

Building Safety and Inclusion in the Drama Classroom

Know your school's policies and overall culture:

It supports the blueprint for your classroom expectations and how you enforce consequences as required. Once you know this essential information, you can add your flavour to the classroom. It's important to ultimately remember that students thrive with routine and consistency.

Set the Culture: Consistency is KEY

This is particularly important around lesson routines and management of the space. What you choose to ignore you choose to accept. Sort out the behaviour that's countercultural first. This can come from positive acknowledgement of acceptable culture and redirection of counterculture so that it aligns with school policy. Establishing rituals, particularly within performance-based activities, such as unique handshakes or greetings builds rapport, enhances inclusivity, and signals the start of rehearsal. Routines aid in creating predictability and comfort.

Understand Adolescent Psychology

Take the time to learn about adolescent psychology. We are NOT psychologists, but if we can understand the brain more we can learn to understand the behaviour more. With this, we are not making excuses or accepting poor behaviour, rather we are supporting different approaches to learning.

Connection Before Learning

Students need to feel safe to be themselves without judgement. So with that, take the time to learn about your learners. If a student can trust you and feel safe, if they know you actually care about who they are, they will do their best work. They will engage with content within their own capacity. They will find a way to get it done. Excellence in arts education is important but secondary to the emotional and social impact on students. Students remember how they felt and moments where they were truly heard and cared for rather than purely academic success.

Realistic Expectations, Purposeful challenging, and Adaptability

Realistic expectations and accepting that being adaptable is a part of the gig is essential. Being a perfectionist and having unrealistic expectations makes success seem impossible to the student and from that can create disengaged behaviours. Once safety and rapport are established however, teachers should engage in realistic challenging that promotes growth and builds trust. Challenges should be purposeful, relevant to the classroom context and balanced with support. If a student feels like success is at least somehow within reach, they will welcome challenge within their capacity.

Be a tiny bit vulnerable/ Set the Example

Remember that the Drama classroom is a space where students have to work outside themselves, and at times be challenged to work outside of their comfort zones. Some Drama activities require some level of vulnerability. We cannot expect a student to work within that space if we aren't modelling it in some way. A part of this is modelling participation through actively participating in classroom and school activities to model engagement and pushing out of your comfort zone. If you're not willing to try activities and get involved, then how do you expect students to feel the security and trust to try it too?

Curriculum Integration

Drama units, such as "social comment" and "impactful moments," offer opportunities for students to explore identity and societal roles, deepening their self-awareness and connection to the material. It's also worth including activities where students can see aspects of themselves in others through viewing performance/ devised material.