

Carousel Players

... THEATRE YOU NEVER OUTGROW ...

Carousel Players Education Inclusivity Document

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Introduction

Background

Carousel Players offers a wide range of educational programs such as Summer Theatre School, after school programs, early years drama programs, and more. Through these programs our Artist Educators have had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of children and youth in the Niagara region, all of whom are unique and have individual backgrounds, abilities, and needs.

As a theatre company for young audiences, Carousel Players strives to create a culture of learning for all members of the company including the Artist Educators who work closely with youth. This inclusivity document is meant to serve all who work at Carousel Players to help them understand the varying backgrounds of our community. We use the term ‘inclusivity’ quite intentionally here; Inclusivity as a policy is the practice of providing equal access, opportunities, and resources for all youth who might be involved in Carousel Players programs, especially those who might otherwise be marginalized or excluded. Our aim for this document is to help inform all Carousel Players employees about the diverse youth we work with and how our education programs can strive for inclusivity.

Framework

This document is divided into five sections each detailing a different area of inclusion we, the education staff, felt most encapsulates the youth that engage in our educational programs. Each section has a list of best practices we have collected in our research and practices, a glossary of terms, a bibliography with useful resources and further information, and lastly our contributor experiences describing our firsthand experiences with the topic.

The first section is Accessibility & Exceptionalities, focusing on children with physical or developmental needs. The second section is English Language Learners. Our educational programs have, in the past, welcomed children from the Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre; these children are often new to Canada and may not fully understand or speak the English language. The third section is dedicated to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ children; we recognize the children we work with can often be in a period of questioning and learning about their own identities. As Artist Educators, we want to create a culture that is accepting and encouraging of individual expression. Our fourth section is Racial Inclusion and Equity, focusing on the practices that our educators can undertake to ensure that our programs represent *all* of our young audiences. Our last section is about inclusion for children from Low Socioeconomic Status and/or children who are considered ‘at-risk.’ Carousel Players often welcomes children sponsored to join

our programs from these communities, therefore it is important that our educators have an understanding of what these children experience in their daily lives.

A Living Document

Keeping with the theme of ongoing learning, we intend to see this as a ‘living document’. A living document is one that is considered never finished, and therefore open to continual editing and updates. With the topic of inclusivity, we recognize there is constant change, such as in the language or practices we use and so we hope this document is altered and improved upon regularly.

Contributor Biographies

Lindsay Detta is a performer and drama facilitator. After graduating from Fanshawe College’s performing arts program, she worked as an actor on Vancouver Island and in Toronto. Eager for more, she enrolled in Brock University’s Concurrent Education. While attending Brock, Lindsay has worked with Carousel Players as a Volunteer, Assistant Camp Coordinator (2017), and a Drama Educator (2018-Present). She was also able to successfully pursue an independent study, partnering with Carousel Players to pilot a Playwriting for Children and Youth Workshop in St. Catharines.

Nicola Franco is a performer and Artist Educator in Niagara. She graduated from Brock University with a degree in Dramatic Arts: Concentration in Performance. Since graduating, Nicola has worked with Carousel Players as an actor (2018-Present), Camp Counselor (2018, 2019), Assistant Camp Coordinator (2020), and currently as an Artist Educator for the After School Drama Program and Early Years Program (2018-Present).

Michael Metz has been the Program Coordinator for Carousel Players’ Summer Theatre School for the last 3 years. Mike has also been an Artist Educator for after school programs, such as Dungeons and Dragons. Outside of Carousel Players, Mike is studying his Masters of Education at the University of Toronto and is currently a supply teacher for the District School Board of Niagara.

Elizabeth Pereira is a Niagara-based performer and educator with a degree in English and Dramatic Arts and a Master’s in English from Brock University. She has been the Arts Education Coordinator with Carousel Players from 2019-Present. She has also worked with the company as a trained Artist Educator since 2018 for the After School Drama Program, Early Years Drama Program, and Playlinks Program, and was the Assistant Camp Coordinator for the 2019 summer camps.

Accessibility & Exceptionalities

Introduction

Accessibility in relation to students with exceptionalities and/or disabilities focuses on removing barriers that make activities inaccessible based on cognition, intellectual, and/or physical abilities. It is important that we think about exceptionalities and/or disabilities as a culture rather than as a group of people with a deficit. This reframing of thinking will assist in planning and organization when creating and implementing drama activities.

Best Practices

What can educators do to include kids with various exceptionalities of all kinds?

