mayo Clinic).

Inclusivity Practices

Mobility Aids

Each classroom will have equipment accessible for any individual who needs assistance moving around freely. Supports will be attached to ceiling tracks and are able to assist students to move free around the room without the support of a mobility aid. There will also be assistants to help if the participant wants it. This will give all students the opportunity to move as they wish without restrictions. This will also provide an opportunity for students to interact, giving the students with CP a chance to socialize with their peers (Turkcan).

Partnering

Each lesson plan will include partnering to give each student the opportunity to interact. Activities such as guided mirroring will be utilized to give the student the equal opportunity to explore creatively and as they feel comfortable. By having mixed ability dancers work together, students with CP will "increase eye-contact, physical contact with others, provide assistance for each other, self expression, and physical self confidence" (Peterson).

How DMT Impacts

Individuals with Cerebral Palsy have a difficult time with balance and motor skills that are used daily. This population often feels unwelcome doing activities with temporarily abled individuals. This can include sports, arts, social events, and other activities. Often, individuals use assistance to move around (wheelchairs, walkers, etc.). Dance movement therapy impacts children with CP by offering "a chance to focus on abilities rather than disabilities, multimodal access to an individual, and an increase of mechanical and qualitative aspects of physical function" (Turkcan). DMT also increases a child with CP's social interactions. As CP primarily affects movement, it also can impair speech, hearing, and vision. Children with CP are discouraged to interact and participate in activities with other temporary abled bodies because of this (Carrera). DMT increases a child's access to physical and verbal expression. Activities used in DMT give children the opportunity to practice social skills and communicate with other (Lopez-Ortiz).

Sensory Integration

There will be sensory integration therapy applied in each class. This will give students the opportunity to build the ability to process sensory input; "When a child has a brain injury, sometimes these perceptions are off kilter with a decreased or increased ability to process. Sensory integration helps build the mental and physical framework within an individual's nervous system to properly perceive sensory input, regulate their responses, and understand the significance behind a particular, texture, movement, or sound" (CP.org).

PROF. GARCIA-RUIZ'S ACTING 101

For college aged theatre artists, at a predominantly white institution, who want to combat the privileges they hold and see in the American theatre and to uplift the voices of the minoriteis at the insitution.

What: Reading "Fences" by August Wilson

This will be the introductory reading for my course and from the beginning it is important for all students to see BIPOC individuals represented in theatre. A well-known piece of theatre work taught in acting classes is "The Death of a Salesmen" by Arthur Miller in my class we will be switching this text out (thanks to the suggestion from the collection of pieces in the document BIPOCSwap) in order to read work with more representation when learning about analyzing text and characters (Pak).

What: Casting Processes

In the material I assign for performances in class, the casting will be reflective of the demographics in the room. White students will not be allowed to perform pieces that are race specific for BIPOC individuals. We will also implement "non-traditional casting " opportunities to give BIPOc students an opportunity to create representation in a setting that has excluded them systematically (Onuoha).

What: Transformational Inquiry

Using transformational inquiry in the classroom helps students to "see themselves in the context of a larger social matrix, they gain the power to depersonalize negative messages they may have internalized" (Caldwell &Frame, 9). This is essential in an acting class because there needs to be an expectation of respect when working with on another. You cannot act if you do not feel welcome and respected.

What: Check-Ins & Self Care

Acting can be an extremely raw and vulnerable profession and can be even more so when including race into the framework. Throughout the semester we will be including self-care check points it may either be a journaling prompt, yoga and meditation session or a day to talk and connect. These breaks will help us to continue the work and dialogue successfully (Megan Nevels, Oct. 8, 2020).

What: "Disrupting Shakespeare"

The history of theatre and older works is important to study in an acting class but we will not study works by William Shakespeare . This is because "educators are often taught to see Shakespearean plays as near perfection, his characters as "archetypes", and to persist in oj indoctrinating students into a false notion of the primacy (and superiority) of the English language." (German). Instead we will try to study heightened language that is more inclusive and diverse in nature.

What: Identity Markers

In my class we will be discussing our identity markers that we are comfortable sharing and incorporate them into our classwork to find intersectionality. This should engage students in their learning and give them a sense of ownership. By sharing race, pro-nouns ect. with that context I can cater the work we do in class to the individul who is working (Caldwell & Frame, 12).

