Welcome to the stage!

I am honored present to so many veteran educators. I am excited to share with you my passion for the dramatic arts, its usage, and some of the benefits it can bring to your students. I run an “open door” classroom, so I encourage you to participate, share your experiences, ask questions, get involved, and most of all, have fun!

Below is an outline of what we will be discussing in this session. The pages that follow will go along with the power point presentation.

• What is “Dramatic Arts”, and why should I teach it?
• What benefits can be gained by using drama?
• How can I start applying drama in my classroom/school? Where do I begin?
• How can I do all this on my own? Time?
• Are there any resources that can help me?

Before we begin, I want to ask you:

What is your opinion of drama in schools? Is there a need for it?  ______________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

Are there any benefits in using drama in the classroom? List them. _____________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

Do you feel that there is a need, or students would like drama at your school?______________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

How would you use drama in my classroom/school?__________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________________________

“I was lousy in school...I was antisocial and didn’t bother with the other kids. A really bad student...I didn’t know what I was doing there. That’s why I became an actor.”

-Sir Anthony Hopkins
What is “Dramatic Arts”, why should I teach it?

Dramatic Arts is an important means of stimulating **creativity** in problem solving. It can **challenge** students' perceptions about their world and about themselves. Drama can provide students with an outlet for emotions, thoughts, and dreams. A student can, if only for a few moments, **explore** a new role, try out, and experiment with various personal choices and solutions to very real problems. Problems from their own life, or problems faced by characters in literature or historical figures. This can happen in a **safe atmosphere**, where actions and consequences can be examined, discussed, and in a real sense **experienced** without the dangers and pitfalls of the “real world.” This is perhaps the most important reason for drama in schools today.

Still there is far more that drama can do. At the center of all drama is, **communication**. Like all the arts, drama allows students to communicate with and understand others in new ways. Perhaps more than any other art form, drama also provides training in the **very practical** aspects of communication. Students who have participated in dramatic activities are less likely to have difficulty **speaking** in public, will have to put themselves in others’ shoes and relate to them, and will have a more positive, **confident** self-image. Once they feel accepted and a part of something, their self-image and self-esteem are off the charts.

Participation in drama requires **self control** and **discipline** that will serve the student well in all aspects of life. Students in drama will learn to **work together**, to cooperate, to find the best way for each member of a group to contribute, real teamwork. Drama requires students to **listen** to and **accept** the viewpoints and contributions of others.

Drama is an important tool for preparing students to live and work in a world that is increasingly team-oriented. It helps students develop **tolerance** and **empathy**. In order for a student to play a role competently, they must be able to understand how the world looks through that character’s eyes. They must be able to show true empathy, not taught in other subjects.

Drama can **reinforce** the rest of the student’s curriculum. Since communication and empathy are central to the Dramatic Arts, a student who has explored drama will have an easier time putting themselves in the shoes of those they will study about in English and history. Drama promotes a greater depth of understanding and a marked improvement in **retention**. Students develop both an **understanding** of and **appreciation** for literary genres and for particular works of fiction by writing scripts from fiction or writing fiction descriptions from play scenes and then performing them.

Drama encourages students to **explore**, **clarify**, and **elaborate** **feelings**, **attitudes**, and **ideas**. Because drama requires students to **organize**, **synthesize**, and **articulate** their **ideas**, it provides an excellent opportunity for reflection and evaluation at the conclusion of a unit of study.

In all, drama accomplishes several goals at once **enriching** a student’s school experience.
What benefits can be gained by using Dramatic Arts?

Below is a sample of research done revealing the benefits of drama:

1. Beales, Joseph N; Zemel, Brook. Title: The effects of high school drama on social maturity. Source: School Counselor. Vol 38 (1) no. 1 (Sep 1990) p 46-51
Abstract: Hypothesized that 20 9th-10th graders in a high school drama program would show significant increase in social maturity compared with 20 students who did not participate. Measures included the CA Psychological Inventory and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Test. Conclusion: Significant improvements were noted for drama students in the areas of social presence, tolerance, and achievement via independence.

Abstract: Describes the implementation in Grades 2 - 5 of a program that uses stage presentations to teach students. Conclusion: Use of the stage to empower students gets them actively involved with learning; they build self-esteem while developing interpersonal skills and self-confidence.

3. Saldaña, Johnny. (1995) Title: Drama of Color. Portsmouth: Heinemann. Abstract: Saldaña discusses a study done Gourgey, Bosseau, and Delgado (1985) with lower socioeconomic students in elementary school. After a six-month improvisational drama project, gains were observed in vocabulary and reading comprehension. Survey results also suggested that students showed improvement in attitude areas including trust, self-acceptance, and acceptance of others. Another study was conducted by researchers Shacker, Juliebo, and Parker (1993). Third graders were immersed in a French language acquisition program with social studies through drama. The use of memorized play scripts assisted with recall of French language months later.

