

## Expert Positioning/Frame/Roles

When participants in drama activities imagine that they are other people then they take on “roles.” We make sense of the world by interpreting situations through various perspectives or social-cultural “frames.” Every professional shares ways of framing themselves in relation to activities that are part of a particular community of practice. We can harness this social reality as we position students and use drama for curricular purposes.

In the classroom, as I structure and shape activities I use my power & authority as teacher to position students. I can position students in such away that I acknowledge their expertise in the everyday world. I can additionally position students in an imagined world to acknowledge imagined expertise, and thus imagined power and authority that goes beyond what they can actually do in the everyday world. If students begin to “position” themselves in this way they will begin to develop a particular expert “frame” along with an expert “role.”

When students and teacher share an imagined expert frame they consistently position one another as colleagues with professional roles and tasks to be done. At the same time they are engaged in everyday tasks in the everyday world of the classroom that have curriculum purposes. Some of the benefits are as follows:

- **Adult power, authority and responsibility** – the eye & attitude of an expert stance towards dealing professionally with a problem
- A stance of **professional competence** towards relevant content and processes
- A need to share knowledge and ability – to collaborate with colleagues
- A need to find out and interpret information
- A **purpose** to engage in activities/tasks like reading, writing, making diagrams, drawing or interviewing
- A need to pay attention to how particular audiences will react to their work

Expert Frame	Expert Role	Enquiry Question	Activities/Tasks
Designers	Museum Curators	What should we include in a holocaust museum for children?	Select information from books; plan engaging exhibits; write descriptions;
Investigators	Newspaper photo-journalists	How should we (in 1936) report on the Dust Bowl?	Select photographs to use; plan how to interview people;
Agents	Lawyers	How can we best defend the (Big Bad) wolf?	List possible charges & defences; Interview witnesses; write reports; visit scene of crime
Care-givers	Veterinarians	How do we care for a sick tiger?	List symptoms; monitor vital signs; complete charts; consult diagrams; plan operations
Mystery Solvers	Detectives	How can we find this lost child Goldilocks?	Make a map; console parents; make wanted posters
Artists	Movie Directors	How can we turn this story into a film?	Select key scenes; select location; interview actors; revise scripts; draft promotional materials
Scientists	Insect Specialists	How can we control caterpillars on an organic farm without using chemicals?	Count number of insects; research insect food and predators; plan experiments

## **Some Important Practical Points**

- When students' frame is also one of "experts in training" or those who are "new to the job" this allows the students to be less knowledgeable and to ask naïve questions which the teacher as 'trainer" or one who is "more experienced on the job" can help to answer. This is useful when students have a low level of content knowledge or ability doing key tasks.
- When, as experts, the students are planning activities and reviewing previous work this foregrounds process and allows students to reflect, interpret, and evaluate their work – and then change it without feeling that it is 'wrong.'

## **An Important Ethical Point**

- Once students adopt an expert frame they have an implied history of past actions which reveals their professional attitude. The teacher has the responsibility to make sure that the students develop an ethical stance of high standards and quality. One effective way to set this tone is when the teacher adopts a position that is knowledgeable about the experts' past ethical actions and their existing high standards; then teacher and students can invent their professional past actions.