

Benefits and Goals for Second Grade Theatre Arts Residency
Dalton School
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This two-semester residency is an introduction to theatre, using life skills, imagination, and curricular links to Social Studies, Literacy, and Art.

The first half of the residency in the fall includes exploration of the ways the body can move, incorporating imagination inspired body shapes, axial movement and locomotor movement. We begin to use our voices and our bodies toward a common focus, using visual art, poetry and children's literature as inspiration for mini theatre pieces. We make connections to literary terms, not only introducing important theatrical nomenclature, but also supporting literacy by reinforcing structural terms for storytelling.

The second half of the residency piggybacks on the "City blocks" project, and uses New York City as inspiration for our culminating experience: the dramatization of a New York City-themed book.

Be Bop A Do Walk by Sheila Hamanaka takes the main characters through various neighborhoods of Manhattan, while Madlenka by Peter Sis is an exploration of all the various cultures surrounding the main character as she walks around her block.

In addition to the rote musicianship, and body coordination that is inherent in song and movement, this residency offers the students important life skills that transcend the study of theatre, music and dance. Responsibility for your actions and contribution to a team; diligence and hard work that culminates in goal accomplishment; application of curricula to something seemingly unrelated promotes problem solving skills; particularly intelligent students are challenged to work viscerally, while those students whose academics may be lacking tend to respond to more imaginative work, thereby gaining important confidence. As comfort levels vary, students who thrive in the imaginative find themselves becoming leaders and good examples, improving self-worth and self-esteem. All students, regardless of ability and interest, feel a boost in confidence when completing the culminating experience, as they have worked hard toward this common goal.

Other important take-aways include the understanding of stillness, quiet, and calmness as excellent ways to begin any process or activity. We also try to encourage volume, slow speed, clarity and expression in solo speaking.

As this residency is grade wide, community is reinforced through the rehearsal and performance of the finale, which is identical for all five houses. Contribution to an exciting common activity is an excellent way to uniquely bond the houses.