- Create a schedule for students to follow and present this schedule at the top of each class/session. As we know, children need and love structure. This is particularly important for children with exceptionalities because their lives revolve around structure. This includes knowing what is coming next, what happened prior, how much time will be spent on something, etc. This schedule should be a visual for students to refer to, and it is a clear and explicit way to inform students about what is going to happen and what they can expect for the lesson. You can also continually refer back to the schedule and cross out activities as you complete them to visually show what you have done and what you are moving on to.
- Create routines. Creating and utilizing routines will keep things predictable and safe for students in the classroom. This includes check ins, warm ups, moments of reflection, etc.
- Use Person-First language. For example, using the phrase “students with learning disabilities” rather than “learning-disabled students”
- Use tactile objects. Giving the students opportunities to touch/feel things will enhance their learning and give fidgety hands something to do. It can also help individuals that have poor sight with association.
- Use broader examples/topics. Incorporate examples that “the average” child may not experience. This is useful for all areas of accessibility because it provides a range of students’ experiences and opportunities for perspective taking.
- Introduce social skills and scripts. Explicitly show and teach students how to create facial expressions, use body language, and discuss what they mean (for example, you can use emoji faces and thought bubbles as references when teaching social skills). Working on social scripts such as introductions, conversation starters, classroom etiquette, manners, etc. can be helpful for students

who struggle with social engagement and social-self regulation. This can be done through drama games that focus on social skills such as games that incorporate role play, emotion levels, and character development.

- Repeat and rehearse. For some students it takes longer to process information and store it in their long term memory, so repetition and elaborative rehearsal can help them better internalize things. When concepts are repeated and connected to other ideas or aspects of the student's life, there is more opportunity for effective processing and long-term memory storage.
- Use positive reinforcement and reward systems. Focus on student strengths and celebrate their successes, even if they seem small. This explicitly tells students that they are doing something right. Continuous reinforcement may need to be incorporated at first, especially for students with behavioural disorders, eventually transitioning to intermittent reinforcement.
- Provide breaks. Give students enough breaks to recharge and rest. Create a hand gesture or safe word in face-to-face classes to indicate when students need a break. We are hardwired to resist mental effort and active engagement; the average person can only actively engage for a maximum of 10 minutes. If students have attention deficit disorders this amount of time will be quite a bit shorter.
- Provide time to think. Some students need more time to think about their response or come up with ideas, so be careful not to rush to get the first answer.
- Have an Interpreter (ASL) and/or incorporating sign language/fingerspelling. Teaching kids a little bit of American Sign Language can be fun, like when they learn a new big word. This is an inclusive practice for students who are hard-of-hearing or Deaf and it provides students with the opportunity to learn a different form of communication. Video classes could benefit from ASL interpreters for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and/or subtitles for videos is another way to assist folks who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provide accommodations for class needs. Demonstrate or provide alternative ways to participate in activities physically. This can include modified postures, body isolation, using sounds instead of words, how to do an activity seated, etc.
- Think about scaffolding. Demonstrate clear modelling of an activity, guide students through it collaboratively, then gradually release students to practice independently. You might want to think of it as: I do, we do, you do. Some students may need more time in the 'we do' part so be sure to be sensitive to this need and not rush through it. If you notice a peer is doing exceptionally well, you can pair them with someone who may be having difficulty. This will reinforce understanding for both students.
- Chunk new concepts/ideas. Introduce new ideas and concepts in smaller chunks/bits. Students can retain more information if it is presented to them in small individual groups of information.
- Communicate with caregivers. Ask questions about accommodations that they find successful and helpful for the child, or what their full-time teacher is doing. Find out about the student's strengths, readiness, and interests because building off of

these allows educators to create opportunities of success and achievement for the students.

- Use descriptive language. Clearly describe actions, textures, smells, etc. Also consider your use of language when giving instructions; describe what to do in an activity in student-friendly language by avoiding vague language and abstract concepts.

Glossary

Accommodations: The special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required to enable a student to learn and to demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter the provincial curriculum expectations for the grade.

Behavioural Disorders: Students who suffer from mental illness, those who are socially maladjusted, delinquent, or emotionally disturbed, and those who exhibit conduct disorders.

Communication Disorders: Students who have learning disabilities, those who have pervasive disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, and those who have speech and language difficulties.

Continuous Reinforcement: Reinforcement presented after every appropriate response.

Differentiated Instruction (DI): A teacher's response to learners' needs guided by general principles of differentiation. Teachers can differentiate content, process, and product according to students' readiness, interests, and learning profile through a range of instructional and management strategies.

Disability: The inability to do something specific, such as walk or hear.

Exceptionality: Students/Children who have unusually high abilities in particular areas or disabilities that impact learning and may require special education or other services. This includes Behavioral, Communicational, Physical, Intellectual, and Multiple (see Exceptionalities Graph below).



Giftedness: An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires more challenging learning experiences than those normally provided in the regular school program.

Handicap: A disadvantage in a particular situation, sometimes caused by a disability.

Intellectual and Developmental Differences: Students who are intellectually gifted and those who manifest intellectual delay.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): An education plan created by a student's teaching team (Teachers, Educational Assistants, Principal, Psychologist) that is based on an assessment of the students educational needs and strengths.

Intermittent Reinforcement: Reinforcement presented after some but not all appropriate responses.

Modifications: Changes made in the age appropriate grade-level expectations for a subject in order to meet a student's learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level and/or increasing or decreasing the number and/or complexity of the regular grade-level curriculum expectations.

