

Teaching Drama in Primary and Early Childhood

DRAMA

What is Drama?

Drama happens when people take on roles and share those roles, relationships and human situations with others.

List the different types of drama that you can identify.

Compare different types of drama in different cultures, places and times

List the drama teaching you have seen in schools.

Compare your experiences of drama in schools with what is in the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts and the Western Australian Arts Syllabus*.

The Western Australian Arts syllabus (SCSA, 2015) describes Drama and identifies the following aims:

Drama is the expression and exploration of personal, emotional, social and cultural worlds, through role and situation, that engages, entertains and challenges. Students create meaning as drama makers, performers and audiences as they engage with and analyse their own and others' stories and points of view.

In making and staging drama, they learn how to be focused, innovative and resourceful, collaborate and take on responsibilities for drama presentations. Students develop a sense of curiosity and empathy by exploring the diversity of drama in the contemporary world and in other times, traditions, places and cultures.

Aims

Drama knowledge and skills ensure that, individually and collaboratively, students develop:

- confidence, empathy and self-awareness to explore, depict and celebrate human experience, take risks and extend their own creativity through drama
- knowledge of how to analyse, apply and control the elements, skills, techniques, processes, conventions, forms and styles of drama in traditional and contemporary drama to engage and create meaning for audiences
- knowledge of the role of group processes and design and technology in the creative process of devising and interpreting drama to make meaning for audiences
- knowledge of traditional and contemporary drama through responding as critical and active participants and audience members.

As with all the Arts subjects in drama student learning is focused on students **making** and **responding**. Making and Responding in drama are intrinsically connected. Together they provide students with knowledge and skills as practitioners, performers and audience members and develop students' skills in critical and creative thinking. As students make in drama, they actively respond to their developing work and the works of others; as students respond to drama, they draw on the knowledge and skills acquired through their experiences to inform their making. The syllabus identifies year level descriptions (an overview of the key concepts addressed, along with core content being studied at that year level), content descriptions (the knowledge, understanding and skills that teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn) and achievement standards (the quality of learning that students should typically demonstrate by a particular point in their schooling).

The syllabus is based on the requirement that all students will study at least two of the five Arts subjects from Pre-primary to Year 6. It is a requirement that students study a performance subject and a visual subject.

Pre-primary year

In Pre-primary, learning in drama builds on the dispositions of learning developed in the early years.

Students, through purposeful play, respond to stimuli to create drama and develop improvisation skills. They are introduced to the elements of voice and movement to create drama, offering and accepting ideas as they improvise, using simple stories.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members, engaging in both spontaneous and structured play to communicate stories; they recognise that the purpose of drama is to share it with others.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore the different places where drama can be seen or heard in the community.

Making	
Ideas	Use of stimuli (photos, sounds or music) to develop dramatic action about the real and imagined worlds (ACADRM027)
	Development of improvisation skills (accepting offers) to develop dramatic action (ACADRM028)
Skills	Exploration and experimentation of the two (2) elements of drama: voice (loud, soft) movement (big, small) to create drama (ACADRM028)
	Simple stories based on stimuli and available technologies (ACADRM029)
Performance	Performance of improvised drama that communicate ideas to an audience (ACADRM029)

Responding

Audience behaviour (being attentive, responding appropriately) when viewing drama (ACADRR030)

Different places and occasions where drama is seen or heard in the community (ACADRR030)

Personal responses to drama they view and make (ACADRR030)

Achievement standard
To be developed in 2015
using (assessment) work
sample evidence to 'set'
standards through paired
comparisons

DRAMA

Year 1

In Year 1, learning in drama builds on the dispositions of learning developed in the early years.

Students explore personal experiences to create drama and develop improvisation skills. They are introduced to the element of role and continue to experiment with voice and movement to create their drama.

Students experience the roles of performers and audience members, learning performance skills and audience behaviour. They have the opportunity to explore the different places where drama is performed.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore the key moments in drama they view and make.

Making	
Ideas	Use of dramatic action to sequence events to communicate an idea or message (ACADRM027)
	Improvisation skills (contributing to the progression of action) to develop dramatic action (ACADRM028)
Skills	Exploration and experimentation of the three (3) elements of drama: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> voice (loud, soft, varying loud and soft) movement (big, small, use of facial expressions) role (fictional character) to create drama (ACADRM028)
	Use of known stories and personal experiences to create drama with simple objects and available technologies (ACADRM029)
Performance	Performance of planned and spontaneous drama that expresses feelings, moods, ideas and experiences to an audience (ACADRM029)
	Performance skills (performing towards the audience, raising chin for good eye lines) when sharing drama with peers (ACADRM029)

Responding

Audience behaviour (paying attention to the development of a story) when viewing drama (ACADRR030)

Different places where drama is performed (ACADRR030)

Personal responses expressing ideas and feelings to key moments in drama they view and make (ACADRR030)

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You are also directed to the
General Capabilities

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Year 2

In Year 2, learning in drama builds on the knowledge and skills developed in early years.

