



EdVestors Arts Expansion
In-School Playwriting Residency
2011 - 2012
Madison Park Vocational Technical
High School

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Program Overview

The EdVestors Arts Expansion is a year-long playwriting residency program supported by a grant from the Boston Public Schools Arts Expansion Initiative funded by EdVestors, Inc.. Citi Performing Arts Center will design and implement this 30-week residency at Madison Park Vocational Technical High School, providing weekly instruction in theatre arts for students with a focus on playwriting skills. This program will introduce the performing arts, using local shows as inspiration, and progressively build on the skills learned; the program includes introductory courses in improvisation, acting, movement, original devising and writing. Students will utilize these concepts in the creation of original scripts that will be performed for their peers. Students will work with a teaching artist and teaching assistant; both will collaborate with the creative writing teacher to support existing curriculum and writing activities as well as cover all elements of theatre arts including performance skills, script development and playwriting.

Program Set-up

Curriculum Setup

- Offered to up to 25, 12th grade students, any level of experience
- Program Location- Madison Park Vocational Technical High School, 75 Malcolm X Boulevard, Roxbury MA 02120
- Meets once a week, for 30 weeks. October 5, 2011 – May 23, 2012
- One hour per week

Program Description

- Students will work individually and in groups
- Students will focus on working as an ensemble, developing basic performing arts skills such as improvisation, acting, movement, physical and vocal warm-ups, original storytelling, and creative expression
- Students will become familiar with basic play structure and playwriting concepts
- Students will explore how playwrights incorporate different playwriting techniques into their work
- Using writing exercises students will begin to write original scripts and create their own characters and scenes.

Program Activities

- Establishment of a safe, creative environment
- Community building exercises
- Physical/Voice warm-ups
- Movement, theater, writing exercises
- Exploration of the Aristotelian basic play structure
- Class discussion on current events or community issues

- Storytelling/reading/rapping/spoken word
- Original writing exercises
- Attendance at professional productions
- Midsession and end of session performance showcases for peers

The Curriculum aligns with The National Arts Standards set by The Kennedy Center

Theatre:

- Content Standard 1 (9-12) Script writing through improvising, writing, and refining scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
- Content Standard 2 (9-12) Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions
- Content Standard 3(9-12) Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions
- Content Standard 5 (9-12) Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices
- Content Standard 6 (9-12) Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and new art forms
- Content Standard 8 (9-12) Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present

The Curriculum aligns with standards set by the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Frameworks

Theatre

- Content Standard 1 – ACTING (PreK-12) Students will develop acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes.
 - Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices
 - Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by developing a character analysis

- Perform in a variety of scenes and/or plays for invited audiences
- Demonstrate an increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble
- Content Standard 2 - READING AND WRITING SCRIPTS (PreK-12) Students will read, analyze, and write dramatic works.
 - Demonstrate an increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble
 - Demonstrate an understanding of the playwright as a collaborating artist who works with the director, actors, designers, and technicians
 - Using the correct form and structure, collaboratively write an original script or a dramatic adaptation of a literary work
 - Using the correct form and structure, independently write a one-act play that includes fully developed characters, believable dialogue, and logical plot development
- Content Standard 3 DIRECTING (PreK-12) Students will rehearse and stage dramatic works.
 - Identify and use appropriate vocabulary to describe kinds of stage spaces (e.g., proscenium, thrust, arena), stage directions, areas of the stage (e.g., upstage, downstage, stage right, stage left) and basic blocking techniques
 - Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of the rehearsal process as a means of refining and revising work leading to a finished performance
 - Rehearse and perform a variety of dramatic works for peers or invited audiences

The Curriculum aligns with Positive Youth Development Frameworks set by the National Conference of State Legislatures

The Five Promises –developed by the America’s Promise Alliance

- Caring adults
- Safe places
- A healthy start and healthy development
- An effective education
- Opportunities to help others through service

Characteristics for Programs that Support and Promote the Positive Development of Youth – developed by The National Research Council

- Physical and psychological safety
- Appropriate structure
- Supportive relationships
- Opportunities to belong
- Positive social norms
- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill-building
- Integration of family, school and community efforts

The 40 Developmental Assets – developed by the Search Institute *(Assets listed are appropriate only to this program)*

External Assets

Support

- Other adult relationships – Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.