Stage Managers with ADHD

Managing a Stage while Managing Yourself: How to Stay Organized Before, During, and After Rehearsals

How does ADHD impact theatre/dance participation?

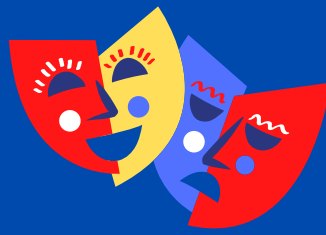
ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that first presents itself in childhood (and can lead into adulthood) as difficulty in paying attention, trouble with controlling impulsive behaviors, and being overly active (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). In situations like rehearsals or production meetings, it is important that the Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager(s) are paying attention to everything as to make sure it is written down in a way that makes sense to everyone, so an idea can be finalized or adapted as the process goes on.

- Stage Managers need to know every single square inch of the show, which at times (especially closer to Tech Week), can be a lot to jumble. In order to keep that organization process easier, utilizing colors and a personally chosen filing system will ensure that nothing is misplaced.

- As an example, to prepare a calling script, write down cues in colored pencil, color coding them based on the type of cue/who needs to be called for said cue. This allows for visualizing colors and associating them with a particular branch of the run crew (ie. yellow = light cue/light board op, blue = sound cue/sound board op). Having the ability to write directly in the script, instead of on post it notes, ensures the information will stay exactly where it needs to, but will also allow for flexibility just in case anything changes.
- People with ADHD are very visual, using brightly colored folders and labels will make filing systems more appealing, and more likely to stick to routine. Grouping similar items together in the same colored folders will also assist in finding things quickly (Sinfield).

-Stage Managers are the gatekeepers of time at a rehearsal. Yes, the director is the one leading the rehearsal with the actors, but it is up to the Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager(s) to keep everything running on time, and to make sure breaks are taken at their proper times. At times, it certainly seems like everything passes slowly during rehearsals, which can expend a lot of mental energy (especially to someone who didn't get much sleep, which is known to make ADHD symptoms worse).

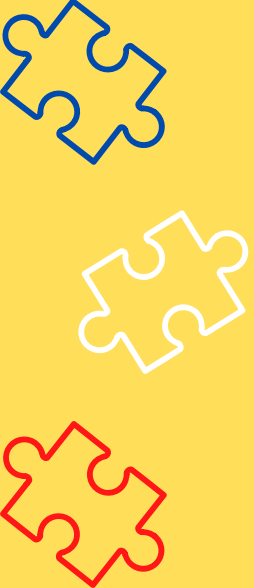
- Knowing when the breaks are ahead of time can help someone with ADHD prepare themselves mentally to use up a large amount of their brain power on focusing for a prolonged period of time. While it is important to enable a rehearsal process that is fluid and can handle change (Rose Theatre and Sillau), the absolute certainties of a process should be expressly communicated to others to ensure everyone comes in with as much of their head in the game as possible. It also allows them to plan ahead about what they're going to use the break time for. Prioritizing and making a list of things on paper (WHERE IT IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE) is crucial.
- During these breaks, it may be important to check in with performers and production team members to see how they're doing with the material. Each person needs specific things in order to be successful, and everyone has different strengths. Cater to everyone, and find ways to work together.



MS. CLEM'S BLACKBOX THEATRE FOR YOUTH

Elementary After-School Theatre Program
Working with young people on the autism spectrum
Williamsburg, VA

Theatre and Autism




When creating theatre with people on the autism spectrum, the most important word to remember is "spectrum." No two people with autism are the same because each has their own personality, strengths, challenges, ambitions, etc. However, this can make it difficult to pin down the exact characteristics of people with autism. The CDC defines Autism Spectrum Disorder as "a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges" ("What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?"). Depending on how this becomes realized in the person's behavior and actions, it can greatly impact the way they create theatre. For example, people with autism may need to communicate differently (i.e. through their body instead of verbally) as they perform. Though these challenges are important to recognize for purpose of filling the needs of each student, it is also imperative to understand the strengths each student has to offer. These may include "personal, family, and community resources" at the student's disposal (Cosden, et al). The student may have a very supportive family unit who can assist them with learning material or a personal strength that will aid them within the classroom. No matter what form these strengths come in, teachers must acknowledge their value in the student's education. Finally, when creating theatre both with and for people with autism, it is best to actually consult with them on their needs. Talleri Adkins McRae writes, "You and your staff are the experts on your theatre environment, and disabled artists, patrons, and staff members are experts on their own needs and accommodations." It is good to discuss with the students and their families the best way to accommodate them, whether that be providing resources or services to offer support.