Students explore personal events and fictional stories to create drama. They continue to develop improvisation skills, exploring possibilities for voice, movement and role. Students are introduced to the element of situation.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members, presenting scenes in which they apply story structures to link the action with an ending. Students view drama based on unfamiliar stories.

As they make and respond to drama, students experiment with the elements of voice, movement, role and situation. Students explore reasons why people make drama.

Making		Responding
Ideas	Use of dramatic action to sequence events communicating an idea, message or story (ACADRM027)	Audience behaviour (responding to interactive elements) where students view drama that uses different styles and unfamiliar stories (ACADRR030)
	Improvisation skills (establishing a situation) to develop dramatic action and ideas (ACADRM028)	Reasons why people make drama (ACADRR030)
Skills	Exploration and experimentation of the four (4) elements of drama: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voice (loud, soft, varying loud and soft; pace and pitch) • movement (big, small; use of facial expressions; gestures; posture) • role (fictional character; listening and responding in role) • situation (establishing a fictional setting and relating to it in role) to create drama (ACADAM028) 	Personal responses using the elements of voice and movement in drama they view and make (ACADRR030)
	Development of drama to communicate important personal events or fictional stories using objects, puppets, images and/or available technologies (ACADRM029)	
Performance	Performance of drama to an audience demonstrating story structures to set the scene, link action and create an ending (ACADRM029)	Achievement standard To be developed in 2015 using (assessment) work sample evidence to 'set' standards through paired comparisons
	Performance skills (suitable openings and conclusions to performances, appropriate stage crosses) when sharing drama with familiar audiences (ACADRM029)	

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Year 3

In Year 3, students extend their understanding of role and situation as they create improvised and devised drama. Students begin to experiment with varying forms and styles using focus and control when improvising or devising drama. They continue to develop improvisation skills, varying voice and movement. Students are introduced to the elements of space, character and time. Students experience drama as performers and audience members. They begin to use rehearsal processes to support audience engagement and continue to learn appropriate responses to the drama of others. As they make and respond to drama, students identify and reflect on the elements of drama used in a performance. Students have the opportunity to experience drama from a range of cultures, times and locations.

DRAMA

Making		Responding
Ideas	Improvised and devised drama based on narrative structures in familiar forms and styles (ACADRM031)	Appropriate responses to, and respect for, drama of others as performers and audience members (ACADRR034)
	Improvisation skills (breaking patterns) to develop drama (ACADRM032)	Features of drama in different cultures and places (ACADRR034)
Skills	<p>Exploration and experimentation of seven (7) elements of drama:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voice (loud, soft, varying loud and soft; pitch variation; pace; volume) • movement (facial expressions and gestures to create belief in character and situation) • role (taking on the point of view of a fictional character; listening and responding in role; adopting a role and maintaining focus) • role (taking on the point of view of a fictional character; listening and responding in role; adopting a role and maintaining focus) • situation (establishing and sustaining a fictional setting) • space (establishing a clear setting) • character (communicating role traits; developing relationships between characters) • time (sense of time to create belief in drama) when creating improvised or devised drama (ACADRM032)	Responses that involve identifying and reflecting on the use of the elements of drama, using drama terminology (ACADRR034)
Performance	Rehearsal processes (to improve the flow of the performance) to support audience engagement (ACADRM033)	Achievement standard To be developed in 2015 using (assessment) work sample evidence to 'set' standards through paired comparisons
	Performance skills and audience awareness (where performers use focus and control) when performing drama forms and styles (ACADRM033)	

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Year 4

In Year 4, students extend their understanding of role and situation, as they continue to explore ideas through improvisation.

Students continue to explore the elements of drama to communicate ideas using role, situation, space, character and time. They are introduced to relationships and how relationships influence character development.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members. They continue to use rehearsal processes to enhance audience engagement and shape the drama for an audience.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore narrative structures and reflect on the meaning and purpose of their drama and the drama of others. They reflect on, and respond to, the ideas in drama from different cultures.

Making		Responding
Ideas	Improvised and devised drama based on narrative structures in non-realistic drama forms (ACADRM031)	Considered responses to, and respect for, the drama of others as performers and audience members (ACADRR034)
	Improvisation skills (working with complications) to develop drama (ACADRM032)	Ideas in drama from different cultures (ACADRR034)
Skills	<p>Exploration and experimentation of eight (8) elements of drama:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voice (loud, soft, varying loud and soft; pitch variation; pace; volume) • movement (facial expressions and gestures to create belief in character and situation) • role (taking on the point of view of a fictional character; listening and responding in role; adopting a role and maintaining focus) • situation (establishing and sustaining a fictional setting) • space (establishing a clear setting) • character (communicating role traits; developing relationships between characters) • time (sense of time to create belief in drama) • relationships (how relationships influence character development) when creating improvised or devised drama (ACADRM032) 	Responses that involve identifying and reflecting on the meaning and purpose of their drama and the drama of others', using drama terminology (ACADRR034)
Performance	Rehearsal processes (to improve transitions between scenes) to enhance audience engagement (ACADRM033)	<p>Achievement standard To be developed in 2015 using (assessment) work sample evidence to 'set' standards through paired comparisons</p>
	Performance skills and audience awareness (where the performers use focus and control) when performing drama forms and styles (ACADRM033)	

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Year 5

In Year 5, students begin to refine and experiment with the elements of drama to communicate improvised, devised and scripted drama.