Physical and Health Difficulties: Students who have genetic disorders, problems that arise from birth trauma, orthopedic conditions, and disabilities caused by disease. Usually students who have neurological disorders are included here.

Positive Reinforcement: Strengthening behaviour by presenting a desired stimulus after the behaviour.

Sensory Disability: Students who are blind and/or Deaf.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Improved access for persons with disabilities is improved access for all. Teachers plan with the academic, social, physical, intellectual needs of all students in mind.

Resources

- *Educational Psychology*. Woolfolk et al. 2020.
- *Special Education in Ontario Schools (8th ed.)*. Bennet et al. 2019.
- *Special Education Companion*. Ontario Ministry of Education (OME). 2002.
<http://www.oafccd.com/documents/SpecialEducationCompanion2002.pdf>
- *Mission to Mars: Using Drama to Make a More Inclusive Classroom for Literacy Learning*. Brian Edminston. 2007.
- *Using Drama as a tool for Inclusion within the Classroom*. David Roy. 2017.
- <https://www.theatresymposium.com/resources> (resources from a Theatre Symposium that was held focusing on Accessibility. There are access to notes on discussions and further resources)
- <http://www.vocaleye.ca/resources/> (Vocal Eye's resource page, containing many extra resources about accessibility in Theatre and Drama)
- <https://thewalrus.ca/inclusion-rick-hansen/> (Video and transcript of speaker Rick Hansen, who discusses inclusion)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ipf_gS8mozY&feature=youtu.be (A discussion about creating inclusive spaces)

- <https://raisetheflagforautism.com/toolkits/> (Resources about working with children who have ASD)

Contributor Experiences

During one Summer Theatre School program, we had a camper who had a diagnosed learning disability and could not read. They also had their Big Sister (from the Big Brothers Big Sisters program) with them. This program was heavily dependent on reading and memorizing a script. As we were heading into the first read-through, we were concerned that others might find it strange that someone else was reading for this camper. We decided to have a private conversation with the camper and ask if they felt comfortable sharing their exceptionality with the rest of the group and they said yes. When we sat down with the rest of the group, I asked the camper if they wanted to explain it or if they wanted someone else to do it. They asked their Big Sister. She explained it by first telling them about her own disability, and that everyone is different; with this particular camper, it was that she had trouble reading. The students were all immediately understanding and empathetic of the situation, and throughout the rest of the camp, the camper had help from other campers when it came to script reading. Although this situation could have gone in the wrong direction, we felt that the campers were mature enough to understand and that we would see less instances of potential bullying by informing campers, rather than keeping the reason from them as to why someone else was reading for this camper.

~ Mike

English Language Learners

Introduction

Accessibility in relation to students who are newcomers and learning English as a second language focuses on removing language barriers that marginalize these students. It is important to be sensitive to the fact that they are not fluent in the English language and are also adjusting to cultural norms associated with the new country and school/education.

Best Practices

How can educators strive to create an inclusive environment for children who are learning English?

- Give students time to think and talk. Remember these students need to think of the answer/idea and then translate it in their head before they can say it out loud.
- Speak slowly and clearly. This does not need to be exaggerated as doing so can make it even harder for the student to understand you if you talk too slowly. Speak slowly and clearly enough that students can pick out words they recognize and make connections in order to understand what you are saying to or asking of them.
- Give clear direct instruction. This ensures that students are able to understand the components of the activity and have a clear idea of what is expected of them.
- Provide visuals to support instruction. When able to, bring in visuals that correspond to the subject/topic of the lesson. This helps students make connections to their first language and ensures that they are able to have a general understanding.
- Provide translations of key words. These could be key words for the lesson (for example, if the lesson is focused on the beach you can introduce sand, water, beachball, etc.) or key words associated with drama (for example, tableaux). This also helps to ensure students are understanding and keeping engaged with the material.
- Provide opportunities for students to participate using sounds instead of only words/vocabulary.
- If students in the class speak the same language, encourage them to act as resources for one another, or pair ELL students with a student who is demonstrating high levels of success or boredom.
- Create movement-based work that does not rely on language for those whose primary language is not English. You can also use images/pictures to provide a visual and inspire the movement activities.

- Bring in different forms of art that remind ESL students of their homes, like music or poetry. Use these as tools for inclusion to help kids feel welcome.
- Use emotions for games that are more universal and easy to participate in without barriers, like 10 second emotions games for example. This is another opportunity to integrate images, like emojis, that most students will be familiar with.
- Learn some basic words from children's native languages beforehand to create a sense of welcome and inclusion.

Glossary

Balanced Bilinguals: Students who can speak, read, and write well in both their first language and in English.

Immigrants: People who voluntarily leave their country to become permanent residents in a new place.

Limited Bilingual Students: Students who can converse well in both languages but are having trouble academically.

Monolingual/Literate Students: Students who are literate in their first language, but speak limited English.