Problem As Need




In "People First Language," Kathie Snow discusses the importance of shifting the focus on a particular problem to the need someone has. This is important because people with disabilities should not be constantly associated with problems. Snow poses the question, "Do you want to be known by your 'problems' or by the many positive characteristics that make you the unique individual you are?" Shifting this mindset allows both people with disabilities and the people that interact with them to develop a growth mindset.

Strength-Based Learning



I will utilize strength based learning in my class because I believe that focusing on the assets of a student helps the students themselves and those around them to see past their obstacles. "[Y]outh who have had significant attention placed on their deficiencies may benefit from the identification of their personal strengths, both in terms of their own self- perceptions and their recognition that important adults in their family and schools also share that awareness" (Cosden et al). As this quote states, focusing on the strengths of a student also provides an idea of some ways the student can continue to learn and grow based off their talents and assets.

Transparency



When making learning more accessible, one accommodation to make students feel more secure is transparency. This entails making the schedule for the class available in multiple modes: verbally, visually, before and during class, etc. McRae suggests, "Flexible forms of communication, including options for written, verbal, and visual ways to receive information." Giving this information ahead of time or at the beginning of class/rehearsal can also give students the opportunity to mentally prepare for class as they need to.

CHLOE'S COMMUNITY DANCE THEATRE

An affordable community dance space with classes for all ages, abilities and levels, located in urban downtown Charlotte, NC.

PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE SPACES AND EXPERIENCES FOR DANCERS WITH AUTISM:

- 1.) Creating a safe and consistent space
- 2.) Intentional lesson plan creation
- 3.) Positive reinforcement to encourage positive behaviors

Contact:

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Impacts to learning dance with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorders carry a wide variety of characteristics that impact learning, communication, socialization, and physical health. No two people experience autism the same, which is why it has to be evaluated on a case by case basis. These common characteristics can impact their participation in dance classes in a multitude of ways (Finlayson).

Communication

A characteristic of communication that affects some individuals with Autism is “delayed imaginative and social imitative play” (Levy, et. al.). This can impact their ability to participate in improvisation activities, and structured creation and imaginative activities often used in younger dance classes. Another aspect that affects communication is the inability to understand nonverbal communication or body emotions. These difficulties may affect the dancer’s ability to understand how to best participate in group or partner activities with other classmates (Reinders).

Socialization

A characteristic of socialization and behaviors that affects individuals with autism is delayed peer interactions (Levy, et. al.). This can affect students' abilities to create friendships and interact with the teacher and other students in the class.

Another characteristic that could impact learning is the need for reliance on schedules and sameness. If the class curriculum or structure changes, this can impact a dancer’s ability to learn in a dance class.

Physical and Sensory

Lastly, characteristics of autism can impact physical health and sensory stimulants as well. They might have trouble integrating motor and perceptual information, which would impact balance and hand-eye coordination. This may impact students with Autism who are wanting to learn stricter technical styles like ballet and jazz (Reinders).

Practices for inclusive spaces and experiences for dancers with Autism

Creating a Safe Space

Our dance space will provide a safe, comforting, and consistent space for all students. (Finlayson) We will be mindful of the volume level of music in the spaces, as well as the volume of our voices while teaching. Headphones will also be provided to all students who wish to have a quieter class. Our space is accessible, with easy access to leave class when needed. We will provide a quiet break room for our students who need a sensory break during class, with quiet activities and fidgets provided. For performances, we will adjust lighting and help dancers know when a change in lighting will occur. (McRae) We will introduce the idea of having our own “personal bubbles” and teaching our students about their own personal kinesphere (Finlayson). This will ensure that our dancers are not being overstimulated by physical contact and interaction with others in the space.

