

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: The Long Run
Subject: New Conservatory Theatre Center
Discipline: Theatre

SECTION I - OVERVIEW	2
EPISODE THEME	
SUBJECT	
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS	
OBJECTIVE	
STORY SYNOPSIS	
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	
INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	
EQUIPMENT NEEDED	
MATERIALS NEEDED	
INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED	
SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT	3
CONTENT OVERVIEW	
NCTC EDUCATION PROGRAMS	
RESOURCES – TEXTS	
RESOURCES – WEB SITES	
VIDEO RESOURCES	
BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS	
SECTION III – VOCABULARY	100
SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK	111



New Conservatory Theatre Center Director Ed Decker discussed the life of a theatre dedicated to raising new and sometimes challenging issues. Still image from SPARK story, January 2005.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME

The Long Run

SUBJECT

New Conservatory Theatre Center

GRADE RANGES

K–12 & Post-Secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Theatre, Language Arts

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the New Conservatory Theatre Center Center, a national model of a theatre arts resource aiming to give expression to the diversity of voices in the urban community it serves.

STORY SYNOPSIS

In the SPARK story about New Conservatory Theatre Center, audiences follow Founder, and Executive and Artistic Director Ed Decker as he talks about programming over the theatre’s 25-year history, as well as his vision for the future. Decker celebrates the uniqueness of NCTC as a populist community theatre whose productions speak to and for diverse audiences, especially the gay community of San Francisco. Whether through serious soul-searching theatrical pieces, light comedy or camp whimsy, NCTC intends its productions to “push the envelope,” bringing the challenging issues at the heart of the gay experience to the forefront.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing
Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance
Hands-on individual projects in which students work independently
Hands-on group projects in which students assist and support one another

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- To provide opportunities for students to consider how theatre relates to and can play an important role in an urban community
- To inspire students to consider how performing arts can give a voice to underserved artists and their audiences
- To encourage students to engage in performance skills to develop self esteem, confidence, creativity and team building
- To illustrate how theatre can help students to explore important social issues

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story about New Conservatory Theatre Center on DVD or VHS, and related equipment
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer

MATERIALS NEEDED

Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
Pencils, pens, and paper
Seasons productions from the NCTC Web site including co-productions, the Pride Season, In-Concert and Special Events
Brochures and flyers on the NCTC Youth programs

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects
Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems
Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically



See more information on
[Multiple Intelligences](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education) at
www.kqed.org/spark/education

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

It is a typical Saturday night at the New Conservatory Theatre Center (NCTC) in the Lower Lobby on 25 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco. It is a “happening” place. There are three theatre spaces and each one is full; *Gorgeous* a YouthAware Educational Theatre Program for teens about body image in Theatre Three, a comedy called *Rescue and Recovery* by Steve Murray about drug addiction in the Walker Theatre, and *Miss Coco Peru is Undaunted* in the 130-seat Decker Theatre. There is always a lot going on.

The SPARK story follows Ed Decker, Executive and Artistic Director, and founder of the theatre 25 years ago, as he talks about programming choices, his personal and social perspective and his vision for the New Conservatory Theatre Center in the future. He celebrates the uniqueness of the NCTC as a populist community theatre that speaks to and for young and old audiences alike, and especially for the gay community in San Francisco. Here young people and gay audiences can enjoy seeing themselves and their concerns represented on stage. Whether through serious soul-searching theatrical pieces, light comedy or camp whimsy, the intention is to “push the envelope” and bring to the forefront the challenging issues at the heart of the gay experience - sexuality, gender roles, questions of identity, and the experiences of young people – peer pressure, violence, homophobia, sexuality and identity.