Students continue to use the elements of drama to communicate meaning, including the use of voice, movement, role, situation, space, character, time and relationships. They are introduced to tension, focus and mood. They explore story structures and ideas to create dramatic action, considering mood and atmosphere.

Students experience the roles of performers and audience members. They work together, giving and receiving feedback, to improve drama to engage an intended audience.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore the purpose of drama and how the elements of drama are used to communicate meaning. They have the opportunity to experience drama from a range of cultures, times and locations.

Making		Responding
Ideas	Dramatic structures to sequence how a story is opened, how events are presented (mood and tension elements) and key details to help the audience understand dramatic meaning (ACADRM035)	The role of drama in different cultures and times (ACADRR038)
	Improvisation skills (creating climax and dénouement) to enhance drama (ACADRM036)	Responses that explain the purpose of drama and how the elements of drama are used to communicate meaning, using drama terminology (ACADRR038)
Skills	<p>Experimentation and refinement of eleven (11) elements of drama:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voice (loud, soft, varying loud and soft; pitch variation; pace; volume; clarity) • movement (facial expressions and gestures to create belief in character and situation) • role (taking on the point of view of a fictional character; listening and responding in role; adopting a role and maintaining focus) • situation (establishing and sustaining a fictional setting) • space (establishing a clear setting) • character (communicating role traits; developing relationships between characters) • time (sense of time to create belief in drama) • tension (factors that contribute to suspense in stories; tension in characters' relationships) • focus (framing drama to highlight and communicate key story elements and characters' motivations) • mood (dramatic action created or emerging from the performance) • relationships (how relationships influence character development) <p>when creating improvised, devised or scripted drama (ACADRM036)</p>	
Performance	Rehearsal techniques (giving and receiving feedback; working together) to improve drama to engage an intended audience (ACADRM037)	<p>Achievement standard To be developed in 2015 using (assessment) work sample evidence to 'set' standards through paired comparisons</p>
	Performance skills and audience awareness (where the performers control the focus) to convey meaning to the audience (ACADRM037)	

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Year 6

In Year 6, students refine and experiment with the elements of drama, considering how feedback can be used to enhance improvised, devised and scripted drama. Students are introduced to script formatting and conventions.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members. They develop their performance skills to establish connections and build trust with the audience.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore how narrative structures and dramatic tension communicate meaning. They examine the factors that influence drama in different cultures, times and contexts.

Making		Responding
Ideas	Dramatic action (the driving force and forward motion of drama to create dramatic meaning) driven by narrative structure and dramatic tension (ACADRM035)	Factors that influence drama in different cultures, times and contexts (ACADRR038)
	Script formatting and conventions, including planning and documentation (ACADRM035)	Responses that explain how the elements of drama and production elements are used to communicate meaning in drama, using drama terminology (ACADRR038)
	Improvisation skills (finding a resolution and signalling a conclusion) to enhance drama (ACADRM036)	
Skills	<p>Experimentation and refinement of eleven (11) elements of drama:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voice (loud, soft, varying loud and soft; pitch variation; pace; volume; clarity; projection) • movement (facial expressions and gestures to create belief in character and situation) • role (taking on the point of view of a fictional character; listening and responding in role; adopting a role and maintaining focus) • situation (establishing and sustaining a fictional setting) • space (establishing a clear setting) • character (communicating role traits; developing relationships between characters) • time (sense of time to create belief in drama) • tension (factors that contribute to suspense in stories; and tension in characters' relationships) • focus (framing drama to highlight and communicate key story elements and characters' motivations) • mood (dramatic action created or emerging from the performance) • relationships (how relationships influence character development) when creating improvised, devised or scripted drama (ACADRM036) 	
Performance	Rehearsal techniques (the consideration of feedback) to improve drama performances to engage an audience (ACADRM037)	
	Performance skills and audience awareness (where performers are making connections and building trust with the audience) (ACADRM037)	

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Pre-primary

In Pre-primary, learning in drama builds on the dispositions of learning developed in the early years.

Students, through purposeful play, respond to stimuli to create drama and develop improvisation skills. They are introduced to the elements of voice and movement to create drama, offering and accepting ideas as they improvise, using simple stories.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members, engaging in both spontaneous and structured play to communicate stories; they recognise that the purpose of drama is to share it with others.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore the different places where drama can be seen or heard in the community.

Year 1

In Year 1, learning in drama builds on the dispositions of learning developed in the early years.

Students explore personal experiences to create drama and develop improvisation skills. They are introduced to the element of role and continue to experiment with voice and movement to create their drama.

Students experience the roles of performers and audience members, learning performance skills and audience behaviour. They have the opportunity to explore the different places where drama is performed.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore the key moments in drama they view and make.

Year 2

In Year 2, learning in drama builds on the knowledge and skills developed in early years.

Students explore personal events and fictional stories to create drama. They continue to develop improvisation skills, exploring possibilities for voice, movement and role. Students are introduced to the element of situation.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members, presenting scenes in which they apply story structures to link the action with an ending. Students view drama based on unfamiliar stories.

