

A DRAMatically DIFFERENT™ WAY TO MEET THE STANDARDS

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by **Robert Shampain, Director**, BAYFEST International Youth Theatre
(BAYFESTyouthTheatre.org, info@BAYFESTyouthTheatre.org)

The information below is meant to accompany the handout:

MAKE A DRAMatic DIFFERENCE IN YOUR CLASSROOM!™ - Using drama- and movement-based activities to enliven the classroom and support existing curriculum.

This handout contains further examples, and the “level 2” workshop goes into more depth on aligning exercises with curriculum and standards. During the **BAYFEST** teacher-training workshops, participants learn how active, verbal/kinesthetic exercises can easily be aligned to learning standards (like the “Common Core”) across subject-areas, and they will practice ways to use particular methods to address issues they want to work on in their classes.

As of the beginning of 2014, forty-five states, the District of Columbia, four US territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards. Many school districts hope and believe the Standards will help teachers and students achieve better educational outcomes; this is a goal that everyone can agree on. But there are embedded issues with any such initiative that point the way to some potential gaps, and the BAYFEST teacher-education programs have been developed to address a few of these issues.

The Standards are subtitled “*Preparing America’s Students for College and Career.*” While this goal has always been vital to a good education, the fear is that the emphasis is so heavily on “college and career” and less on the broader (and perhaps more difficult to define) idea that education must prepare young people for “Life.” The Standards do sometimes point out how certain standards link “to everyday life, work, and decision-making,” but as newly-mandated standards and assessments have increased in number and complexity over recent years, teachers often report that they feel they don’t feel they have the time or the training to include more active, drama- and arts-based activities into the school day, and that this affects student morale, readiness to learn, and the need to use different teaching modalities to address different learning styles.

BAYFEST believes that one can do both; that is, be rigorous in achieving high standards and encouraging “excellence”, while still incorporating active and fun drama, movement and other verbal / kinesthetic learning exercises into the classroom. We know that if we can train teachers to use these methods consistently in ways that do not take up lots of class time but actually enhance and even speed-up the teaching and learning process, it will achieve several important goals: Firstly, teachers will be able to find more time in the school day for things they want to do (such as remedial work with students who are lagging, or project-based learning activities); and, maybe most importantly, students will be exposed to different ways of learning and different models for excellence that will also enhance their sense of the classroom as a place where fun can happen.

Some of the exercises on the following pages reference specific Common Core Standards; others are actual examples from the “Articulate a problem; Invent a DRAMatic solution™” portion of our Level 2 teacher-training workshops.

“...Meet the Standards” examples –

NOTE: In some subject-areas like English Language Arts, justifying doing a drama or other “active arts” exercise as a way of “teaching to the standards” may seem fairly intuitive, and can often be used to move a class through an ELA unit faster than the curriculum suggests; in other subject areas (for instance science and math), using these methods may be less obvious. Below are a few examples across subject-areas.

EXAMPLE 1: A 7th / 8th-grade math teacher said that for quite a few of her students, understanding the structure of even simple algebraic equations is difficult, though that understanding is imperative to have before going on to more complex problems. The boxed text below is taken from the California Common Core Algebra I Standards, and is followed by the exercise that was practiced by the teachers as a way of addressing this standard:

Algebra: Seeing Structure in Expressions

Interpret the structure of expressions. [Linear, exponential, and quadratic]

- 1. Interpret expressions that represent a quantity in terms of its context.*
- b. Interpret complicated expressions by viewing one or more of their parts as a single entity. For example, interpret $A = P(1 + r)^n$ [a formula showing compound interest] as the product of P and a factor not depending on P .*

In our workshop, we first identified the global issue (that can be pointed out to students so they have a keener understanding of the broader usefulness of the skills they are learning): in this case “recognizing and understanding structure.” After discussion, we came up with the following exercise:

First, define the terms of the equation:

***A** is the amount of money accumulated after n years, including interest, when the interest is compounded once a year:*