Ed Decker explains how, for him, risk taking is what it is all about. “I strive to push past my comfort level. Whenever I start to see us producing things that are easily done, I quickly move in the other direction.” The new pieces under consideration for the upcoming Pride Season illustrate this commitment to trying new and challenging material. Under consideration is a piece about the photographer Richard Mapplethorpe and a “tease” called *Slap and Tickle* about a gay bathhouse by new writer Davis Parr. Both pieces are controversial, as is the work of dramatist Terrence McNally, one of the leading American playwrights today, who will have his third

premier at the NCTC in the 2006 Pride Season. The YouthAware Educational Theatre Program will present the world premiere of *OutSpoken*, a play for teens, developed by NCTC from the voices of today’s youth and written by playwright Prince Gomolvilas. It is a program about all of the reasons that young people feel ostracized in today’s society, and how they can learn to move past those differences.

NCTC is respected for this courage in engaging with and dramatizing difficult issues. While as Ed Decker admits, it may be true that the enlightened atmosphere in San Francisco has enabled the theatre to succeed in a way that might not have been possible in other states, it has been important in contributing to change nationally. Now that dramatizing the gay experience has become more acceptable, he sees the NCTC responding and moving in a new direction. It is no longer a question of gay theatre or black theatre or women’s theatre, but a time when these communities are coming together. Theatre now articulates these voices and needs to reach out to other communities - the straight community or the questioning community? It remains to be seen.

Things may change, but the mission of the NCTC remains constant: “to effect personal and societal growth, enlightenment and change”.



Actors backstage in the dressing room of the NCTC prepare for a performance. Still image from SPARK story, January 2005.

The NCTC is a recipient of multiple Drama-Logue, Bay Area Theatre Critics and Dean Goodman Awards, as well as receiving substantial support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Tony Award-winning playwright, Terrence McNally, is currently in residence at the NCTC as part of its new works program, jointly funded by Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and The Pew Charitable Trusts. The NCTC was the first theatre in the U.S. to use theatre to educate youth in grades K-12 on HIV Awareness and Prevention as part of its nationally acclaimed YouthAware Education Theatre Program, a two-time recipient (1986 and 1999) of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors' Certificate of Honor for innovative youth arts programming. Finally, the New Conservatory Theatre Center was also the 1993 recipient of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce's Business Arts Excellence Award.

NCTC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The NCTC Web site gives a sense of the energy and social engagement of this well-known institution in San Francisco at <http://www.nctcsf.org/index.html> which lists the performance program and the Pride Season, but also the range of education programs offered by the Center. The Youth Theatre Conservatory, the YouthAware Educational Theatre, and the Satellite Drama Program are all about empowering young people to express themselves and experience high quality theatre.

The Youth Theatre Conservatory offers a year round conservatory theatre training system. Instructors teach young people ages 5-18 after school and on Saturdays a variety of acting skills through improvisation, scene study, musical theatre and theatre games, all of which encourage self esteem, team building, creativity and problem solving. These classes introduce young people to creative expression and self-discovery, for example through storytelling, movement, improvisation and scripting etc. The teen theatre program is for ages 13-18 and offers classes on acting, playwriting and musical theatre. There is also the Satellite Drama Program providing NCTC instructors who teach after school drama classes throughout the Bay Area.

The YouthAware Educational Theatre Program has a social focus, educating young people on challenging issues and exposing them to new ideas and ways of thinking. These productions have been performed for youth both at NCTC and have toured North California schools for the past 17 years. Eight different plays are produced each year employing professional actors to perform plays on important issues such as HIV prevention, tolerance, body awareness, the Holocaust and substance abuse. Part of the YouthAware program is financed and promoted through San Francisco Unified School District and integrated into the HIV Prevention requirement for K-12 grades.

"Theatre is such a great way to connect with kids on a different level as far as getting these issues out...issues that are often too hard for them to talk about..." (Sara Staley, YouthAware Educational Theatre program director).

The YouthAware program strives to support young people as they grapple with issues of peer pressure, youth violence, homophobia, behavior norms and expectations, self-esteem, discrimination and identity. It is vehicle for promoting understanding and tolerance amongst today's youth.

The latest initiative at the NCTC is the new program of classes for adults in playwriting, acting and singing.



Actor perform for an audience of young people in one of NCTC's YouthAware Educational Theatre programs. Still image from SPARK story, January 2005.

RESOURCES – TEXTS

Recommended reading by the New Conservatory Theatre Center's Education Program:

Bauer, Marion Dane. [Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence](#). Harper Collins, 1994.