As they make and respond to drama, students experiment with the elements of voice, movement, role and situation. Students explore reasons why people make drama.

Year 3

In Year 3, students extend their understanding of role and situation as they create improvised and devised drama.

Students begin to experiment with varying forms and styles using focus and control when improvising or devising drama. They continue to develop improvisation skills, varying voice and movement. Students are introduced to the elements of space, character and time.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members. They begin to use rehearsal processes to support audience engagement and continue to learn appropriate responses to the drama of others.

As they make and respond to drama, students identify and reflect on the elements of drama used in a performance. Students have the opportunity to experience drama from a range of cultures, times and locations.

Year 4

In Year 4, students extend their understanding of role and situation, as they continue to explore ideas through improvisation.

Students continue to explore the elements of drama to communicate ideas using role, situation, space, character and time. They are introduced to relationships and how relationships influence character development.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members. They continue to use rehearsal processes to enhance audience engagement and shape the drama for an audience.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore narrative structures and reflect on the meaning and purpose of their drama and the drama of others. They reflect on, and respond to, the ideas in drama from different cultures.

Year 5

In Year 5, students begin to refine and experiment with the elements of drama to communicate improvised, devised and scripted drama.

Students continue to use the elements of drama to communicate meaning, including the use of voice, movement, role, situation, space, character, time and relationships. They are introduced to tension, focus and mood. They explore story structures and ideas to create dramatic action, considering mood and atmosphere.

Students experience the roles of performers and audience members. They work together, giving and receiving feedback, to improve drama to engage an intended audience.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore the purpose of drama and how the elements of drama are used to communicate meaning. They have the opportunity to experience drama from a range of cultures, times and locations.

Year 6

In Year 6, students refine and experiment with the elements of drama, considering how feedback can be used to enhance improvised, devised and scripted drama. Students are introduced to script formatting and conventions.

Students experience drama as performers and audience members. They develop their performance skills to establish connections and build trust with the audience.

As they make and respond to drama, students explore how narrative structures and dramatic tension communicate meaning. They examine the factors that influence drama in different cultures, times and contexts.

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Year 7

Pre-19th century drama

In Year 7, Drama students will be given an opportunity to plan, develop and present drama to peers by safely using processes, techniques and conventions of drama. Drama will be improvised, or taken from appropriate, published script excerpts (e.g. Australian or world drama), using selected drama forms and styles (Note: students will have an opportunity to present a scripted drama and improvisation performance at least once over Year 7 and Year 8). Student work in devised and/or scripted drama is the focus of informal reflective processes using general drama terminology and language.

Teachers are required to address knowledge and skills in Drama through one or more of the forms or styles below. Other forms and styles may be used in addition to teach knowledge and skills in Drama.

Drama forms and styles for Year 7: restoration comedy, circus, Kathakali, medieval theatre, or ritual theatre.

Year 8

Pre-19th century drama

In Year 8, Drama students will be given opportunities to plan, refine and present drama to peers by safely using processes, techniques and conventions of drama. Drama will be based on extended improvisations, or taken from appropriate, published script excerpts, using selected drama forms and styles (Note: students will have an opportunity to present a scripted drama and improvisation performance at least once over Years 7 and 8). Student work in devised and/or scripted drama is the focus of informal reflective processes using more detailed drama terminology.

Teachers are required to address knowledge and skills in Drama through one or more of the forms and styles below. Other forms and styles may be used in addition to teach knowledge and skills in Drama.

Drama forms and styles for Year 8: readers theatre, children's theatre, naturalism or realism.

Why have we included the secondary year level descriptions in a course for primary teachers?

Year 9

Non-realist drama

In Year 9, Drama students are given opportunities to refine their knowledge and skills to present drama as an event, by safely using processes, techniques and conventions of drama. Students develop drama based on devised drama processes and appropriate, published script excerpts (e.g. Australian drama pre-1960 or world drama), using selected drama forms and styles. Student work in devised and scripted drama is the focus of reflective and responsive processes supported through scaffolded frameworks using drama terminology and language.

Teachers are required to address knowledge and skills in Drama through one or more of the forms and styles below. Other forms and styles may be used in addition to teach knowledge and skills in Drama.

Drama forms and styles for Year 9: melodrama, neoclassical drama, multi-formed devised drama, commedia dell'arte, or Kabuki theatre.

Year 10

20th century drama

In Year 10, Drama students are given opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills to present drama for purposes and wider external audiences, safely using processes, techniques and conventions of drama. Students develop drama based on devised drama processes and taken from appropriate, published script excerpts (e.g. Australian drama post-1960 or world drama), using selected drama forms and styles. Students will have opportunities to research devised drama and read in selected script excerpts in context. Student work in devised and scripted drama is the focus of reflective and responsive processes. Students are encouraged to develop their use of extended answer forms and interviews, using drama terminology, language and different forms of communication, based on own drama and the drama of others.

Teachers are required to address knowledge and skills in Drama through two or more of the forms and styles below. Other forms and styles may be used in addition to teach knowledge and skills in Drama.

