

Kristina Friedgen  
K-6 Educational Philosophy

As K-6 students begin their learning journeys, they naturally start with an individualized understanding of the world around them and grow to see their world and learning as increasingly interconnected. Drama provides students opportunities to harness their innate gift of imagination and curiosity. By developing experience with imaginative inquiry, creative problem solving, embodied practice, and collaboration, I believe drama has a unique ability to connect students to themselves, their peers, and their world, and ultimately to prepare them for life in the 21st-Century.

Drama fosters the individual student's understanding and appreciation for their bodies, voices, minds, and hearts through activities that encourage students to develop motor control, body awareness, and voice production. Each child has their own set of assets, which I am responsible for acknowledging and strengthening through differentiation strategies in both lesson development and assessment. As a teacher, I adapt curriculum goals to meet everyone's needs and abilities, while scaffolding in challenges to encourage improvement in areas of weakness. To accomplish this I integrate formative assessment strategies through my lessons to monitor student progress, design multiple forms of summative assessment, and incorporate student choice whenever possible. Drama successfully promotes students' understanding of themselves when the classroom can support some measure of student-led work—either through inquiry, practice, or reflection. As students mature in their learning, drama empowers them to become upstanders for their own learning and can inspire the confidence to express themselves physically, verbally, emotionally, as well as socially.

Drama strongly supports social-emotional learning through empathy development, collaboration, and embodied practice. Incorporating rituals and ensemble techniques into daily

Kristina Friedgen  
K-6 Educational Philosophy

classroom procedures builds community and promotes belonging, while also organically implementing classroom management structures. As 21st-century learners grow up with increasingly more technology, they are at risk for underdeveloped interpersonal skills. Through drama, students practice the responsibilities of different roles in society including performer/spectator, leader/follower, teacher/learner, among others. Activities such as group work, critical feedback, and character analysis, provide opportunities for students to learn in compassionate, inclusive groups where they practice listening to, supporting and challenging each other to be their best selves. My drama classroom fosters community in a world that is increasingly more isolated through a structured, yet creative, environment. By implementing Creative Youth Development practices, I increase intrinsic motivation, empathy, and respect amongst all students. This is accomplished through co-creating (with my students) a safe space where people can be open and honest while being intellectually challenged. I model positive relationships for my students by supporting my community of learners, encouraging their hopes and goals, and building meaningful, professional relationships with each. I see my students through an asset-based lens, which appreciates students for the strengths and experiences they bring to the group. I believe in learning as much from them as they do from me. Valuing my students as contributors to our learning environment connects students to each other as well as their environment, culture, and context.

Drama prepares students for life through games, role-play, and explorations that allow students to identify real-world problems and rehearse strategies for overcoming these problems. Through play and exploration, they gain deeper understanding of the complexities of their world. As students grow in their drama experience, they gain the ability to extrapolate the skills honed

Kristina Friedgen  
K-6 Educational Philosophy

in drama to various contexts such as effective communication, collaborative partnerships, active listening, conflict resolution, and creative ideation. Such skills prepare students to thrive in the 21st-Century, not just survive. Through drama, they imagine the worlds they wish they could inhabit and learn skills to make those imaginings reality. Drama activities that immerse students in another's life experience through role-games, engage them in relevant problem solving through process drama, or provide them chances to hypothesize and rehearse solutions to conflict situations through Theatre of the Oppressed expand their understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them and prepare them to become impassioned and compassionate citizens.

My experience as a theatre artist has taught me that none of my work is static. I continually reflect on my methods and approaches through evaluation, student feedback, formal and informal observations, and continuing education. Through such reflection, iteration, and implementation of new or revised practice, I model for my students a passion for lifelong learning grown from a place of intrinsic motivation. While I hold myself and my students to high standards that encourage them to not just meet but exceed expectations, I understand the necessity of scaffolding in support and assistance to each challenge and gradually building to student-led experiences. This is particularly important in K-6 education when skills vary from burgeoning to increased mastery. A student in my drama classroom from Kindergarten through sixth grade should be expected to communicate and advocate for themselves, practice empathy and respect for others, and question, wonder, and engage in the world around them.

Kristina Friedgen  
K-6 Educational Philosophy