School Drama

John Saunders, Education Manager, Sydney Theatre Company
&
Professor Robyn Ewing, The University of Sydney
**Teacher Professional Learning Day**

**Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00am</td>
<td>Registration, tea and coffee (Large Balcony)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:15 to 10:30am</td>
<td>Welcome, Program, Overview, Research (Small Rehearsal Room)</td>
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<td>10:30 to 11:00am</td>
<td>Morning Tea (Large Balcony) Principals who cannot stay for the rest of the day are welcome to leave after morning tea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 to 12:30pm</td>
<td>Practical Workshop 1 (Two groups – SRR and The Loft)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 to 1:15pm</td>
<td>Lunch (Large Balcony)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:15 to 2:30pm</td>
<td>Practical Workshop 1 (Two groups – SRR and The Loft)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:30 to 3:30pm</td>
<td>Questions, Benchmarking, Choosing Texts</td>
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The School Drama Movie

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2pW5SZw3Dk
The context

Increasing regulatory national context. For example:

- high stakes, multiple choice testing
- pressure on teachers to teach to the test and focus on literacy and numeracy – a narrowing of the curriculum
- ongoing criticism of teacher quality
...the context

• content-laden first phase national curriculum documents that do not embed pedagogy
• A growing re-acknowledgement of the importance of the Arts in learning
• few resources for the Arts and little professional learning about the Arts for pre- or in-service primary teachers -> lack of confidence and expertise in teaching the Arts in primary classrooms
• LITERATURE an art form
At the same time...

- Slashing of support for teachers by government sector (e.g. recent cuts in NSW)
- Action learning as an effective professional learning tool for teachers (e.g. Aubusson, Ewing & Hoban, 2009)
The rationale for *School Drama*

The Arts (including literature): an underused component in primary curricula despite unequivocal evidence that student involvement in quality arts-rich experiences enhances both affective and academic outcomes (e.g. Ewing, 2010; Catterall, 2009; Bamford, 2006; Deasy, 2002; Fiske, 1999)

Drama as critical, quality pedagogy
Process/educational drama?

Use of drama/theatre strategies – a focus on process not performance – to walk in someone else’s shoes:

• to enact and explore experiences (*mime*, *improvisation*, *storydrama*, *playbuilding*)

• Embodiment (e.g. *sculpting*, *depiction*)

• Get to know a character (*hot-seating*, *thought tracking*, *role-on-the-wall*)
• Explore different perspectives (*conscience alley*, *hot seating*)
• Tell a story (*storydrama*, *readers’ theatre*, *soundscape*, *playbuilding*)
• Make decisions (*teacher in role*, *mantle of the expert*)
Drama as critical, quality pedagogy

Resonates with the elements of quality teaching and learning through:

• Engaging and motivating learners through focusing on meaning
• Improving learner and classroom communication
• Helping re–shape traditional classroom interaction
• Mediate disenfranchised children’s frustration and avoidance
• Authentic assessment strategies embedded in the learning process
  – mediate children’s frustration & avoidance
  – communicate meaningfully
Drama and English and the Australian Curriculum

The emphasis on literature – the importance of using imaginative literary texts with educational drama

The emphasis on meaning, integration and inquiry
   -> deep learning and understanding

The cross curricular emphasis on creativity
The process

- Initial TPL Day for teachers
- A focus on artists working alongside primary teachers in classrooms once a week over a 7 week time frame
- Aim is to develop teacher professional knowledge of and expertise in drama as critical, quality pedagogy as well as their confidence to embed drama strategies in English and literacy programming of authentic literary texts
No Classroom Teacher = No School Drama Workshop
1. One-day Professional Learning workshop
2. Pre-program Teacher Survey
3. Planning meetings (2 x 1hr.)
4. Pre-program benchmarking – 1 Teacher from each school
5. In-class workshops (7 x 90 min.)
6. Follow up activities
7. Post-program benchmarking – 1 Teacher from each school
8. Post-program Teacher Survey
9. Research
10. Accreditation
Literacy Outcomes

Literacy outcomes include:
- Narrative writing and structure
- Comprehension and inference
- Descriptive language
- Confidence in Oracy

Non-academic outcomes:
- Student confidence
- Class cohesion
The Sustainability of School Drama in Schools
Choosing Quality Literature
Agreements

Emailed to the Contact Teacher
Cost

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>Cost Breakdown</th>
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<tr>
<td>Two teachers</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>1st teacher – fully subsidised. 2nd teacher – $500 (equal to roughly 20% of overall cost)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three teachers</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td>1st teacher – fully subsidised. 2nd &amp; 3rd teachers – $500 per teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four teachers</td>
<td>$2700</td>
<td>1st teacher – fully subsidised. 2nd &amp; 3rd teachers - $500 per teacher. 4th teacher – $1700 (equal to roughly 75% of total cost)</td>
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Resources
Questions?