Drama forms and styles for Year 10: Grotowski's Poor Theatre, Youth Theatre, Contemporary Aboriginal Theatre, Theatre of the Absurd or Butoh.

Understanding what we teach in Drama

For students to learn the Content of the Drama Syllabus, we need to teach key concepts.

When we make drama we tell stories using the following building blocks.

Elements of Drama

The Elements of Drama work dynamically together to create and focus dramatic action and dramatic meaning. Drama uses movement and voice along with language and ideas to explore roles, characters, relationships and situations. Drama action is shaped by dramatic tension, space and time, mood and atmosphere to symbolically present and share human experiences for audiences.

role, character and relationships	role and character: identification and portrayal of a person's values and attitudes, intentions and actions as imagined relationships, situations and ideas in dramatic action relationships: the connections and interactions between people that affect the dramatic action
situation	the setting and circumstances of the characters/roles actions
voice and movement	voice: using voice expressively to create roles, situations, relationships, atmosphere and symbols movement: using facial expression, posture and action in space and time expressively to create roles, situations, relationships, atmosphere and symbols
focus	directing and intensifying attention and framing moments of dramatic action
tension	sense of anticipation or conflict within characters or character relationships or problems, surprise and mystery in stories and ideas to propel dramatic action and create audience engagement
space and time	space: the physical space of the performance and audience, fictional space of the dramatic action and the emotional space between characters time: fictional time in the narrative or setting; timing of one moment to the next contributing to the tension and rhythm of dramatic action
language, ideas, dramatic meaning, mood and atmosphere and symbol	language, ideas and dramatic meaning: the choice of linguistic expression and ideas in drama used to create dramatic action mood and atmosphere: the feeling or tone of physical space and the dramatic action created by or emerging from the performance symbol: associations that occur when something is used to represent something else to reinforce or extend dramatic meaning
audience	experience of participating in the drama

Principles of Story

Drama tells stories. Stories involve people (characters) who experience relationships and situations.

Story is structured.

Many stories use cause and effect – a person does something that causes the next event in the story to happen. These sorts of stories unfold event after event, leading to a major incident – called the climax – and then the story is finished usually with some sense of explanation or satisfying conclusion.

But not all stories are told in a straight line – linear – way. Some stories manipulate time. They start the story sometime in the future then flash-back to an earlier time; or they flash-forward to a future time.

The elements of drama (character, situation, tension, etc) are combined to shape narrative (story) through using contrast, juxtaposition, dramatic symbol and other devices of story.

Forms of drama

In their drama, students use a variety of sources including stories, personal experiences and historical and current events to create meaning through situations and characters. They also draw on their experiences in other Arts subjects and curriculum learning areas.

In Drama students are taught the forms of devised and scripted drama.

In all years, students draw on, use and analyse drama genres, forms and styles from a range of historical and cultural contexts. They begin with the drama in their immediate lives and community and identify the purposes of drama. They draw on the histories, traditions and conventions of drama from other places and times including drama from Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, Asia, Western Europe and world cultures.

Skills, Techniques and Processes

In drama students learn to use the following skills, techniques and processes:

Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ working collaboratively◆ applying the elements of drama and principles of story◆ devising drama◆ interpreting scripts◆ performing◆ scriptwriting◆ applying design elements and production components
Techniques	Voice and movement to make drama.
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Dramatic playing◆ role-playing◆ improvising◆ process drama◆ play building◆ interpreting scripts◆ rehearsing and directing.◆ responding to drama as audience.

Materials

The raw materials of making drama are:

Voices and bodies	◆ voices and bodies (movement, facial expression, gesture, posture.
Production components	◆ props, costumes, lighting, sound and staging equipment and performance spaces.

Understand how we teach Drama – Focusing on Pedagogy

To understand how our students learn drama we need to recognise

- the role of dramatic play, improvisation, group devising, process drama and ways of working with scripts.
- the distinctive pedagogies of drama teaching

Dramatic Play

As the Early Years Framework (<http://deewr.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>) adopted across Australia notes, there is an essential focus on Play-based learning: as “a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations” (p. 6).

Play is a context for learning that:

- ◆ allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
- ◆ enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity
- ◆ enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
- ◆ assists children to develop relationships and concepts
- ◆ stimulates a sense of wellbeing.

Children actively construct their own understandings and contribute to others' learning. They recognise their agency, capacity to initiate and lead learning, and their rights to participate in decisions that affect them, including their learning.

Purposeful dramatic play has the elements of taking on role and creating situation but rarely is it for an audience (apart from the audience of the person herself or himself playing). Dramatic Play is, like Fundamental Movement Skills in Dance, a foundation stone on which students in primary schools learn drama.

Students need opportunities to play by trying different roles, object play (such as puppets), using props and simple improvised costumes (a length of fabric for a cloak or plastic beads as jewels).