Borthek, Mary. [Coming out to Parents](#). Pilgrim Press, 1993.

Boxer, Andrew & Herdt, Gilbert. [Children of Horizons: How Gay and Lesbian Teens are Leading a New Way Out](#). Beacon Press, 1993.

Gray, Mary L. [In Your Face: Stories from the Lives of Queer Youth](#). Harrington Park Press, 1999.

Perrotti, Jeff. [When the Drama Club is Not Enough : Lessons from the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students](#). Beacon Press, 2002.

Rench, Janice. [Understanding Sexual Identity: a Book for Gay and Lesbian Teens](#). Lerner, 1990.

Singer, Bennett, L. [Growing Up Gay: A Literary Anthology](#). The New Press, 1993.

For teachers, parents and friends

Bass, Ellen. [Free Your Mind](#). Perennial Currents, 1996. (Young Adult)

Dew, Rob Forman. [The Family Heart: A Memoir of When Our Son Came Out](#). Addison-Wesley, 1994.

Fairchild, Betty & Hayward, Nancy. [Now That You Know: What Every Parent Should Know About Homosexuality](#). Harcourt Brace Janovitch, 1989.

Lipkin, Arthur. [Understanding Homosexuality. Changing Schools](#). Westview Press, 2000.

Marcus, Eric. [Is it a Choice? Answers to 30 of the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gays and Lesbians](#). Harper Collins, 1993.

Marcus, Eric. [What if Someone I Know is Gay? Answers to Questions about Gay and Lesbian People](#). Price Stern Sloan, 2000.

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

American Alliance for Theatre and Education - Organization dedicated to promoting standards of excellence in theatre and theatre education, connecting artists, educators, researchers and scholars with each other, and providing opportunities for our membership to learn, exchange, expand and diversify their work, their audience and their perspectives - <http://www.aate.com>

Arts Education Partnership - A national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations that demonstrates and promotes the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America's schools - <http://aep-arts.org>

ArtsEdge - The arts education initiative of the Kennedy Center, offering a range of programs, curricula, links, and resources for educators - <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>

ArtsEdNet - The Getty Center for Education in the Arts - <http://www.getty.edu/artsednet/home.html>

California Alliance for Arts Education - The CAAE promotes, supports, and advocates for visual and performing arts education for preschool through post-secondary students in California schools. - <http://www.artsed411.org>

California Arts Council - The state's arts council, including grant programs, the arts license plate, and links to other arts organizations, as well as updates on the state's funding for the arts - <http://www.cac.ca.gov>

California Department of Education: Visual & Performing Arts Education - Complete overview of the state's arts initiatives, including Arts Assessment, Arts Taskforce, Arts Funding, Policies, and Legislation - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts>

California State Visual & Performing Arts Content Standards – Online version (printable) - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts/standards.htm>

Model Arts Program - The purpose of the Model Arts Program Network is to help school districts to evaluate, improve, and expand visual and performing arts programs in California schools through a guided self-evaluation process, professional development seminars, conferences and a supportive network of colleagues - <http://www.teachingarts.org/MAP> and <http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts/modelarts.htm>.

National Conference of State Legislatures - Arts education policies in the United States - <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/arts/artsed/artedhom.htm>

National Endowment for the Arts - The Federal arts agency, supporting arts and arts education through grants to organizations, states, and institutions - <http://www.arts.gov>

New Conservatory Theatre Center - Youth Programming at NCTC
Youth Theatre Conservatory for young people ages 7-18 offers after school and Saturday classes, summer theatre courses, and satellite drama programs at San Francisco schools. Students learn acting skills, scene study, music theatre workshops and theatre games. Visit http://www.nctcsf.org/youth_programs.html for application forms. YouthAware Educational Theatre offers touring productions for young audiences on a range of social issues - <http://www.nctcsf.org/index.html>

TCAP - The California Arts Project
The state's subject matter project in Visual & Performing Arts, TCAP's mission is to deepen teachers' knowledge of dance, music, theatre, and visual art, to enhance student success pre-kindergarten through post-secondary, and to develop instructional strategies to support the Visual & Performing Arts Content Standards and framework in California's public schools - <http://csmp.ucop.edu/tcap>