4. Kennedy Center For The Arts. (1999) Title: Champions of Change. Abstract: Seven major studies examined the role of Dramatic Arts education on the academic, behavioral, and thinking lives of children. Conclusion: Sustained student involvement in theater arts (acting in plays and musicals, participating in drama clubs, and taking acting lessons) associates with a variety of developments for youth: gains in reading proficiency, gains in self-concept and motivation, and higher levels of empathy and tolerance for others. A co-relationship between high involvement in the Dramatic Arts and better academic scores was found among all students. High level of involvement in theater co-related to high levels of achievement in reading proficiency.

Such studies like these show evidence that Dramatic Arts can be greatly beneficial to many types of students. How ironic, when most public schools, in budget crisis, drama is the first to go.
Decide which form of Dramatic Arts below will best suite your style and your students.

**Creative Drama:** Creative drama is a great teaching tool for all ages of children, grades K-12. It can include dramatic play, story enactment, imagination journeys, theatre games, music, and dance. "Let's pretend" is the norm in creative drama class, not just a child’s game. Because the emphasis in creative drama is process rather than product, teachers have the freedom to take as much time as needed with their classes. When a student in a creative drama class prefers to watch instead of participate, because of shyness or fear, a teacher can allow it. This way the child is given time they need to overcome their inhibitions. This freedom applies also in the opposite situation, when members of the class are extremely willing and skilled at dramatic activity. The teacher can become a participant and let the children lead the activities rather than being guided through them. Creative drama can help children learn about emotions, problem solving, and relating to other people. By using drama in the classroom, students can better develop their imaginations and their confidence without worrying about the wrong or right answer. Classroom drama is not learning about drama, but learning through drama.

**Reader’s Theatre:** Reader’s theater was developed as an efficient and effective way to present literature in dramatic form. Today as well, most scripts are literary adaptations, though others are original dramatic works. In Reader’s Theater, students "perform" by reading scripts created from grade-level books or stories, generally without benefit of costumes and props. The goal is to enhance reading skill and confidence through practice with a purpose. Reader’s Theater gives students a real reason to read aloud. It makes reading fun for children!

**Children’s Theatre:** Offer an after school drama club. A small fee may be charged to cover production expenses. Here students can audition, rehearse, and perform plays not only for their families and friends but also for the community. This is a great way to showcase your school’s talent. Ask parents to assist in building sets, props, and costumes. These can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose. If you are going to produce a full-length play, you will need a support group. So start networking in the beginning. This is a good time to get your administration involved as well. If nothing else, just get them updated on your program so there aren’t any surprises. Such as a parent who thinks your audition process is unfair because their child didn't get the leading role. Involve your students in as many ways as possible. Even if it is out of your comfort zone. Remember this is a learning process for all. When you feel your students are ready, perform your play for a school assembly, or at a local public library or retirement center. Invite local businesses to sponsor ads in your program. Be sure to call the local newspaper to come and do a story on it. What a great way for community outreach!

"Tell me and I will forget.  
Show me and I will remember  
Involve me and I will understand"

- Chinese Proverb
Online Resources for Dramatic Arts

1. www.childdrama.com
   Ready to use resources for applying drama in the classroom, or after school.

2. www.angelfire.com/ego/edp303/
   Good resources and insight for using drama in the traditional classroom. Lots of lesson plans!

3. www.aaronshep.com
   Resources for Reader's Theatre, including ready to use free scripts.

4. www.lisablau.com/freescripts.html
   More ready to download free scripts. Great scripts for each month!

5. www.library.thinkquest.org/5291
   Wonderful resource for using Creative Drama in the classroom. A super site for those using drama for the first time!

6. www.cre8tivedrama.com
   Drama structures, teaching tools, programs, and more all in this site. This site is packed full of resources!

7. www.aate.com
   The American Alliance for Theatre and Education. The leading national organization for theatre educators, theatre artists, and educators who use drama and/or theatre in the classroom.

8. www.faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu/theater/tya
   Children’s Theatre webpage full of resources and information.

9. www.applays.com
   The first publishing house to concern itself primarily with quality theatrical literature for young audiences. Scripts and royalties can me purchased online.

10. www.dramatists.com
    Another good publishing company that offers many great scripts to use for children's theater
    Scripts and royalties can me purchased online.

11. www.dramaticpublishing.com
    One of my favorite script publishing resources. Great customer service and assistance. Full of wonderful plays!
    Scripts and royalties can me purchased online.

12. www.pioneerdrama.com
    Several theatre for youth categories. There is also a search engine. Good site.

13. www.samuelfrench.com
    One of the U.S.'s oldest play publishers. Scripts and royalties can be purchased online.

14. www.upstagereview.org
    A comprehensive resource for anyone desiring to produce quality theatre on a shoestring budget.