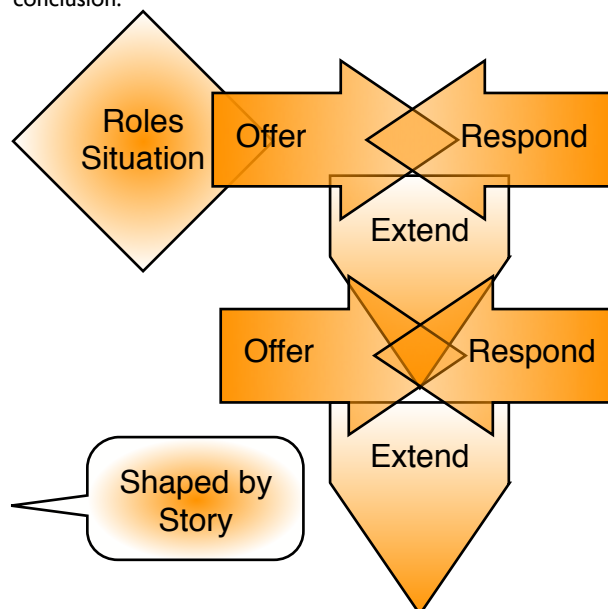
Improvisation (abbreviated as *improv*)

Not all drama begins with a script that is learnt, rehearsed and performed.

Improvised drama is drama without a pre-determined script.

But improvisation is not a random process nor is it a case of anything goes.

Improvisation grows from the starting idea involving people (roles) and situation, which in improvising is called *an offer*. Improvisers take the gift of an offer and *respond* to it while also providing ways that can *extend* the improvisation. This process continues until a story is shaped and reaches a conclusion.



For example, there are two people in a lift. The lift stops suddenly between floors. (Situation).

One of the two is afraid of confined spaces. The other is happy-go-lucky. (Roles)

The afraid of confined spaces person begins: What's happening with this lift?

The happy-go-lucky person responds: We seem to be stuck between floors.

The afraid of confined spaces person: But I can't be. I'm scared in closed in places.

The happy-go-lucky person responds: It'll be Ok, These things never last long.

The happy-go-lucky person responds: But I am late for my appointment.

Etc.

We begin to get a picture that they are trapped in a lift and who these people are (we call this the given circumstances – who, what's happening, where, when and what's at stake).

There are many ways that this improvisation can develop – it is an improvisation after all. The two actors can take it in any direction: for example:

The afraid of confined spaces person is late for an appointment with a dentist and has a tooth ache.

The happy-go-lucky person urgently needs the toilet. (This is building tension and using the Principles of Story.

Where do ideas for improvisation come from?

Like all drama, they spring from human experience.

What makes a good improv?

◆ Spontaneity and maintaining flow

◆ Credibly staying in role and situation

The most important process in improvising is to keep extending the story. The biggest problem is if improvisers *block* the forward flow of the improvisation. A *block* can be a refusal to respond, or to try to change the given circumstances (in the example above, a *block* might be to say that “this is not a lift, this is a rocket ship to the moon!”)

Another issue that teachers need to attend to is that improvising is thought of as only comic. This is not surprising because there are many comedy-based improvisers – for example, television programs such as *Whose Line is it?*

Improvisation does not need to always be comedy – we call it *going for the gag*. Students can improvise on about serious ideas.

Devising Drama

Most improvisations are short – hence their usefulness in drama classes.

Students also need opportunities to explore sustained drama events. This includes linking several improvisations together.

Process Drama is one way of doing this.

Process Drama is an exploration based on extended connected improvisations that are structured using the Principles of Story, dramatic and theatrical structures, conventions and traditions. In Process Drama, participants are both actors and audience simultaneously.

Process Drama is initiated through a powerful pre-text – a stimulus to start the dramatic exploration. Participants enter a fictional world in role and share commitment to imagined dramatic action led by the teacher/workshop leader. Process Drama proceeds without script but is more than isolated improvised scenes or fragments. It knits together an episodic dramatic form that involves the whole class group. The teacher/leader functions as playwright and director using changing perspectives and points of view to lead participants through an embodied experience that draws on theatre elements and frames. In Process Drama participants move into and outside dramatic action, including moments of reflection.

Key strategies in Process Drama include role and situation, building context and poetic action through improvisation, teacher-in-role (T-i-R), using theatre conventions, frames and contexts.

See the drama teaching and learning strategies listed later.

It is also possible to devise drama through collecting, selecting and linking several successful improvisations that began spontaneously but which are then re-worked, rehearsed and presented to an audience as a complete play.

Scripted Drama

Scripted drama, drama written by someone else that is rehearsed, interpreted and performed, is the other major form that students study.

Students are expected to study a wide range of scripted drama. The *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* advises:

In all years, students draw on, use and analyse drama genres, forms and styles from a range of historical and cultural contexts. They begin with the drama in their immediate lives and community and identify the purposes of drama. They draw on the histories, traditions and conventions of drama from other places and times including drama from Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, Asia, Western Europe and world cultures. As students learn drama, particularly in secondary schools, they broaden their experiences of particular places and times, forms and representational and presentational styles as a springboard for their making and responding. (ACARA Draft)

There are many examples of scripts that are written for or are suitable for performance by primary aged students. Having said that there are also many more examples of scripts that are inappropriate in subject matter or (worse) lack challenge.