TeachingArts.org - A gateway site to arts education organizations and information - <http://www.teachingarts.org>

Theatre Bay Area

Includes calendar & listings of programs, workshops, auditions, grants etc as well as a Bay Area online magazine
<http://www.theatrebayarea.org>

Young Audiences of Northern California - Area arts education non-profit offering K-12 programs in dance, music, theatre, and the visual and literary arts - <http://www.ya-nc.org>

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS & PARENTS

Referenced by the NCTC's YouthAware Educational Theatre Program:

GSA NETWORK – gay straight alliance network
www.gsanetwork.org

GLSEN – creating safe schools for LGBT youth
<http://www.glsen.org>

LYRIC – A community center and talk line for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth 23 and under - 1800 246 PRIDE
<http://www.lyric.org>

National Youth Advocacy Council –
<http://www.nyacyouth.org>

Outproud – The national coalition for LGBT youth -
<http://www.outproud.org>

PFLAG – An association of parents and friends of lesbians and gays - <http://www.pflag.org>

Safe Schools Coalition – A national organization supporting LGBT youth -
<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org>

Alcohol & Drug Use Hotline - 800 237 6237
San Francisco Drug Hotline- 415 362 3400
Youth Talkline – 888 977 3399

HEALTH INITIATIVES

Health Initiatives For Youth - online resources for young people at risk for and living with HIV & links to other youth serving agencies and websites
<http://www.hify.com>

Teenage Health Resource Line – Confidential health questions answered by a Stanford UCSF nurse 1 888-711- TEEN

Email teenhealth@lpch.stanford.edu

HIV Insite – Easy to understand, complete and up-to-date information on HIV/AIDS published by UC San Francisco -

<http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu>

Coalition For Positive Sexuality – Agency advocating for safer sex and public policy information for young people - <http://www.positive.org>

Healthfinder – National Web site about substance abuse - <http://www.healthfinder.gov>

Well - Web site dedicated to addiction and providing information on addiction -

<http://www.well.com/user/woa>

Health – A national clearinghouse for alcohol and drug information - <http://www.health.org>

VIDEO RESOURCES

Creative Drama & Improvisation, Theatre Video Series, DVC Inc., 1990. (Available through Amazon at <http://www.amazon.com>.)

House of Girls [Video] High school level material. Four teenage girls produce insightful videos on the popular vision of beauty and positive female role models. Distributed by Independent Television Service, 150 Fifth Street East, Suite 200, St Paul, MN, 55101, Phone: (612) 225 9035

Open Your Mind [Video] Seven 30-second PSAs made by teens for teens on issues such as drugs, teen pregnancy, violence and school. Distributed by United Church of Christ, Office of Communication, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100 Phone: (216) 736 2222

Peace Talks [Video] TV series is designed to help prevent violence by teaching kids how to avoid dangerous situations and to get along with others. Distributed by Bureau for At-Risk Youth, 135 Dupont Street, PO Box 760, Plainview, NY, 11803-0760, Phone: 800 99-YOUTH

Sticks and Stones (2001) [Video] (17 min) Appropriate for grades 3-7. This documentary looks at the lives of children aged 5 to 12, from various backgrounds, using their own words to show how homophobic language affects their lives. The two main topics in the video are family and name-calling. National Film Board of Canada (NFB) Customer Service Centre at 1-800-267-7710

In Other Words (2001) [Video] (27 min.) Appropriate for grades 7-12. Language and the power of words are the specific topic here. We see the impact of homophobic name-calling on the growth and development of youth, aged 14 to 22 Very positive messages for LGBT youth and their friends. Information for teachers provides background, discussion points and activities. National Film Board of Canada (NFB) Customer Service Centre at 1-800-267-7710

One of Them (2000) [Video] (25 min.) Appropriate for high school. Six high school students plan a Human Rights Day, and have to confront their own difficulties in addressing homophobia that is manifested in several ways. The focus is on graffiti, name-calling discrimination and stereotypes, rather than sexual activity. Includes background information and class activities. National Film Board of Canada (NFB) Customer Service Centre at 1-800-267-7710