Empowerment

- Community values youth – Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- Youth as resources – Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- Service to others – Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- Safety – Young person feels safe at home, school and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries & Expectations

- Adult role models – Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- Positive peer influence – Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
- High expectations – Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time

- Creative activities – Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theatre or other arts.

- Youth programs – Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs or organizations at school and/or in the community.

Internal Assets

Positive Values

- Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people.
- Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.

Social Competencies

- Planning and decision making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- Interpersonal Competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- Cultural Competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Positive Identity

- Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”
- Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
- Sense of purpose—Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”
- Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Cross Curriculum Activities

- English Language Arts (Reading/Poetry/Creative Writing)
- Social Studies (Politics/Current Events)
- American History (Civil Rights Movement, Immigration, Slavery in the United States, etc.)

Presentation Activities

- Students will perform a sharing of original scripts inclusive of a multi media, live performance at the school
- Written and video blog entries by students and Teaching Artists for Citi Center website and social media pages

Activity Line

The following structure is meant to provide guidance for teaching artists to use their strengths and knowledge to develop specific activities and exercises.

Fall Semester (First 12 weeks will include three, 4 week units)

Unit One - Introduction

The program will begin with introductions, warm-ups, and exercises to create a safe space where students can work as an ensemble. This will include introducing basic theatre performance skills.

Students will discuss their knowledge of playwriting and the role that theatre and playwrights fulfill in society. Students will explore themes and topics they would like to explore in a self written play.

Unit Two – Play Structure

The teaching artist will introduce the form and structure of plays according to Aristotle and other early Greek dramatists. Students will become familiar with basic play structure and playwriting concepts including character, plot, and conflict using theatre and writing exercises.

Current playwrights will also be discussed with regard to specific writing techniques similar or different from that of early Greek drama. Playwrights can include William Shakespeare, Anna Deveare Smith, Suzan-Lori Parks, Charles Mee, August Wilson, Lydia Diamond, Tarrell Alvin McCraney and Lynn Nottage.

Unit Three – Exploration of Story and Character

Students will continue to discuss and explore themes and topics that interest them. Through movement, improvisation and writing exercises students will explore character development including individual exposition, inner life, and subtext.

The teaching artist will guide students' use of music, stage picture, creative set design and dramaturgy to support the development of students' story. Dramaturgical research conducted on the internet can be viewed in class via youtube and other theatre websites. Students can develop their characters' back story and inner life monologues and film them via flipcam.

Unit Four – Let the Writing Begin

Toward the end of the semester, students will begin to decide on the story they want to tell. They will write original scripts, creating their own characters and scenes. Multimedia elements like photo, video and sound will be included in the working script.

The semester will include a visit by a local guest artist familiar with the process students are undertaking. Students will conduct a mid program sharing for their peers at the school. Students will also be invited to attend a local professional theatre production.

Spring Semester (Final 18 weeks will continue with three, 6 week units)

Unit One - Review and Continue

Students will continue to explore how to express their ideas using playwriting, experimenting with different playwriting structures and techniques including monologues, scripted scene-work, spoken-word, and poetry.

Students will review their mid-session performance to determine what they would like to change and what they would like to keep and expand on for their final piece.

Unit Two – Revise, Confirm and Rehearse

The teaching artist will work with students to revise and edit the piece wherever needed. The arc of the final piece will also be defined and run thru rehearsals will begin. At this point in the process, no radical changes will happen to the written script -- rather additions and elaboration of ideas will be included. Multimedia pieces will also be edited and their placement in the piece will be confirmed by this time.

Unit Three – Rehearsal and Performance

Students will perform their short scripts for each other, giving each other feedback in a workshop format. With that feedback, students will continue to develop, rehearse, and edit their work in preparation for a performance sharing for their peers.

The teaching artist will continue to guide students toward the importance of rehearsal and commitment to a polished final performance.

The semester will conclude with students giving a short performance at their school inclusive of their written script and multimedia elements.

As in the Fall Semester, students will experience a visit by a local guest artist and be invited to a local professional theatre production.