Monolingual/Preliterate Students: Students who are not literate. They may not read or write in their first language or may have very limited literacy skills. They may also speak limited English.

Newcomers: A collective term for immigrants, refugees, and others (ex: temporary foreign workers, international students, etc.) who have been in Canada for less than 5 years.

Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre: Located in St. Catharines, this non-profit organization assists newcomers to Canada with a broad range of programs and services, including English learning. Over the past few years, The Robby (a building owned by the centre) has been the home of Carousel Players' Summer Theatre School.

Refugees: People who are compelled to leave their home country because it is not safe.

Resources

- *Educational Psychology*. Woolfolk et al. 2020.
- *Special Education in Ontario Schools (8th ed.)*. Bennet et al. 2019.

Contributor Experiences

During name games and icebreaker activities for one of our first After School Drama Programs, I realised that one of the students in the group was a Newcomer to Canada and spoke very little English. As the program went on, I noticed that this student was struggling to understand instructions and to communicate with the rest of the group. There were times when no matter how slow and clear you spoke, the child just did not understand the language and would then be disengaged with the class and activities. There was another student in this group who was quite busy and got bored quickly; they also seemed to have a really unique relationship with the student who was learning English. I spoke with him and his mother about partnering the two boys for activities and asked if he would be interested in mentoring his friend through the program. He responded very enthusiastically and the mother agreed that this would work well for him. Moving forward, I paired these two boys together for most activities and the child who acted as a mentor was successfully able to explain and guide the student learning English while they created and performed various Drama sequences. I noticed a significant increase in confidence and engagement by the ELL student, which in turn made communication less stressful and fostered their success.

~ Lindsay

Inclusivity of LGBTQ+ Children

Introduction

Children identifying as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and/or any of the other gender identities and orientations) or growing up in households with (or even perceived to be) LGBTQ+ parents are subject to many forms of discrimination in most countries around the world. They are much more likely to be bullied, harassed, isolated, or subjected to violence than children who identify as and/or have parents who are cisgendered and heterosexual. Discussing the variety of gender identities and orientations in an open, informed manner can help lead to acceptance, prevent discrimination, and help LGBTQ+ children feel safe and welcome in our space.

Best Practices

What can educators do to practice inclusivity, teach, and discuss LGBTQ+ topics?

- Sexuality and gender identity are multifaceted. Avoid using gendered language (ex: girls and boys, ladies and gentlemen) and instead use gender-inclusive language (ex: welcome all, welcome everyone).
- If there are all-gender bathrooms, make sure students know where they are and that they are for everyone. Similarly, make sure students know they may use whichever bathroom they feel most comfortable in.
- Make it a practice to ask kids what pronouns they would like you to use. It is important to ask them directly rather than their parents because in some cases parents may not be aware that the child identifies with pronouns that are different from the ones they have been assigned.
- You might need to change the language around pronouns with younger children because they may not fully understand or have a grasp on the vocabulary. You can do this by leading by example to help familiarize them with the vocabulary (ex: “My name is Alex, I identify as a girl and I like to be called she/her. What about you?”). It may be confusing for some children at first but it will eventually be part of their script or schema.
- If you are unsure of a child’s pronouns in the moment, you can refer to them using their name or neutral pronouns they/them/theirs but make sure to check in about their pronouns for future use.
- Allow kids to play characters of all genders regardless of their own gender.
- Allow kids to change the gender of their character whenever they want.
- Use books and stories that have LGBTQ+ representation and/or non-traditional family structures, and that are not based or centred on the gender divide.

- If students misuse terms out of ignorance, such as conflating homosexuality and being transgender, reprimanding may discourage them from asking questions or discussing LGBTQ+ issues generally. Instead, try to find the root of the action or comment: “What made you say that about Sam?” Explain to kids the very real issues of prejudice. While prejudice isn’t a factor in every incident, it is certainly a factor in many. We all struggle with prejudice, bias, and stereotypes. Be honest with kids about your own issues and how you work to overcome them. Not everyone who struggles with bias or prejudice is “bad.” Knowing this can help kids grow to recognize their own biases and encourage them to search for common ground with others.

Glossary

Ally: Individuals who don’t identify as LGBTQ+ but support both individuals and communities who do and advocate on their behalf. An ally speaks out and stands up for a person or group that is targeted and discriminated against. An ally works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for people who are stigmatized, discriminated against, or treated unfairly.

Bisexual: Romantic attraction, sexual attraction, or sexual behavior toward both males and females, or romantic or sexual attraction to people of any sex or gender identity; this latter aspect is sometimes termed pansexuality.

Cisgender: Of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth.

Gay: A term that primarily refers to a homosexual person or the trait of being homosexual. Gay is often used to describe homosexual males but lesbians may also be referred to as gay.

Gender Identity: While the sex assigned at birth is binary, one’s gender identity is informed by how one sees oneself.

Gender Expression: How one expresses gender identity using outward appearances, behaviors, or other means.