OUT: Stories of Lesbian and Gay Youth (1993) [Video] (39 or 78 min.) High school level material. Issues of discrimination, racism and homophobia are sensitively addressed in this Canadian video. It provides awareness, understanding and hope to gay and lesbian youth, parents, counselors and educators. National Film Board of Canada (NFB) Customer Service Centre at 1-800-267-7710

School's Out! (1997) [Video] (24 min) High school level material. To provoke discussion about heterosexism, writer Jane Rule and 5 members of TEACH (Teens Educating and Confronting Homophobia) talk about sexuality and the issue of sexual orientation in today's society. National Film Board of Canada (NFB) Customer Service Centre at 1-800-267-7710

Taking Charge (1996) [Video] (25 min) (Secondary, Professional) This video shows teen activists “taking

charge” of their lives in an increasingly violent society. With role-playing, peer discussion groups and anti-violence collectives, they’re educating their peers about the many faces of violence and its effects manifested in sexism, racism and homophobia. National Film Board of Canada (NFB) Customer Service Centre at 1-800-267-7710

That’s a Family! (2000) [Video] (35 min) Appropriate for elementary and middle school students. This video helps elementary children see and understand the many different shapes of today’s families. The children take viewers on a tour through their lives as they speak candidly about what it’s like to grow up in a family with parents of different races or religions, divorced parents, a single parent, gay or lesbian parents, adoptive parents or grandparents as guardians. It comes with an extensive discussion/teaching guide, with lesson plans, suggestions for facilitating classroom discussion at different grade levels, and additional resources for teachers, families and children. Women’s Educational Media (WEM), 2180 Bryant St, Suite 203, San Francisco, CA 94110 USA (415-641-4616)
<http://www.womedia.org>

Let’s Get Real (35 min) (Middle School) 2003 WEM Told entirely from a youth perspective, this video gives young people the chance to tell their own stories. It examines many issues that lead to taunting and bullying, including race, perceived sexual orientation, religion, learning disabilities, sexual harassment and others. The film not only gives a voice to targeted kids, but also to those who bully, to find out why they lash out and how it makes them feel. The most heartening stories are those of kids who have mustered the courage to stand up for themselves or a friend. Women’s Educational Media (WEM), 2180 Bryant St, Suite 203, San Francisco, CA 94110 USA (415-641-4616)
<http://www.womedia.org>

Teaching Respect For All (1996) [Video] (52 min) (Professional) Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) Director and teacher Kevin Jennings explains clearly and passionately why “teachers, administrators, parents and schools need to care about issues of sexual orientation”. GLSEN works to create schools where all people are valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation. From Amazon Books at <http://www.amazon.com>

Ma Vie en Rose (My Life in Pink) (1997) [Video] (Secondary) Ludovic is an 8-year old little girl in a boy’s body. For him, nothing is more natural than to change his gender. He believes that a miracle is going to happen. He will be a girl, no doubt about it. He’s in love with the son of his father’s colleague. After the initial amusement, outrage grows in their suburb when the two boys are seen playing at getting married. The family begins to realize with horror that his desire to be a girl isn’t a passing fantasy. They try to make him change his mind, to no avail. Available from Amazon at <http://www.amazon.com>

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

*** Theatres with educational programs*

Actor’s Theatre of San Francisco

533 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
415/296.9179
Web: <http://actorstheatresanfran.tripod.com>

American Conservatory Theatre **

415 Geary Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
415/279.2ACT
Web: www.act-sfbay.org

Berkeley Repertory Theatre **

2025 Addison Street
Berkeley, CA 94704
510/647.2900
Web: <http://www.berkeleyrep.org>

Brava! For Women in the Arts

2781 24th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/826.5773
Web: <http://www.brava.org>

California Shakespeare Festival **

Shakespeare Festival Way
Orinda, CA 94563
510/548.9666
<http://www.calshakes.org>

