

21st Century Skills in Drama and Theatre Arts

The drama and theatre arts subcommittees embedded 21st century skills, school readiness, and postsecondary and workforce readiness skills into the revised standards utilizing descriptions developed by Coloradans and vetted by educators, policymakers, and citizens.

Colorado's Description of 21st Century Skills

The 21st century skills are the synthesis of the essential abilities students must apply in our rapidly changing world. Today's students need a repertoire of knowledge and skills that are more diverse, complex, and integrated than any previous generation. Drama and theatre arts are inherently demonstrated in each of Colorado's 21st century skills, as follows:

Critical Thinking and Reasoning

As this century progresses, it becomes clear that the world needs citizens who are able to penetrate unfolding of events and conflicts with pure thought. The greatest exercise for the development of solid rationalization and logical solution has to do with problem-solving and critical response. Whether searching for strong or better choices in production or dramatic literature, or exploring the spontaneous ingenuity of improvisation, the mind is engaged in analytic and logical examination. Through script analysis, character analysis, design interpretations, or marketing planning, the theatre student develops practical thinking skills along with the ability to respond through writing, speaking, and logical expression. Equal to the ability to develop thought through observation and the identification of substantive ethic in plot, character, or style is the mindfulness of how one's choices affect others within the theatre group and from an audience's perspective. Once the mind is engaged through decision-making in writing, directing, acting, critiquing, using mathematics in design and construction, or simply attending a performance, the theatre student is developing abilities and skills that serve society to progress and evolve, to be flexible in solving cultural conflicts, and to celebrate the uniqueness of the individuality and the common bond in humanity.

Information Literacy

Processing the awareness and demands of an ever-changing, modern world is more and more a function of an individual's ability to respond to what the world offers with one's foundation of knowledge, imagination, inventiveness, and attention to detail. The research required to master a faction of theatrical endeavor entreats the student to utilize all the sources available for study and to know the laws and limitations relevant to their audience, community, and culture. Theatrical production, as well as study in history and criticism, demands knowledge of customs, ideals, and technologies. Theatre students must use their knowledge from all other disciplines, including history, politics and social studies, mathematics and science, and media technology and mass communications in order to create and to understand their roles and created environments. These bodies of knowledge must be enhanced by skills and awareness in knowing where and how to find the information and how to discern its truth and relevance. What follows lies in knowing how to utilize the information in writing, characterization, directing, designing, and fashioning implements and environments. Theatre expresses the differences of time and cultures from all over the world and the spectrum of disciplines from all of history.

Collaboration

The spirit of collaboration lives in the very heart of theatre study. Theatrical production includes a dynamic mix of all the arts – as visual art, music, dance, and literary works are all embraced to recreate stories of the human condition. The study of theatre arts is a group dynamic. To produce theatrical works requires an interaction of artists and technicians from many different disciplines. This interaction is inherently related to the interaction our young citizens will encounter in their roles as citizens. In preparation for a theatrical event, planning, staffing, and practicing are required of the entire company of actors, artisans, managers, designers, technicians, and marketing specialists. The result of this intense collaboration is an understanding and appreciation of leadership, talent, and reliability. A work of theatre for an audience is the reenactment of conflict and consequence in time and space as interpreted by the group in plot, characterization, and spectacle. This provides the essence of understanding and loving in a community bound together by language, custom, age, gender, history, race, or privilege.

Self Direction

The guiding lights for students of theatre are in learning the concepts of initiative and responsibility. Because of its collaborative nature and that a task must be completed on time and out of one's own initiative, theatre production is an invaluable tool for developing the personality and sense of community responsibility. Each individual finds an important place to contribute to the whole of the project, and each one learns to express himself or herself to their best sense of excellence for the good of the entire company. For personal growth, theatre equips the participant with the communication skills and the ego strength to make mature choices and evaluations. As theatre students progress from learner to leader, they have the opportunity find their gifts and individual talents. Theater students learn to rely on themselves and to trust the response of their community of artists and their audiences. To stand in the midst of fellow students, teachers, and administrators, or face an audience and deliver the fruits of their labor and study is the most internally strengthening human activity. Students of theatre can rely on this strength for self-expression and self direction, and those qualities stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Invention

Exercising the creativity and inventiveness of the human soul begins at the very first stages of theatre study and continues beyond the high school years. The actor learns to take risks in characterization and spontaneity; the writer learns to explore all possibilities of development; and the technician learns to solve all sorts of problems in nonverbal forms. Each time a theatrical production is undertaken, it is a new invention, no matter if that title has been done before or if it is an original work. The solutions to that particular production concept are inventions created to serve the performance; the particular invention may live only in the time and place for which it is created, or it may be discarded after performance – but the inventiveness and appreciation for those solutions will live on in the individual and group –each time an actor, out of technique or spontaneity, creates a personal event or interpretation, or each time an artisan creates a working piece of scenery, sound effect, implement, or environmental effect, or each time a publicist finds a new incentive for a greater audience, an invention has come to life. The appreciation of new inventions also has a place in theatre study, as the discerning theatre group always embraces the newest technologies and latest developments in theory. The skill developed in the creation of the moment, implement, or method will serve the theatre student through many years to come.