Gender Neutral: This phrase refers to a number of different concepts, all of which revolve around neutrality. It could be used to discuss gender-neutral pronouns, bathrooms, or identities.

Heterosexual: Of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to or between people of the opposite sex.

Lesbian: A female who experiences romantic love or sexual attraction to other females.

Pansexual: Pansexuality, or omnisexuality, is sexual attraction, romantic love, or emotional attraction toward people of any sex or gender identity. Pansexual people may refer to themselves as gender-blind, asserting that gender and sex are insignificant or irrelevant in determining whether they will be sexually attracted to others.

Queer: An umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities that are not heterosexual or cisgender. Queer was originally used pejoratively against those with same-sex desires but, beginning in the late-1980s, queer scholars and activists began to reclaim the word.

Questioning: The questioning of one’s gender, sexual identity, sexual orientation, or all three is a process of exploration by people who may be unsure, still exploring, and concerned about applying a social label to themselves for various reasons.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. It is sometimes abbreviated to trans.

Transsexual: A person who experiences a gender identity inconsistent or not culturally associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Two-Spirit: A modern umbrella term used by some indigenous North Americans to describe gender-variant individuals in their communities, specifically people within indigenous communities who are seen as having both male and female spirits within them.

Resources

- “5 Ways To Make Classrooms More Inclusive” by Jenny Brundin, Oct. 26 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/26/659571443/5-ways-to-make-classrooms-more-inclusive>
- “A Teacher's Guide to Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity Terms” by Traci Lowenthal, n.d. <https://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/education-teaching-degree/lgbtq-youth/>
- “Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Students: A Teaching Tolerance Guide” by Cory Collins and Jey Ehrenhalt, n.d. <https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/TT-Best-Practices-for-Serving-LGBTQ-Students-Guide-Appendix.pdf>

Contributor Experiences

A couple of years ago Mike and I became the instructors for the 11-14 age Shaw Camp of Carousel Players' Summer Theatre School. We were fortunate to have campers who quickly became comfortable with one another, including one camper whose parents didn't know they were not cisgender. They went by a different name at camp and over the course of the two weeks they decided they preferred they/them pronouns, but made it explicit to us and the other campers their parents weren't accepting of their gender identity. While supporting them and their identity, we had to be careful to call them by their given name and pronouns in front of their parents so they would still be allowed to attend the camp. It was wonderful to see them open up and perform in roles with which they identified, and above all it was impactful for myself to see them supported by their peers and comfortable being allowed to express themselves.

~ Elizabeth

A few years prior, while working as a volunteer for Carousel Players' Summer Theatre Camp, there was a young boy (about 7 or 8 years old) who would come to camp in both 'girl' and 'boy' clothes. When they arrived everyday to camp, they would change into a particular dress from the costume bin and would express their desire to be a girl, rather than a boy. They always wanted to play with the female instructors' hair and play 'hair salon'. There was another boy, the same age who did not agree with these behaviours; he would yell at them and try to rip the dress off of them. This was very concerning because we hope to maintain a safe environment at our camp where campers feel comfortable expressing themselves. When we spoke to the parents of the child who was being aggressive they said that they would talk to their son, but ultimately it was our problem. At that time, we did not have the tools and resources to deal with this situation properly. We did the best we could with the resources available. By the end of the week, the child who was aggressive calmed down because he realised we would not tolerate his behaviour and it was not worth the trouble to bully the child who just wanted to be someone else.

~ Lindsay

Racial Inclusion & Equity

Introduction

Children should not only learn about diversity, but should also experience it. It is important that we enhance diversity on all levels - with our educators as well as the students. This means creating an inclusive environment so that when we provide the Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) community with access to drama by reaching out to them, our BIPOC students feel safe and comfortable. Our goal is to identify and eliminate embedded systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that negatively impact students/create inequitable outcomes.

Best Practices

What can educators do to teach/discuss diversity?

- Avoid the ‘colour-blind’ approach and acknowledge the diversity in the group, including the disparities.
- Emphasize similarities as well as differences and acknowledge that people are treated differently based on race.
- Learn about each others’ differences and similarities in an open and inviting way. It is important to know enough about the students we are teaching in order to properly and effectively teach them. Learning about our differences can be exciting to bring into a drama environment.
- Create culturally-relevant content that instills pride and self esteem in BIPOC and multicultural youth, for example choosing stories and plays that focus on encouraging BIPOC experiences and role models and avoiding stories reasserting BIPOC trauma.
- Give constant praise and direction to all children but especially and purposefully to marginalized youth who are often sidelined unintentionally.
- Encourage and welcome BIPOC students into the classroom. Then see, challenge, and protect them once they are there.
- Find evidence in your own educational environment to learn how you can improve. You can observe the participation in drama exercises and use those results to see where teaching reached and didn’t reach all of the students.
- Include images/imagery that are diverse in video content, storybooks, and other media brought into the classroom.
- Avoid “one-shot” days that promote a cultural group or holiday. Instead, you can incorporate, for example, Black/African history into everyday teaching and discuss the achievements of Black/African inventors, scientists, and leaders in all aspects of the curriculum.
- Promote the achievements of ALL people in society.