Eureka Theatre

215 Jackson Street
San Francisco, CA 94111
415/788.1125

Web: <http://users.rcn.com/eureka.dnai>

EXIT Theatre

156 Eddy Street
San Francisco, CA 95102
415/931.1094
Web: <http://www.sffringe.org>

Intersection for the Arts

446 Valencia Street (at 15th), San Francisco, CA 94103
415/626.2787
Web: <http://www.theintersection.org>

Lorraine Hansberry Theatre

620 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA. 94102
415/474.8800
Web: <http://www.lorrainehansberrytheatre.com>

Magic Theatre

Fort Mason, Building B, Third Floor
San Francisco, CA 94123
415/441.8822
Web: <http://www.magictheatre.org>

Marin Theatre Company **

397 Miller Avenue
Mill Valley, CA 941941
415/388.5200
Web: <http://www.marintheatre.org>

The Marsh Theatre **

1062 Valencia St
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/641.0235
Web: <http://www.themarsh.org>

New Conservatory Theatre Center **

25 Van Ness Avenue, Lower Lobby
San Francisco, CA 94102
415/861.4914
Web: <http://www.nctcsf.org>

A Traveling Jewish Theatre

470 Florida Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/285.8080
Web: <http://www.atjt.com>

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

YOUTH AWARE EDUCATIONAL THEATRE - TERMINOLOGY FROM POST SHOW DISCUSSIONS

Youth Aware Educational Theatre produces eight plays each year employing professional actors to perform plays on important social issues. After each performance students are asked to participate in a discussion of the important social issue.

Discrimination

Unfair treatment against a specific group of people; an action

Homophobia

Stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals

Intolerance

Unwillingness to grant equal freedom of expression; unwillingness to grant or share social or political or professional rights

Persecution

Act of causing others to suffer, especially those who are different or have specific political or religious beliefs

Prejudice

Pre-judging a group of people without adequate evidence or information and then forming an attitude about that group (liking or not liking them)

Racism

A belief that race defines what people are like and what people can do. A belief that one's own race is superior to another race

Stereotype

Assigning the supposed characteristic of a whole group of people to all its individual members; an attitude, belief or idea

Tolerance

A fair and objective attitude towards opinions and practices that differ from one's own; allowing the right of something that one may not approve; freedom from bigotry

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

NOTE:

These activities have been developed in collaboration with the New Conservatory YouthAware Educational Program. Many of the activities are taken directly from or adapted from NCTC's post-performance discussion activities. Others are designed with a similar focus on social issues as underscores the YouthAware program.

Responding to Social Issue Theatre

Play the SPARK story on the New Conservatory Theatre Center to introduce students to social issue theatre. If access to local theatre of this kind is not available, obtain and screen a longer social issue theatre piece, such as one of the films listed in the Resource section of this Guide.

Before viewing, discuss the particular social issue the piece explores, such as equality, human rights, tolerance, body image, substance abuse and myths about gays and lesbians in society etc. Why is the issue important? Ask students to view the work with an open mind and to be aware that they have an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the issue. Encourage students to participate in the post show discussion, or challenge students to write a short response, focusing on the social issue. What did they learn? How has the experience of seeing the piece changed or impacted their views? Encourage students to explain in what ways their ideas have changed or not as a result of the experience.



Artistic Director Ed Decker illustrates an idea during a production meeting at the theatre. Still image from SPARK story, January 2005.

Attending a Performance

Play the SPARK story on the New Conservatory Theatre Center to introduce students to the theatre and to the Youth Programs offered by the NCTC.

Contact the theatre to arrange for students to attend a performance of one of the YouthAware Educational Theatre productions. Alternately, book one of the touring productions to be performed in your school - in the theatre, gymnasium, cafeteria or multi-purpose room. The NCTC Web site lists the programs - <http://www.nctcsf.org/YouthAware> - or contact them at 415/861.4914 for a brochure.

The YouthAware project offers eight different plays throughout the school year, each exploring a social issue of relevance to young audiences in K through grade 12. Suggest that students review the program together to help them choose the performance they would like to see.