Intentional Lesson Plan Creation

We will develop consistent movement practices that will be performed consistently throughout the course. This is to ensure consistency and structure to make the dancers feel comfortable, because they know what will be happening. When teaching with the idea of having our own personal kinesphere, these lessons will not include partner work. Structure of activities will remain constant each class, so that students know what to expect as the class progresses (Finlayson). Each lesson will incorporate both visual, audio, and kinesthetic instruction so that all students can grasp what their teacher is asking (Hunt).

Positive Reinforcement to encourage positive behaviors

Sometimes, behavior with Autism can be unpredictable. With that, our teachers will be trained to encourage positive behaviors as a behavioral tool, while allowing students to take breaks when positive behavior is not attainable that day for the student. Positive reinforcement is effective because it “motivates the participants to stay present with the hope of receiving another congratulatory response” (Finlayson). This encourages the dancer to follow specific prompts, stay on task, hold themselves accountable, and avoid distractions that may be on their mind. This can help manage behavior, while also encouraging students to be focused and engaged during class.



Ms. Fini's Afterschool Theatre Company

An after-school club for 9-12 graders to perform in fully realized productions

Deaf/Non-Verbal Students: Specific Needs and Research

Deaf/Non-verbal students possess a unique set of skills that can be especially useful in theatre. These students may not be able to speak, may not be able to hear, or possibly both. Because of this, they sometimes can communicate via ASL or by reading lips. Regardless of these student's ability to hear or speak, it is important to "be ready and willing to accept them where they are" (Burns). Since these students are more attuned to using ASL, they have a well-versed understanding of how movement can convey messages. This means that these students can have a more articulated movement vocabulary. Because ASL is not a widely-known language, an interpreter might be needed for these students to be successful in a performance setting. But, this does not mean that the student will be any less involved. Interpreters should stay close to the student they are assisting, and should also be familiar with theatrical vocabulary (Tips for Working...). Interpreters are useful not only in rehearsals, but also during performance. It is entirely possible to utilize interpreters during live performance, and it can be done in many artistic ways. One example of such performances is the Deaf West Spring Awakening Production (Franklin). Participation should never be limited by a student's ability to speak or hear.

Putting Theory To Practice

- **Utilize Check-Ins**

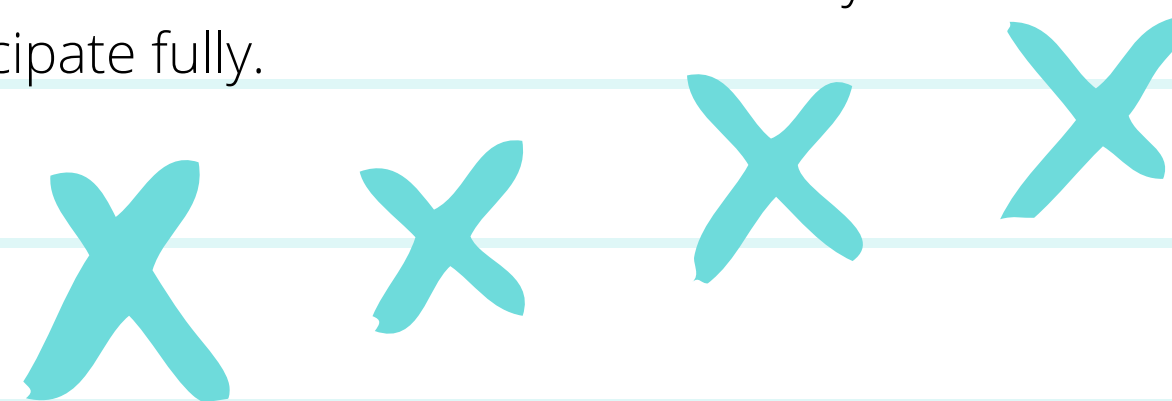
During rehearsals, I plan to have specific check-in points with any students who are deaf/non-verbal. My goal is to "create a periodic check in during the process" (Sillau) to help to identify specific needs as they arise, rather than just addressing potential needs at the beginning of the process and then never revisiting them again. Needs are not always constant, and they can fluctuate with time. It is important to give students a chance to evaluate what is working, what is not working, and to allow them to discover what changes we can make together.