- Provide students with the historical background that shows why certain groups are/were treated differently. This includes encouraging skills that require students to think critically about bias and inequity.
- Provide examples of the changes we, as a nation, have made to incorporate and respect our ancestries from around the world. Examples are the acknowledged apology to Japanese Canadians and to our First Nations people for the abuses suffered in residential schools.
- Model a stance of respectful openness. Even if you disagree, strive to set a tone that maximizes the possibilities for considering different viewpoints.
- Try to anticipate the kinds of concerns or misconceptions that children and families may have toward racial equity and prepare some strategies in advance for responding. This can include recalling experiences that have expanded your own thinking about these issues and consider sharing the story of how your perspective has grown and changed.
- Know that the coordinator or manager is available, either in person or over the phone, to communicate with families about their perspectives on the curriculum. If you choose to communicate with a family, email communication can often amplify disagreements so try to keep communication face-to-face if possible.
- Practice ‘*Brave Spaces*’. Brave Spaces function to recognize and name harm, where folks can feel okay with saying “that hurt or offended me” and get back to the work of productive, transformative conversations, where we build critical connections, where it doesn’t matter what your intentions are-what matters is what impact your words of behaviour create (*Mastrangelo, Teaching Resistance, 2019, p. 57*). The focus and importance should be on the IMPACT of words/behaviours over the INTENTIONS behind them.
- You can create ‘*Community (or Classroom) Agreements*’. Some of this will be internal work and some is external behaviour. You can begin the first few lessons with reviewing the Agreement as reinforcement. You are also encouraged to include IMPACT over INTENTIONS in this agreement. Some questions you might ask when crafting these with the class:
 - How do we create a space where people can take creative risks?
 - (Adaptation for younger kids: What can we do to make sure everyone feels welcome?)
 - Where people can share their personal and political (often interconnected) beliefs and experiences as safely as possible?
 - In what ways can we show each other respect and care?
 - What are some principles we want to follow and what do those look like in our classroom space?
 - (Adaptation for younger kids: What rules can we follow that will help everyone feel like they can share ideas in our classroom?)
 - What processes should we have in place for when someone (including instructors) says something that is hurtful to someone else?

- (Adaptation for younger kids: What can we do if someone feels hurt by another person's words?)

Exploring Implicit Bias

- Although prejudice is often viewed as explicit (ex: someone making a racist comment or holding negative views of specific groups of people), many people can be prejudiced implicitly, or without knowing it. Know that no one is entirely neutral, thus we all have biases towards specific things or groups and are sometimes completely unaware of them.
- Know that implicit bias holds real world consequences. For example, using computer simulations researchers have found that implicit bias against Black people is related to believing that a Black person is likely holding a gun (instead of a comb or other harmless item), and thus are more likely to shoot Black (vs. white) people. This is an example of an implicit bias that explains why many white women in 2020 have been featured in the news for calling the police on Black men without sufficient reason. They may not even be aware of their bias, but could be more afraid of Black men compared to white men, and thus request police presence without sufficient cause.
- It is important that we all understand our levels of unconscious bias so that we can become more aware of when we are accidentally acting negatively towards/holding harmful beliefs against a specific group of people.
- If you are interested in assessing your own implicit biases you can visit this site to take a test that will give you more insight:
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/canada/selectatest.jsp>

Glossary of Terms

Anti-Black Racism: The name of a specific form of racial prejudice directed towards Black people. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices so much that it is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger white society (African Canadian Legal Clinic).

Antisemitism: Discrimination against, latent or overt hostility, or hatred directed towards Jewish people for reasons connected to their religion, ethnicity and/or their cultural, historical, and intellectual heritage.(Canadian Race Relations Foundation).

Antiracist: One who expresses the idea that racial groups are equal and *none needs developing* (see definition for Assimilationist), as with assimilationist behaviour, and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequality.

Assimilationist: One who expresses the racist idea that a racial group is culturally or behaviourally inferior and is supporting cultural or behavioural enrichment programs to develop that racial group.

Brave Spaces: Environments in which uncomfortable, even harmful ideas and expressions are not necessarily prohibited. Rather, they are named and openly acknowledged for what they are in the express service of ultimately creating new, transformative conversations and deep mutual community support.

Collective Impact: An approach to tackling deeply entrenched, complex social problems defined by the collaboration of individuals across government and community. It is based on a recognition that achieving lasting social change, such as eradicating racial inequities within any one system (ex: child welfare, justice, education, etc.), requires addressing interlocking and interdependent systems beyond it.

Colonialism: A practice of domination that involves the subjugation of one people to another. Settler colonialism — such as in the case of Canada — is the unique process where the colonizing population does not leave the territory, asserts ongoing sovereignty to the land, actively seeks to assimilate the Indigenous populations, and extinguish their cultures, traditions, and ties to the land.