Before the show, discuss the particular social issue the play explores, such as equality, human rights, tolerance, body image, substance abuse and myths about gays and lesbians in society etc. Why is the issue important? Ask students to attend the show with an open mind and to be aware that they have an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the issue. Encourage students to participate in the post show discussion.

In class draw on key quotes from the script (contact the YouthAware Educational Theatre Director to obtain scripts) to further explore situations that came up in the play. For example "My mother can't even hear the word homosexual without crossing herself....she believes that people like that live in a state of sin because it is against the will of God." (Excerpted from "The Other Side of the Closet" by Ed Roy)

Ask students to write a short response to the play, focusing on the social issue. What have they learned? How has the experience changed or impacted their views? Encourage students to explain in what ways their ideas have changed or not as a result of the experience.

For older students, assign a more substantial 500-word response paper or review, using the following guidelines.

- Introductory response to the play
- Outline of the plot and key themes
- Discussion of the social issues addressed in the play. Did the play convey a message?
- Discussion of characterization
- Assessment of different viewpoints represented
- Evaluation of the play - was it informative, interesting, enjoyable?
- Concluding comments – how the play impacted their views and how

The YouthAware program welcomes student thoughts about its productions and the issues addressed. Teachers and students are welcome to send their responses to: New Conservatory Theatre Center Center, YouthAware Educational Theatre, 25 Van Ness Avenue, Lower Lobby, San Francisco, CA 94102.

SPARKLERS:

* Suggest that students attend one the Youth Theatre Conservatory workshops on musical theatre, creative drama, acting, or playwriting. They could also consider the Summer Drama Program. Alternately, invite instructors to work with students at school through the Satellite Drama Program.

http://www.nctcsf.org/youth_programs.html

* The YouthAware Educational Theatre performs plays for young people on relevant social issues. Challenge students to think about issues that are of particular importance to them and to suggest topics for a future touring performance. They should write to the address above with their ideas.

Role-Playing Exercise

Working in groups of three ask students to describe to each other occasions when they have felt excluded, ignored or ostracized in any way. It could be a memory of a sister or brother leaving them out

of a game when a new friend came along. It could be a group of friends whispering or laughing at them or making them feel humiliated or uncomfortable for some reason. It could be as a child they had a lisp or a stutter or felt fat or had red hair. It could also be they felt discriminated against in some other way. Ask students to work with their groups to recall the situation and feelings.

Suggest that each group chooses one situation to work with. When they are ready, invite each group to role-play the situation, attempting to “feel” the situation and reenact the emotions. Challenge the groups to take the situations as far as they can i.e. did the central character challenge the behavior of the others? What happened?

Discuss each role-play in turn.

- What did each character feel like - both the victim and perpetrators?
- Could the victim change the situation – act differently, challenge the behavior, or ignore their feelings?

Initiate a general discussion reviewing the exercise and extending the issues more widely. Did these incidents happen a long time ago? Have students felt ignored, hurt, or discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, gender, skin color, religion, family, bodily type etc more recently? How have they handled it? What advice would the rest of the group offer?

Invite students to write freely about a time when they or someone they know experienced some sort of discrimination or harassment. Ask them to describe what happened and if anything was done about it.

Encourage students to send their written piece to the theatre for possible inclusion in the new program entitled *Outspoken* or in a future YouthAware Educational Theatre production. The theatre would like to hear about real experiences that are affecting young people today.

Write to:

YouthAware Educational Theatre
25 Van Ness Avenue, Lower Lobby
San Francisco, CA 94102

(Based on the post-performance writing exercise used by the YouthAware Program with the play *The Other Side of the Closet* by Ed Roy)

IMPROV SPARKLER:

* Ask each student to stand in front of the class to improvise a speech on a socially related theme. Another student should pick the topic. Provide a stopwatch or clock for a third student to time the speech. Begin with 20-30 seconds, but extend the time as students improve and become less nervous. Invite everyone to speak at least once, and then ask each of them to consider how well they spoke, what points were important to communicate, and what points were omitted. Review the speeches and discuss how students could increase their impact.