Scripts chosen for students to work with need to be age and developmentally appropriate as well as dramatically challenging.

Sources for scripts

The Australian Script Centre – AustralianPlays.org
 Currency Press –
 Theatre Folk – www.theatrefolk.com

To engage students in the Arts, teachers typically create learning experiences which:

- use all aspects of perception: sensory, emotional, cognitive, physical and relational to make learning experiential for students
- develop skills in students through modelling, coaching, practising and reflecting
- enable students to work individually and collaboratively, using flexible grouping to accommodate their needs and strengths
- encourage students to take risks and extend their ideas
- foster participation in projects in a flexible, dynamic learning environment
- provide opportunities for students to experience the Arts in live or virtual settings
- explore significant and recognisable examples of the Arts from different times and cultures to develop in students an aesthetic and cultural appreciation of the Arts.

<http://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/p-10-curriculum/curriculum-browser/the-arts/drama3/arts-overview/ways-of-teaching>

Distinctive pedagogies of Drama

Over time drama pedagogy has developed a series of distinctive ways of teaching.

How we learn the arts.

In drama students experience

- warming up
- improvising and simple devising
- process drama
- working with simple scripts
- teacher in role
- using narratives such as picture books and human experience as a springboard for drama making
- Making choices (for example, use of props)

They see modelled

- Teacher in role
- Teacher as side coach
- Teacher as director
- Teacher as supportive critical responder leading responding

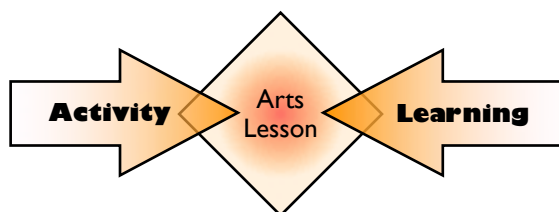
How we teach so students learn the arts.

In drama the focus begins with reflection on the strategies used in the students' drama making.

Distinctive markers of drama pedagogy:

- use of warm up, edging in and shaping drama lessons
- drama teaching strategies (conventions)
- working collaboratively
- co-construction of meaning - student to student/ student with teacher
- planning with a focus on drama in integrated curriculum learning
- assessment and making comparable judgments
- focus on embodied, experiential learning and teaching
- reflection
- critical responses

In designing your lessons with students you need to clearly identify what you will do (the activity) and the learning you intend.



It is important not to confuse activity and learning. An activity is a vehicle for the learning and not an end in its own right.

Some Drama Teaching Strategies

The following teaching strategies for drama (drawn from the work of Patrice Baldwin and many teachers over time) are useful for focusing the activities for students. The choices that teachers make need to be made based on the learning outcomes expected. Strategies for their own sake are no substitute for thoughtful planning. They are listed alphabetically according to title.

Collective Role/Collective Voice/Chorus

A group or whole class of children speak in turn as one character. This shares the ownership of the character and responsibility for a character's development. They have to listen carefully to each other to be sure that the contributions fit with the one character.

Conscience Alley (or Decision Alley/Thought Tunnel)

The class divides into two lines facing each other with a corridor down the centre through which a character can walk. As the character walks between the lines, one side tries to persuade him/her to take one course of action and, the other, the opposite course of action. Or one line gives the pros and the other the cons. Each person has opportunity to speak to the character when he/she is standing nearest them. The character can join one line to indicate a decision has been made in accordance with that line. The line can be made longer if people break away once they have spoken and add themselves on to the end of the line.

Eavesdropping

A character (often the teacher in role) listens in to scenes, as if they are eavesdropping on them. This can be done in an exaggerated way with hand to ear. The rest of the class also sits still and listens until it is their group's turn to be eavesdropped upon, while the others listen.

Freeze Frame (see also Still Frame and Tableau/x)

A freeze-frame is made by in-role action being halted mid-flow to a given signal, for example, the teacher calling 'Freeze'. Those in the scene need to then remain very still, as if frozen. At a further agreed signal, for example, 'Action', the freeze-frame can be broken or thawed, and the action can then carry on again.

Image Theatre

This involves presenting a series of still images. Often the images are contrasting, for example, hopes/fears, ideal/reality. The groups might move between the images in slow motion or back and forth between the two. Time may be given to discuss the comparisons and consider what steps would be needed by a character to move from one situation portrayed to the other, for

example, how to get from fear to hope or from the reality to the ideal.

Mantle of the Expert

This involves children taking on the role of experts, usually involved in taking on a significant task for an imaginary external customer. For example, the children might be in role as designers with a brief that they are fulfilling for an imaginary development company.

Passing Thoughts

This is thought-tracking 'on the move'. A character stands in the centre and in turn the whole class can pass by the character and speak the character's thoughts aloud. Alternatively they can pass by the character and offer advice or reassurance at a key moment.

Performance Carousel

This is a theatrical way of seeing the linked work of several groups in sequence. All groups imagine they are on stage waiting still and silent for their spotlight turn. One at a time seamlessly each group performs, while the rest are still and silent. The groups might move into a still image starting position and all freeze at the end of their group performance before melting down into stillness between group scenes.