Colour-blind Approach: A way of thinking about everyone as a people rather than their groups (ex: seeing a Black female as simply a *person* and not acknowledging their identities as a Black individual and female). Although this sounds like an effective approach to reduce prejudice/discrimination, this does not work. The brain categorizes people by their groupings regardless of intention. This can also cause complacency; when we start to think that everyone is the same, then we do not need additional resources to account for their inequitable treatments in society. This approach is harmful to racialized students because it denies their greater identity.

Community Agreement: A living document that can be revised as you go along. It includes ongoing practices, processes, and principles that everyone in the group/community creates together in order to have an inclusive and healthy creative space.

Disproportionate: The overrepresentation of a particular group of people in a particular program or system, as compared to their representation in the general population.

Diversity: Understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing our individual differences. The following can be considered: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It can also include differences that are entirely personal, such as personality, style, and ability.

Implicit Bias: Having attitudes towards people or associating stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge. (perception.org)

Indigenous: A collective name for the original people within Canada and their descendants. This includes First Nations (status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit.

Intergenerational Trauma: Usually seen within a family in which the parents or grandparents were traumatized, and each generation of that family continues to experience trauma in some form. Direct survivors of these experiences often transmit the trauma to later generations when they don't recognize or have the opportunity to heal or address behaviours. Over the course of time these behaviours, often destructive, become normalized within the family and their community, leading to the next generation suffering the same problems (Kevin Berube, Director of Mental Health and Addictions at Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre).

Intersectionality: A concept that acknowledges the ways in which people's lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations which, together, can produce a unique and distinct experience for that individual or group. In the context of race, this means recognizing the ways in which people's experiences of racism or privilege, including within any one racialized group, may differ depending on the individual's or group's additional intersecting social identities such as ethnicity, Indigenous identification, experiences with colonialism, religion, gender, citizenship, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation.

Islamophobia: Includes racism, stereotypes, prejudices, fear, or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic, and societal level (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2015, Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed).

Marginalization: Refers to a long-term, structural process of systemic discrimination that creates a class of disadvantaged minorities. These groups become permanently confined to the margins of society; their status is continually reproduced because of the various dimensions of exclusion, particularly in the labour market, but also from full and meaningful participation in society (Grace Edward Galabuzi, 2006, Canada's Economic Apartheid: The Social Exclusion of Racialized Groups in the New Century).

Multiculturalism: The existence and state recognition of multiple cultural traditions within a single country. In 1971, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy. In doing so, Canada affirmed the value and dignity of all Canadian citizens respectful of their ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences.

The 1971 Multiculturalism Policy of Canada also confirmed the rights of Indigenous peoples and the status of Canada's two official languages.

Race: A term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits (phenotypes) such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has chosen to emphasize with significant consequences for people's lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place, and can overlap with ethnic, cultural, or religious groupings.

Racialization: the act or process of imbuing a person with a consciousness of race distinctions or of giving a racial character to something or making it serve racist ends.

Racial Equity: Refers to the systemic fair treatment of all people that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.

Racialized (Person): Often used to stand in for "visible minority," this more fluid term acknowledges that race is a social construction that can change over time and place. It can be applied to people who have racial meanings attributed to them as a group in ways that negatively impact their social, political, and economic life (ex: Black, Asian, Muslim and Roma).

Racism: Refers to ideas or practices that establish, maintain, or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another.

Social Inclusion: A concept based on notions of belonging, acceptance, and recognition that entails the realization of full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural, and political institutions. It is about recognizing and valuing diversity and engendering feelings of belonging by increasing social equality and the participation of diverse and disadvantaged populations.

Systemic Racism: When institutions or systems create and/or maintain racial inequity often as a result of hidden institutional biases in policies, practices, and procedures that privilege some groups and disadvantage others.

Segregationist: One who expresses the racist idea that a permanently inferior racial group can never be developed and supports policy that segregates that racial group.

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Contributor Experiences

This document became an apparent need out of the political climate we experienced in the summer of 2020. The Black Lives Matter movement and the unjust treatment and tragedies of many Black people in North America came to the forefront of the social conscience. Countless lives had been lost and many Black voices were being silenced daily. Protests broke out across the continent and offered a demonstration of Black lives needing to be heard and valued, as well as for justice to be served to those who were not being held accountable for their harmful actions. We as a company came together to discuss the movement and chose to commit ourselves to doing our part for not only the Black community, but for all marginalized folks. We created this document to acknowledge the importance of us as a predominantly white company (as of 2020) to practice racial inclusivity among not only our educational programs, but within the staff as well. The Black Lives Matter movement has forced those of us in positions of privilege and power as educators to reconsider our own implicit biases and work towards creating an overall more inclusive environment for all children.