- **Student First, Interpreter Second**

In a setting like this, it is important to make sure that students who are deaf/non-verbal feel like they are directly involved in the process, rather than just being involved through the channel of their interpreter. Doing things like "speak[ing] directly to the student who is deaf" (Tips for Working...) can help to make students feel like they really have a place in the process. This has everything to do with valuing the students for their presence, time, and ability instead of just working with them because they signed up for the program.

- **Offer Multiple Modes of Information**

Students who are deaf/non-verbal may not be able to take in information or direction via the traditional mode of speaking and listening. Whenever possible, I plan to "offer alternatives for auditory/visual information" (Universal Design For...). Depending on the needs of the student, I will plan ahead in order to make sure that the transfer of information will be effective for them. The information must be relayed in a way that works for them, otherwise they will not be able to participate fully.



DIRECTOR OF "ALL SMILES:) THEATRE COMPANY"

AN INCLUSIVE AND EDUCATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY WITH AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM IN URBAN WASHINGTON DC

Autism is a spectrum because it is unique to each individual. There is no way to possibly predict how each young person with Autism will communicate and participate. However, there are many tools that can help make them feel welcomed, appreciated, and safe. Autism can manifest itself in different patterns of **communication**, meaning someone with Autism may need extra attention to detail and more clarification. Again, it is a large spectrum so it is not reasonable to assume one's communication patterns with Autism. One individual may take a very slight extra amount of time word processing while another individual may go their whole life without developing speech (Ingrid Robeyns, 385). Autism can also manifest itself in **socioemotional** ways. All people with Autism "have vast ways of interacting that are not in line with how the vast majority of people in society act" (Ingrid Robeyns, 384). These interactions could include repetitive behaviors, impairment of speech, and difficulty comprehending conversations (Joshua Streeter, 10/15/2020). However, these characteristics of Autism do not impair the **strengths** that individuals with Autism possess. "Typically we look at disability with a deficit lens" (Joshua Pulos, 10/29/2020), when we should really be highlighting what they *can* do. "Yet their attention to detail, their talent in systematizing, and their often exceptional memory may lead to major talents and savant skills" (Ingrid Robeyns, 386).

PRACTICE 1:

WITH

PAIRING INDIVIDUALS WITH A BUDDY

DURING A PRODUCTION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERY INDIVIDUALS' NEEDS ARE BEING MET. THEREFORE, OUR TEAM WILL INCLUDE MANY EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS THAT WILL PAIR UP WITH OUR CAST AND CREW MEMBERS WITH AUTISM. BY DOING SO, WE ARE ENSURING THAT THESE TEAM MEMBERS GET TO KNOW THE INDIVIDUAL THEY ARE PAIRED WITH AND CAN THEN LEAD TANGIBLE OUTCOMES THAT WILL ASSIST THEM (JOSHUA PULOS, 10/29/2020). IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR ME AS THE DIRECTOR TO IMPLEMENT GENERAL ASSISTANCE TO THE GROUP, INDIVIDUAL SPECIFIC NEEDS MUST ALSO BE HEARD AND MET.

PRACTICE 2:

FOR

SENSORY FRIENDLY PERFORMANCES

OUR PRODUCTIONS WILL BE SENSORY FRIENDLY FOR AUDIENCES ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM. THERE WILL BE TWO ROOMS IN THE LOBBY DEDICATED FOR BREAKS AND QUIET TIME DURING THE SHOW. IN ADDITION, I WILL CREATE A PRODUCTION PACKET AVAILABLE ONLINE AND ON PAPER THAT OUTLINES WHAT THE EXPERIENCE OF COMING TO THE SHOW IS LIKE, THEREFORE LEAVING NOTHING UP FOR SURPRISE (TALLERIE MCRAE, 2018). I WILL ALSO COLLABORATE WITH THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND LIGHTING DESIGNER TO ENSURE THE BEST PRACTICES FOR NOT USING OVER STIMULATING LIGHTING AND LEAVING HOUSE LIGHTS ON DURING THE SHOW.

