

**Professional Development – Lesson 2**

**10 Strategies to Make Your Theater Department More Inclusive with Fran Sillau**

**Lesson Recap:**

**1. Include ALL arts disciplines.**

- Develop ways to authentically include the visual art arts students on aspects of the scenery and music students on the sound effects.
- Devise ways for the dance team members to choreograph one dance to take some of the load off you as the teacher.
- Invite students from other art forms to join the ensemble to encourage friends of members to join.

Why should I try to reach out?

- Enabling these opportunities helps to create important intersections within the arts disciplines.

**2. Collaborate with student groups.**

- Reach out to class sponsors to enable marketing opportunities for your production.
- Create opportunities for clubs to sell items in the lobby before the play.
- Promote goodwill and a positive school community through theater.

Why should I collaborate?

- Collaboration shows your program's investment in the school, which in turn will come back to you in positive ways.

**3. Find ways to be authentically inclusive.**

- Develop collaborations that enable inclusive and self-contained special education students to learn drama and theater skills at their own pace.
- Provide opportunities for leaders in your program to help teach theater games to special education students.
- Find ways for special education students to share their strengths.

What does successful inclusion look like?

- Successful inclusion looks different in every situation, so use instinct and check in with your colleagues to ensure things are going well along the way.



**4. Collaborate with non-arts colleagues.**

- Team up with your non-arts colleagues to conduct dramaturgical research that will enhance your production.
- Teaming up can give your actors new understanding of their roles.
- Teaming up makes learning come to life for non-theater students.

This seems like a lot of work, so is it worth it?

- This collaboration bears fruit in the short and long term because it can directly and indirectly bring students into your process that many not have previously joined.

**5. Create Joint Fundraising Opportunities**

- Fundraising is hard, especially for busy educators, so partner with other colleagues to create fundraisers for both of your departments.

Are joint Fundraisers worth it? Is this misplaced or needed?

- Only the teacher can decide if something is worth, but some money is better than no money.

**6. Deepen Student Learning**

- Create opportunities for students to learn about cultures that are not their own.
- Reach out to community organizations that can give you insights to authenticate your production.

Finding collaborators is overwhelming. Where do I start?

- Begin your search with Google.
- For example: If you are producing a play about the Holocaust, visit The Institute for Holocaust Education website.

**7. Do Your OWN Research Regarding Marginalized Groups**

- Don't shy away from the important issues' theater can raise.
- Be ready to collaborate with professionals to help you answer the hard questions.
- Do your own homework. Please do not go to your marginalized students for the answers.

How do I find those collaborators?

- Let Google be your start.
- For plays involving justice against marginalized groups, you might reach out to The Anti-Defamation League: <https://omaha.adl.org/>



**8. Utilize Universal Design for Learning:** <https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

- Developing accessible scenery from the start can ensure every individual can authentically utilize the entire stage.
- Designing accessible scenery can evolve into interesting stage pictures.
- Creating accessible scenery reinforces positive representation.

What if the scenery is not perfect?

- You can be a little UDL and you can be a lot UDL. You can use the part of the framework that works for you and leave the rest.
- There is no such thing as perfect accessibility. Just try your best to make sure that all students can fully access the scenery.

**9. Showcasing Student Writing**

- Invite student writers to contribute to your program.
- Invite friends to collaborate on writing short stories that can be developed into short plays.

What if the stories do not fit the play I am producing?

- You can always give prompts that pair with the themes of your play.
- And remember that the play is not always the “thing.” Serving the students is the “thing”.

**10. Find opportunities for student leadership.**

- Take pressure off yourself to do everything, give leadership to student leaders when you can.
- Remember that by giving away your power, you are creating the leaders of tomorrow.
- Do what is best for you and your students.

What if I cannot give students full control of an aspect of the show?

- The students do not have to direct a whole scene, they just need to feel like they can lead for a short moment and feel successful doing it.





## Theater Essentials Online

### Creative Extensions:

- Analyze and discuss the theater program at your school. What about the program promotes inclusion? What are areas that could be improved?
- Write a dialogue with 2-4 characters inspired by the themes of a performance at your school. Brainstorm ways to showcase this original work for your school community.