***P** is the principal (the initial amount you borrow or deposit)*

***r** is the annual rate of interest (percentage)*

***n** is the number of years the amount is deposited or borrowed for.*

Have one student represent **A** and stand on a chair on one side of the room. S/he is the “goal” - an amount that you will have after investing money for a year or more. Another student (with fake money representing the amount you start with) is **P**, and stands on the other side of the room from **A**. A third student, **r**, also has fake money, and walks next to **P** as s/he moves toward the goal (“A”). Have other several other students (**n**’s) stand at intervals between **P** and **A**, each representing 1 year of time. **P** shows the group that s/he is starting with \$100. **r** will give **P** \$10 (10% interest) after they walk together “one year.” Have **P** and **r** walk to the first **n**-year person and have **r** give **P** \$10. **P** now has \$110. Point out that if **P** gives all the money to **A** now, then that’s the end of the story, and **A** will be worth \$110 after 1 year. But now have **P** and **n** move to the second person closer to **A**, who is at the 2-year mark. **r** will now give **P** 10% of what s/he currently has (let the class figure out that it’s \$11.) **P** now has \$121. This can be repeated as many times as necessary, but the idea should become much more concrete quickly. Now look back at the equation on the white-board again. The whole exercise can take 5-minutes or less, and many students will be able to understand the concept better. The teacher can then refer back to the exercise without actually doing it if a similar concept is being discussed.

EXAMPLE 2: To teach shapes and their relationships to K-1 students, the Moving Geometry exercise is a great, and can easily be aligned to curriculum and standards. It is more fully described in the **Make A DRAMATIC Difference in Your Classroom™** handout, but the basic idea is to have young students use their bodies, a string or rope to make shapes together. Depending on their age, small groups can work together, with prompts like “Make a triangle turn into a rectangle and then into an

octagon.”; “Make a square turn into cube.”

EXAMPLE 3: *“I teach Spanish – the concept of conjugation is hard for some students at first, especially when I just try to explain in words.”*

Exercise: For instance, with the verb *comer* – meaning “to eat” – have one person hold a sign with the root COM - then have an E and an R join them for the infinitive, then an O for first person singular (“como”), the E is joined by an S for 2nd person singular (“comes”); the S goes away for 3rd person singular, etc. Other active exercises (like those of the TPR - “Total Physical Response” system) can be extremely useful to the language-learning process, and mirror how we naturally learn our first language as children.

EXAMPLE 4: *“In middle school science, we have to teach about atoms and molecules and move to an understanding of how they are attracted or repelled, can react and re-combine, etc. Most of the curriculum that covers this is very detailed and can take a long time to get through. I would love some ways to speed up the process of teaching some of the basic concepts so we can move on to more fun things.”*

The “Moving Molecules” exercise (in the **Make A DRAMATIC Difference in Your Classroom™** handout) is an example of how on-your-feet kinesthetic learning can be used to teach these kinds of science concepts. Depending on the age, students can physicalize the idea that atoms and molecules are always in motion, move faster depending on temperature, are attracted or repelled from each other, combine to form new molecules, etc.

EXAMPLE 5: *“I teach dance at a charter school that has a strong dance focus but not everyone is comfortable moving. Also, getting other general-ed. teachers to see how what I do can be used in their classrooms is difficult at times.”*

Start with simple breakdowns of movement into clear categories: Fast, Slow, Normal; Laban Effort-Shapes (see charts and exercises in the **Make A DRAMATIC Difference in Your Classroom™** handout.) This vocabulary can quickly become a concrete way of giving feedback that students can more easily act on (“do it again but make the movement ‘heavier’ and more ‘wringing’.” Teachers in other subject areas will see the value of teaching Classification and a “Taxonomy of Movement” as a useful model for many other systems of classification.

EXAMPLE 6: *“How can I more fully engage that shy or ESL student who can’t or won’t be verbal?”*

Use them as the “silent partner” or “Expert” person in the Translation exercises (in the **Make A DRAMATIC Difference in Your Classroom™** handout.)

EXAMPLE 7: *“I am teaching Of Mice and Men to my 10th graders. I want to find ways of calling their attention to the larger issues of racism, age-ism and sexism in the book.”*

“Groupings games” can be a quick and easy, though often very revealing, way of focusing students’ understanding of underlying thematic ideas. Assign each character to a student and ask them to be responsible for knowing what their character does and thinks (say, after reading the first three chapters -- then repeat with additional characters as the class progresses through the book.) Get them on their feet and have them quickly separate into groups: “All male characters to this side of the room; all female characters to this side”. This might reveal the previously unnoticed fact that there is only one really important female character in *Of Mice and Men* -- “What does that say about Steinbeck and/or the world of the novel?”; Repeat with high-status characters/low status characters; rich and poor; old and young, etc.