PRACTICE 3:

WITH

CREATING A SCHEDULE WITH UDL

BEFORE EVERY REHEARSAL, TECH MEETING, AND PERFORMANCE, I WILL CREATE A DETAILED SCHEDULE THAT WILL BE GIVEN TO THE FULL TEAM BEFORE SHOWING UP THAT DAY. AS WELL AS GIVING IT TO EVERYONE BEFORE HAND, I WILL ALSO ANNOUNCE THE SCHEDULE OUT-LOUD AT THE BEGINNING OF EVERY REHEARSAL/ MEETING/ PERFORMANCE, AS WELL AS WRITE IT ON THE BOARD. THIS ENSURES THAT INDIVIDUALS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM KNOW WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO THAT DAY SO THEY CAN PREPARE THEMSELVES. IF THERE WAS NO PRIOR SCHEDULE, IT COULD RISK INDIVIDUALS TO FEEL UNSAFE AND UNPREPARED IN THE ENVIRONMENT, WHICH IS THE LAST THING WE WANT.

HART TO HART MOVEMENT

Hart to Hart Movement is a program that uses trauma informed dance and movement therapy to support children who have experienced trauma at a community center in Cincinnati, Ohio.

IMPACTS AND BENEFITS OF DANCE FOR CHILDREN WITH TRAUMA

Children who have experienced Trauma live with a variety of symptoms of traumatic stress that can be carried with them throughout their lifetimes. Severe childhood trauma can lead to increased health-risk behaviors as well as require additional amounts of mental and physical health services. Trauma survivors may also be more likely to experience interesting with child welfare, juvenile justice systems, as well as have difficulties when it comes to maintaining employment and meaningful relationships (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network). Additionally, children who have experienced trauma may exhibit hyperarousal, avoidance symptoms, anxiety (van Westrhenen, Nadine et al.), emotional numbing, irritation, difficulty with concentrating and cognitive processes (Goggin). Dance can provide a holistic approach to addressing trauma that integrates the mind and body without necessarily having to verbally communicate.

PRACTICES

Creating Safe, Brave Spaces

This is the most critical of all of our practices. Children who have experienced trauma may expect that any environment that they may find themselves is unsafe and untrustworthy. This can prevent them from fully investing in the work with themselves and the individuals around them. Creating a supportive environment will allow the children to be able to not spend us much energy or focus on utilizing defense mechanisms. One of the ways that we do so is to ensure that our instructors have “consistent affect and open, nonthreatening body postures” (Goggin). However, creating a supportive and safe space also reflects what the individual students need. This may be established through the customs or rituals that they may be used to.

Pro-social Approach through Improvisation, Mirroring, and Body Scans

A pro-social approach (Goggin) allows the opportunity for children to seek internal and external resources in order to confront a challenge or difficulty they may have. This can be created through individual solo dance exploration as well as creative group movement processes. One way that we ensure this opportunity is to create ample opportunities for children to understand their own methods of moving as well as how they use their bodies to interact with other people in the classroom. By doing so, participants are able to use this knowledge and understanding with how they relate to themselves and others. Through mirroring exercises, children are able to expand their understanding of empathy. Finally, through body scans, children have the opportunity to examine their own understanding of their internal resources, increase consciousness, and recognize the relationship they may have with their bodies and emotions.

Discussion

Although movement provides an alternate mode of communication and process, we also make sure to include opportunity for group and individual discussions. This offers another mode of processing that allows for the children to verbally articulate what they are experiencing. This can be important in order to more fully solidify the work that is done physically with the body. Additionally, this is an important aspect of creating a safe, brave, and supportive space for the participants, as children may benefit from hearing about the experiences of other students and relating it to their own.

MS. GOOLEY AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

I am working as the artistic director for a regional theatre in Newark NJ, specializing in creating theatre with young people (ages 21 and under) on the autism spectrum.

THEATRE MAKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM.