Physical Theatre

This involves performing in ways that use the body as objects, properties, scenery, and so on, rather than just as people. The body is used in a versatile and creative way to become whatever the drama requires.

Ritual

This involves everyone carrying out repeated agreed actions, words or sounds for a significant purpose within the drama. Ritual makes actions and words significant and important and might give them symbolic meaning.

Rumours

In a short amount of time everyone makes up and spreads a rumour among the whole class.

Some rumours may be true and others may not. Good false rumours are not easily distinguishable from truth. Afterwards the rumours may be gathered for collective consideration. This quickly creates many plot possibilities.

Sensory Journey/Tour

One person has their eyes closed. Their partner guides them around the drama space, talking to them and leading them on an apparent journey in another environment linked to the drama. They can use touch, texture, sound and words to feed into the experience for the blindfolded person. The partner may be led by the elbow or just by verbal instruction with no touch.

Small Group Play-making

This is self-explanatory, other than to say that the group usually comprises up to four children and the play they make is usually a short scene. Often the class divides into groups for this activity based on a theme. They usually bring the scenes back together afterwards to show each other (possibly using Performance Carousel).

Sound Collage

This involves building a setting or atmosphere creatively through sound effects. The sounds are usually made from the body or objects found in the room. Sounds can be repeated, overlap, be loud, quiet, and so on. The activity is usually done by a group and links to a purpose within the drama. Often the sound collage is presented to an audience who keep their eyes closed.

Still Image

A still image is of course a still picture. It is not necessarily the same as a freeze-frame. A freeze frame is a type of still image. We might ask children to make a still image and this would involve a creative devising process, whereas a freeze-frame is not planned, the children just 'freeze

Tableau

A tableau is another type of still image. It often ends up involving the whole class. It usually is built up gradually, with the addition of one or two people at a time.

Talking Objects

This involves the children portraying themselves as objects in a scene. The objects usually enter the scene one at a time. They can speak, tell you about themselves and characters and events they have witnessed. They can be questioned and can talk to each other. Characters might pass by the talking objects and the objects might speak to the character or about the character. Also, the objects can speak to each other.

Teacher in Role

This involves the teacher taking a role in the drama. They will signal clearly to the children when they are in or out of role and may use a piece of costume or prop to make this clear. The teacher only stays in role for as long as is necessary to the drama. They do not need to act, just present a set of attitudes with seriousness and consistency.

Teacher as Narrator

This involves the teacher telling, or telling back, parts of the drama as if he/she is a storyteller. This may be used to gather and share what has happened in the drama so far and to move the drama forward in time so that it does not get stuck. It enables the teacher to model narrative storytelling.

Thought-tracking

This involves speaking the inner thoughts of a character out loud and is often an opportunity offered to the whole class at a key moment. It may be that a child gets an opportunity to speak the character's thoughts aloud when the teacher is passing nearest to that child. Sometimes a touch on the shoulder is used as a signal that it is their turn to speak the thoughts of the character.

Voice Collage

This is usually carried out by a group or class. A voice collage is built up (maybe spontaneously or maybe rehearsed) that links to the drama. It involves using only voices. The voices can speak words, make sounds, repeat, overlap, interrupt, and so on. When voice collages are being performed it is usually most effective if the audience have their eyes closed.

Shape of drama lessons

Drama is physical activity. As with all physical activity you need to start with a warm up.

Warm ups can be physical (work with the muscles and parts of bodies). They can also be cognitive (work with our brains) and social (help us work with other students) and, finally, emotional (help us connect with our feelings and sense of self).

Activity	Purpose
Warm up	Prepare students physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally for drama
Focus – ideas to be explored through drama and principles of story	Introducing the elements of drama
Opportunity to explore drama elements	Student agency and discovery
Shaping ideas for sharing	Working collaboratively to share and shape drama ideas
Sharing and responding to drama of other students	Performing Responding
Cooling down and de-briefing	Cool down while at the same time consolidating learning

Warm Ups for drama

In every warm for drama you need to allow opportunities for

- physically warming up muscles, developing breath control and physical resilience and a sense of the space in which they are working
- cognitively challenging students minds - to get them thinking, to make their brains active and responsive
- socially preparing them to work collaboratively
- emotionally – ensuring that students have a sense of safe psychological space in which to take on role and explore ideas and situations

Students need to always have safe physical conditions in which to work in drama. Drama is physically active so there should be cleared spaces, no obstacles or dangers.

Safe working practices in the Arts are an essential aspect of the teaching and learning. These include providing or adapting an appropriate space to work; teaching students guiding principles to care for their voice and bodies; working safely with others and with specialist equipment; and appropriate warm-up procedures before class or a performance. Safe working practices also include the responsibility teachers and students have in the maintenance of safe social and emotional spaces for the Arts. Without this aspect of safe working practices, risk-taking becomes difficult for many students. To ensure the development of creative processes where students are willing to risk making mistakes in the Arts, teachers will need to establish and maintain a safe learning environment in the classroom.

(<http://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/p-10-curriculum/curriculum-browser/the-arts/drama3/arts-overview/ways-of-teaching>)