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USING IMPROVISATION IN NON-THEATER CLASSES

The benefits of improvisation are not exclusive to theater students. Teachers of all subjects can use improvisation to engage and actively involve students in their learning. Content-specific lessons and concepts can be brought to life in an improvised performance, and improvisation can serve as an interactive assessment tool. Finally, improvisation can help all students build self-confidence, solve problems, think critically and creatively, develop strong interpersonal skills, reduce social anxiety, speak clearly, and listen effectively.

A list of subject-specific improvisation scenarios is included below. Initially, some students might feel self-conscious about participating in an improvisation. Use these tips to run improvisations with students who have limited performance experience:

- Participate in the first few improvisations yourself. Ask for a volunteer to be your partner. If no one volunteers, select one of your more outgoing students. Continue by asking for volunteers. Most students will want to participate once they see how fun it is! If most of your students are highly motivated, then pick names out of a hat.
- Provide some basic instruction on playing to an audience (e.g., projecting, positioning, movement).
- Set a time limit for each improvisation. You'll find that some students can go on forever, while some have little more to say or do after a few seconds. Set a timer for one or two minutes or any amount of time you think is appropriate for your group.

If you find the improvisation has stalled before time is up, end it yourself and either provide another situation or move on to the next players.

- Offer some positive feedback after each performance as encouragement for your players. You may also ask for some feedback from your class.

Business Education

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1. After teaching a lesson on entrepreneurship, have your students play young entrepreneurs discussing the challenges they faced when they began their businesses. Students may choose the type of business themselves, or you can offer suggestions.
2. Randomly assign students some commonly used business terms (e.g., accounts payable, cash flow, equity, net worth, return on investment), and have them play business executives using the terms in a corporate meeting. Have your students plan an agenda that would require the use of the terms during their discussions.
3. Give your students tips on effective interviewing strategies, and have your students play interviewers and job applicants for specific occupations. As an added challenge, assign specific personality traits to the interviewers and applicants, and observe how they interact with each other. Allow students to switch roles so everyone gets a chance to play both interviewer and interviewee.
4. Require each student to research a famous person in business (living or dead). Improvise scenes where you play a newspaper reporter interviewing your students as the businesspeople they've researched. You could also have other students in the class take turns playing the reporter instead of you.
5. After a lesson on résumé writing, have students play prospective applicants for different jobs who are helping each other write