Theatre making can be a useful tool in any person's life, as it allows us to explore the possibilities life has to offer without any 'real world' attachments. For young people on the autism spectrum, theatre is even more useful and can even be described as "providing a platform for others to see the 'ability' in disability" (Corbett). General education systems teach valuable skills to differently abled students, but what it lacks in personalization theatre making can make up for. By participating in a theatre program these young people are pushed to explore their own emotions and relationships with other people. Acting, for example, can be used "teach emotional recognition, expression, nonverbal behavior, gestures, listening skills, eye contact, and strategies to handle social situations" (Goldstein & Therrien). Theatre can also serve as a powerful recreational activity for young people with autism as it engages them in community based activities without any added anxieties. These young people will work on and attend performances that are autism friendly where we limit hyper-sensory stimuli like auditory, visual or tactile elements that trigger stress. By making these changes they can relax and engage with our team of peer creators. As a company we will work alongside with young people on the autism spectrum to create narratives and relationships that can educate us on the human experience. By "embracing the inherent creativity in accessibility" this regional theatre can make strides to prepare them for a life beyond the public education system and create an environment where they can return to in their future (McRae).

- **Aim for Possible ...** In order to create an environment where our young performers feel welcome I will change my expectations and aim for what is possible. I will work to "try new things, reflect on what worked and -- more importantly -- what didn't, stay connected to the disability community and revise" (McRae). Recognizing that this work is messy is one thing, but I will take action to do the work alongside these young people. I will ask them how we can do better and include them in our process of growing together.
- **Adapt the Sensory Experience ...** Recently 'autism friendly' performances in Broadway and off-Broadway theatres have made strides in creating a safe environment for people with autism and their families to enjoy a performance. As a theatre company we would ensure that we use "Accommodations such as brighter lighting, reduced sounds and preparatory story guides help make the experience less intense" (Corbett) for performers and audiences members on the autism spectrum. This adaptation will help these young people feel comfortable when they are theatre making and when they are observing their peer creators perform.
- **Acting as an Exploration ...** Theatre making can be a vital tool in a young person's life, as it allows us to explore the endless possibilities that life has to offer. By engaging people on the autism spectrum in acting classes they are able to grasp the meanings behind relationships and show how well they can connect with others. They also can work to understand the knowledge they have been given in school, testing their comprehension by physicalizing what they've learned. Through having our students work together to create performances they are able to explore "opportunities for socialization, but even more important generalize learned skills" (Goldstein & Therrien)

THE "ALL-IN" WORKSHOP DIRECTED BY KINSLEY STEVENSON

**AN ALL-INCLUSIVE DANCE WORKSHOP FOR
INDIVIDUALS ON THE SPECTRUM RANGING FROM
ALL AGES LOCATED IN RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**

DANCING ON THE SPECTRUM

Dance, for kids on the spectrum, is an emotional release and my goal by the end of this workshop is simply personal development. Each class will include kids of all ages, we will not split up classes based on being younger or older. According to We Rock the Spectrum Boca Raton they should be able to enjoy a dance class without fear of judgement. These classes will be made up of smaller groups of people because larger groups can be intimidating and uncomfortable. "People First Language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is" as stated in this article, we will uphold to this and make sure our students are comfortable in our space. Kids on the spectrum should be able to enjoy a space to learn to express themselves through movement. Teaching in the environment is very different compared to a normal dance workshop or convention. Our teachers will be experienced in taking care of and handling your kids. This space will provide knowledge in dance but also ways to get through uncomfortable situations. Adapting to changes and knowing how to improvise on the spot will be a main focus we have in our workshops.

IMPROV AND IMPROVING

In our workshop we won't be aiming for perfection. Nothing about this process is perfect and improvising and experimenting is something we will bring into the classes. Improv is going to be one of the main dance forms that we will bring to light and included in our classes. "The classes are fun and interactive and kids are encouraged to use their imagination," as said in the We rock the Spectrum (Dancing On The Spectrum).

KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE

In our workshop, all of our teachers will be up to code on the correct terminology to use and when. This is something that the parents along with the students will respect and appreciate. "When we see the diagnosis as the most important characteristic of a person, we devalue her as an individual," this statement shows that words can de-face someone on the spectrum if used wrongly. That's why each student in our class will be treated as a normal individual, not seen by their disability.

SAFE SPACE

We will implement a "safe space" into our workshop for when students become overwhelmed. This will be a in a seperate room where there will be sensory things to play with like pillows, play-doh, and other simple but effective objects. It will have a theme such as a camping outside, or even going to the grocery store. We will ask the questions like "What is the physical environment like?" Then using these types of questions from Howlround Theatre Commons to access how to create the right "safe space".