Scripting Exercise

(Offered as an alternative to the role-play activity)

Invite students to brainstorm the similarities between racism, sexism and homophobia.

Ensure the following points are covered:

- Each involves stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination
- Each involves a targeted group with less social power
- Each involves feelings of anger, pain, self-hatred and frustration.

Use the glossary of terms above to support the discussion and write the definitions of the terms on the board.

Suggest that students work in small groups to discuss these forms of oppression. They should then choose a short scenario to illustrate one of the themes i.e. racism, sexism or homophobia. It could be an incident they have experienced themselves, been told about, or witnessed. It could have happened at home or in school or with friends.

Encourage students to discuss the incident or scenario and decide how they want to represent it - what is the key thing they want to say about it? The situation or conflict does not need to be resolved or to close happily, but simply to be enacted.

Ask students to write a 5 or 10-minute script of the scenario to dramatize the situation. Explain that one member of each group will be asked to introduce the

scenario – where it takes place, who the characters are etc. to set the scene.

When the groups are ready, invite each group to perform their scenario. Review the scenarios with the whole group and discuss the strategies the group would suggest to resolve the situation. The intention is to use this scripting exercise to develop strategies for young people to deal with difficult situations.

IMPROV SCRIPTING SPARKLER:

* Sit in a tight circle and write down the opening line of a story and pass it to the person sitting to your left. Challenge each participant to add a sentence and pass the story on to person to the left. The last person to add a sentence should then read the story aloud to the group. This activity can also be done verbally, which would then omit the final reading, but call upon the participants to listen to and remember what came before. Consider making the opening line something exciting or evocative such as “Suddenly last summer I discovered...” or “When the door opened Matilda screamed.....”

RELATED STANDARDS

THEATRE

Grade 4

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.4 Identify a character's objectives and motivations to explain that character's behavior

Grade 7

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.2 Explain how cultural influences affect the content or meaning of works of theatre.

Grade 8

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.1 Develop criteria and write a formal review of a theatrical production

Grades 9-12 (Proficient)

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

2.2 Write dialogues and scenes, applying basic dramatic structure: exposition, complication, conflict, crises, climax, and resolution

3.0 HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXTS

3.2 Describe the ways in which playwrights reflect and influence their culture in such works.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.2 Report on how a specific actor used drama to convey meaning in performances.

Guidelines for Classroom Discussion

(From the YouthAware Educational Theatre post show lesson plan)

- Set parameters for classroom discussion, keeping in mind the balance between freedom of expression and the expression of hate and intolerance
- Listen carefully and treat each other with respect, each person gets a chance to talk, don't cut people off
- Remind students that it isn't just "what" is said but "how" it is said...derogatory words are not allowed
- Statements or questions which express or condone violence will not be tolerated
- If you feel hurt by what someone says, say so and why...it's OK to disagree
- Speak only for yourself, not for others or for your "group"
- Personal information shared by anyone should stay in the classroom
- Students should be encouraged to ask any question they wish as long as it is asked inoffensively and with a spirit of curiosity or interest in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect

Non Verbal Presentations

Ask students to work in groups and select a situation where spoken language is not an option e.g. communicating with a person who speaks a different, unknown language, or with someone who is deaf, or making a silent movie. Challenge students to create a message about something they think the person or the audience ought to know.

Students should communicate their message by acting it out non-verbally. Enactments can include charades, pantomime or hand signals, dance, or using their bodies to form letters in the message. They can also use any other methods they can think of, such as drawing or painting illustrations to help. Music, clapping, sounds or other special effects can be used to enhance the performances.

Invite each group to enact their message with the class or other groups in the school.

It may be interesting to videotape the performances to review. What are the challenges of this exercise?

RELATED STANDARDS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Grade 5

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

- 1.4 Select a focus, organizational structure, and point of view for an oral presentation.
- 1.6 Engage the audience with appropriate verbal cues, facial expressions, and gestures
- 2.1 Deliver narrative presentations: Establish a situation, plot, point of view, and setting with descriptive words and phrases

Grades 9 & 10

1.0 LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.

1.0 WRITING STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at

<http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp>.