~ Nicola

Inclusion for Low Socio-Economic Status & At-Risk Children & Youth

Introduction

Families with low socioeconomic status may not have as much access to financial resources as others. Some of the barriers children from these backgrounds face more often than others include Financial barriers, Transportation, Time, Food Access, and Social barriers. Families facing financial barriers may not be able to afford programs, shop at higher price point grocery stores, or be able to purchase school supplies and other items. They may also face transportation barriers because their families may not have a vehicle, may share a vehicle, or might take public transportation. Time can also be a barrier, particularly for caregivers who work longer hours or spend more time travelling using public transportation. Food access becomes a barrier when families struggle to afford lunches or extra snacks for their children to have while at school or enrolled in a program.

Sometimes children from these backgrounds may also be considered “at-risk” youth, meaning they are exposed to more factors that make them susceptible or at risk for poor health, addiction, poverty, behavioural disorders, and more. They may also have had adverse childhood experiences (ex: experiencing traumas at a young age). At-risk children and children who have had adverse childhood experiences may face social barriers as they do not always have the same level of social skills as other children their age. As educators it is important for us to be considerate of the many factors impacting and influencing the children we are working with.

Best Practices

What can educators practice, teach, and discuss for at-risk children or children from low SES to making positive changes to improve the lives of those children and families?

- Have compassion; be considerate and understanding if children are in a bad mood. Consider there may be outside motivations/reasons for their attitude (family situations, etc.) and don't take it personally.
- These children may act out more, feel like they don't fit in, or don't know how to handle a situation. They may withdraw or become very emotional about something small. In any of these cases, let the child know you're there with them by checking, asking how they are doing, seeing if they need a short break, or if they need to talk.

- At the start of each class, provide a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for children and ensure they know that if they need help with something, or to talk for example, that they can come to you.
- Avoid using words such as “parents” or “mom and dad” as some kids may be in kinship or foster care. Consider instead using or integrating terms like “guardians,” “caregivers,” or “family.”
- Be cognisant when making/creating activities that not all children had the opportunity to experience certain luxuries, such as vacations. Instead of focusing on vacations or travel you could discuss local adventures with families or friends.
- Be considerate of the fact that some kids may not own many supplies or a range of different clothes or costume pieces. Know that they may be limited in their selection of clothing, so don't make very specific requirements for costumes. Provide costume pieces and only ask for them to bring basic pieces, such as a black shirt.
- Intersectionality can often happen for children between their socioeconomic status and race. Consider the multiple identities kids have and how that might impact them differently.

Glossary

At-Risk: Youth/kids who are exposed to factors that make them more susceptible or “at-risk” for health problems, addiction, poverty, and adverse life experiences.

ACE: Adverse Childhood Experiences. The more ACE a child has had at a young age in their life, the more susceptible they are to a variety of risks (ex: mental health challenges, physical health challenges, etc.).

BBBS: Big Brothers Big Sisters is an organization that matches young people (“Little Brothers/Little Sisters”) to positive adult mentors (“Big Brothers/Big Sisters”) through individual matches or group programming.

The Boys and Girls Club of Niagara: One of Canada’s largest child and youth-serving agencies. It is a charitable, community-supported organization that provides a broad spectrum of services for children and youth 0 – 24 years of age including food, shelter, transportation, childcare, aquatics, recreation, physical activity, leadership, and life skill programs.

FACS: Family and Children’s Services Niagara is among Niagara’s largest child and family-serving organizations that offers a wide range of programs that protect children.

Kids in Care: Children/kids who are fostered by a family or under the care of an organization such as FACS.

Kinship Care: When kids are being cared for by someone other than their biological parents (ex: with grandparents, aunts, or uncles).

RAFT: The RAFT is an organization operated by the Niagara Resource Service for Youth. It contributes to the welfare of Niagara’s community by helping at-risk youth, families and neighbourhoods become independent and self-sufficient.

Socio-economic Status (SES): Social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation.

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Contributor Experiences

Being part of Summer Theatre School, I have seen first-hand how impactful the arts can be for kids in low SES circumstances. These experiences personally impact me, as I grew up in a low SES neighborhood and had friends who were labelled ‘at-risk’. It is great that Carousel Players is able to offer a number of free spots in camp to Big Brothers Big Sisters, FACS, and the Niagara Folk Arts Centre; these spots have a direct impact on the kids, particularly socially. One year a camper received his spot through his Big Brother and it was really wonderful to see him open up and feel supported by the other campers. He ended up becoming good friends with everyone and when he performed a rap, he was backed up by a trio of girls and the rest of the campers.

~ Elizabeth

My first year as Coordinator of Summer Theatre School, I learned about our bursaries program - that families who could not otherwise afford to attend could send their children for free. What I quickly became aware of was that not all kids who attended made the choice themselves. This quickly became apparent when one camper for our Musical Theatre Camp told us that he had little to no interest in musical theatre or singing

in general. Through getting to know the child and creating a welcoming space, we learned that he played piano. Through this, we were able to accommodate the child by allowing his performance to be a piano solo, rather than forcing him to sing. As it happened, by the end of the camp he became more confident and asked to sing as part of the group number.

~ Mike