

BIRMINGHAM POLYTECHNIC

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

If you want children to carry responsibility in the dramas, these things must be considered:-

1. Helping them not to feel "stared at" so they do not either "pretend" or feel foolish. (Provide something they pay attention to!).
2. Create the circumstances and context which need lots of people, not a few "actors".
3. Break the events into episodes. (Drama is not the re-telling of stories).
4. Find a point of view (and lifestyle which may sustain their point of view) so that people work from attitudes first, not feelings. (Feelings grow out of attitudes).
5. Remember conflict is useless (one against you!)
Remember Tension is valuable (I'm/we're trying to do this/these things but there is this pressure on us and it makes it difficult).

Conflict is between people and therefore a bad model.

Tension is between persons and that which makes it hard to do something - such as "we have to be brave but we are frightened of". A good example of tension is the recent rail derailment - men have to move carriages from an embankment but it is very dangerous because houses may be damaged if they make a mistake. There are three types of tension:-

Formal: you cannot argue with "how things are in the nature of things" (trains bigger than people).

Informal: you have to try to get something changed. (The law is wrong etc.).

Technical: People have to win what they believe in.

These laws then come into action and bind and assist all participants

1. There must be a contract made to each and every fictional situation throughout the time of the event. (Shall we agree that ...?. Could we agree that ... ?. etc).
2. A viewpoint must be established from which we 'read', build and contribute to the events. (This is called "frame" - the window we choose to look through into the event). It offers and legitimises bias, e.g. In "Under Milkwood" the undertaker "measures people for shrouds" as they pass by - perfectly sensible in a professional!
3. Events proceed in episodes not stores (Theatre and drama are not literature-based).
4. All signs are as deliberately placed to serve need - what cannot be changed has to be agreed by all to be discounted, and usually new sign is created to become significant!.
5. The events explored must have built-in "productive tension" **NOT CONFLICT.**

These tensions will be graded to support the social health of the participants. (Cynical groups need more crude tensions than co-operative ones and the tensions need to be more crudely signed, because cynical (or rat-like suspicious spectators in any social event) refuse (naturally!) to subdue their need behaviour, in favour of any other behaviours).

6. There must always be realisation that "we create a fiction that is truthful but not necessarily true. We know we are doing it to ourselves by what it is we do NOW.
7. No-one must ever feel stared at. They must be staring at something else. (Teachers have given their pupils permission to stare at them (as have actors) but no pupil has ever given teachers permission to stare at them.
8. All information (Textual, visual, vocal) must be signed appropriately in context of the event **NOT OF SCHOOL!**.

Role Play for learning: Laws related to a determined and precise use of SIGN

"Sign" is only present when there is a reader present to read and interpret.

It is used in all social events and we survive because we constantly read and interpret the social scene. When two persons are present then sign is the way we make sense of the social encounter. When only one is present that one "reads" the environment to interpret the meaning of the place.

We need to interpret all signs all of the time because it is the way we make sense of all the situations we find ourselves in. We look for stability in sign - is it all as I left it this morning? Are they the same as they were last time I saw them?).

We also examine new 'sign' in familiar situations: ("who's been here" we say).

We also "read" all new situations minutely and bring to mind other similar occasions to assist us in making sense of the new events we encounter.

We never stop interpreting the meaning of any circumstances, unless we are dead!

The deliberate placement of "sign" for meaning is most "purely seen" in the theatre where every aspect of the social encounter in place and space is especially made - an artificially generated environment to seem authentic and truthful. Thus- all articles, spaces, artifacts, persons (clothing, gesture, space, voice, vocabulary, physique, "style", movement, silences) and language forms - "add up" to "internal coherence" in interpretation.

School has to become a place where meaning can be made as efficiently and as "healthily" as possible. It is just as artificial a place as a theatrical event, - because it has been deliberately created for changes in perspective to be engendered among social groups who learn as individuals and bring their interpretation of the situation as the means of making meaning from the complex signed event.

When one enters any public place (e.g. post office, doctor's surgery, store, office-or classroom) this interpretation begins and will reflect the bias of the reader.

Most classrooms dedicated to younger children tend towards a coherence of sign (forbidden areas are "signed", public and private territories and a fairly clearly signed stance is generated so that children quickly can predict the likely response of the adult/s, and so "feel" safe. In schools for older students (and colleges and universities!) the 'sign' is less predictable and frequently not carefully scrutinised by the leaders/tutors/teachers. But those uncherished and discounted "signs" will still form part of the interpretation made by the participants.

The basic thesis of these sessions then is that we can, if we wish to consider and take trouble, deliberately use sign creatively to attract, then intrigue, then gain interest, responsibility, concern and productive obsession from students. The signing system demands a balance between feeling and thinking in the present. So teacher and pupil talk and all the negotiations must be now/task orientated, clearly signed supportively, and by agreement everyone contracts in to the contract to only one lie: that the status of all people will be shifted

so that the pupils' position is equal to that of the teacher (in responsibility, in self and social worth, in being a person who has knowledge to bring to the current tasks and endeavours etc).

The signing which most militates against this "happy" state lies in the areas of:

teacher "spaces": (I'm the most important person in the room!);

teacher "talk": (talk to me, not each other);

teacher vocabulary: (I know more than most others here - you can tell I do if you listen);

teacher gestures: (orientate to me and I'm consistent);

teacher "rights": (to tell, to assess, to arbitrate, to supply, to give and provide);

and teacher power: to bring retribution or to protect.

The signing which assists the contract to shift these powers, most depends upon these things:-

- a) it's alright to deliberately present changing patterns of behaviour within contracts and not be "read" as foolish - to walk in others' shoes and behave as others might behave;
- b) to have many "voices" - at different powers, of styles and vocabulary, and
- c) to constantly change the working space to suit the task!