Fall Semester (Unit One, Unit Two)

Unit One – Introduction

Objectives:

- Students will be able to share their names with the Teaching Artist
- Create a safe space in which they are able to make mistakes, learn together, and take positive risks
- Understand purpose of warm-up techniques
- Develop drama vocabulary and technique with a focus on the structure of plays including an introduction character and setting and concept of beginning, middle and end
- Movement Expression Exercises to prepare students for later work
 - Movement techniques used to express ideas/feelings; create meaning in movement

Activities:

- Name Game Activity
- Movement/Vocal Warm-ups (these types of warm-ups will be used at the beginning of each day to prepare students for their work and promote performance skills)
- Drama Exercises:
 - Improvisation, character/setting building, imagination exercises to prepare students for later work
- Exploration Through Drama:
 - Students write 10 lines of “the story of my life”. Using 10 written lines of their own text, students describe the last 10 years of their life
 - Students break out in groups of 5 or 6 each and share their stories with each other, reading them aloud

-The group selects one story to tell through movement; defining beginning, middle and end of the story through three or four tableau/still pictures

-Students begin to expand on their tableau work by adding background music, sound effects, and visual art depictions of their story and the inclusion of text from the original writing.

-Students share with the rest of the group and receive constructive feedback

Reflection:

- Why do we do theatre? Why is it important? Who is responsible for telling our stories?
- What do we want to communicate as a group through theatre?
- How does movement tell a story?
- How did it feel to place your story into the group's hands? Did they honor your story?
- What are some requirements of performers when telling someone else's story? What is their responsibility with other people's story?
- What is the next step in telling this story with more clarity and details? What would you add or remove?

Unit Two – Play Structure

Objective

- Become familiar with the basic form and structure of a play based on Aristotle's premise of the order of importance in a tragedy:
 - Plot
 - Character
 - Thought (relevant to the time period of the play)
 - Diction
 - Song and spectacle
- Become familiar with plot devices such as beginning, middle or emotional peak and conclusion or denouement as well as conflict, plot event and turns in the action
- Explore classical or contemporary playwrights' use of different writing techniques
- Express emotion, gesture, and relationship through movement

Activities

- Group discussion on current events that directly affect the lives of students
- Dramaturgical research on the internet of historical or current events that are similar in nature

-For example: events during the civil rights movement of the 1960's vs. civil rights violations in 2011

- Exploration through writing:

-Five minute free writing sessions with the following prompts:

I never thought...

I'm the kind of person who...

I'm scared...

All around me, I see...

I believe...

When I close my eyes I see...

-Exploration of self through free writing with the following prompts:

My name is...(write about your name-what it means, where it comes from, how you feel about it-without actually using it)

When I hear my name...

Whenever my name is mispronounced...

What does your name mean? How well does it describe you?

-Exploration of community through free writing with the following prompts:

From my bedroom window I see...

Where I'm from...

Tastes like...

Sounds like...

Feels like...

Smells like...

Looks like...

- Exploration Through Drama:
 - Returning to “the story of my life” pieces from Unit One, students review their three to four tableaux
 - Students begin writing text for each still picture, expanding on set, time, character and plot
 - Students read their scripts aloud for feedback from the group
 - Students begin staging “the story of my life”
- Students will read scenes aloud from contemporary plays

Reflection

- What is setting? Plot? Character? Why are these important to have in a play?
- How does multimedia (photos, videos, etc.) enhance a live theatre experience?
- How do you begin shaping a character?

Spring Semester (Unit Three)

Objectives:

- Students will review material covered in the fall semester
- Students will explore the importance of rehearsal
- Develop original writing pieces, scenes and monologues to express story
- Explore technology and media to enhance their story

Activities:

- Movement/Vocal Warm-ups
- Exploration of Community
 - select sections of the free writing exercises and discuss issues facing communities
 - partner and share two or three things each student can do or are doing in their community
 - define the pillars of community
- Exploration of character through technology
 - using a Flipcam, students can share their experience with exercises in the program and their connection to being a playwright
 - students will edit their videos and determine how they want their character to be perceived in the final piece

Reflection:

- Why is rehearsal important? How does an actor make the same moment fresh for each rehearsal or performance?
- What is the actor to audience relationship and why is it important?
- Does the final script reflect the voice of the group?

Resources

- *The Poetics*, Aristotle
- *Ruined*, Lynn Nottage
- *The Brother/Sister Plays*, Tarell Alvin McCraney
- *In the Blood*, Suzan Lori Parks
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, William Shakespeare
- <http://www.scriptfrenzy.org/introtoplaywriting>
- <http://www.playwriting101.com/>