



## The Benefits of Drama Education

*More than just a FUN after-school activity.*

I knew that working as an actor was not my life's work. This may be surprising: drama and theatre production were a large part of my Liberal Arts education, and I worked as a professional actor for some time during and after college. So, if I knew I didn't want to be an actor, why did I study theatre? And why was I passionate about drama education, so much so, I would leave professional theatre, an equity contract, the glamorous parties, and the jobs that allowed me to interact with celebrities on a regular basis so I could teach?



Because I had gained so much from my drama education! I developed emotional intelligence and other skills necessary in navigating through life. It was in improv class that I first hushed my inner critic, and learned how to use the discomfort of the unexpected to my advantage. Playwriting taught me to trust the creative process and know that all the answers I will ever need are available to me if I am willing to try a few things, let go of some others, and think outside of the box. Acting allowed me to take risks, learn to laugh at myself, and get over my fear of the sound of my own voice. I learned to see subtle detail in human relationships and make connections between seemingly different concepts. And most important, teaching drama has taught me to be present in the moment and re-taught me how to play.

Also, the characters I played often taught me more than I had bargained. Terms such as apartheid or concentration camp were concepts to be memorized for a multiple choice test, but not something I, who had never been to South Africa or Auschwitz, could really understand emotionally. It was

Elizabeth, a character caught in the cross fire of the Soweto Uprising, who forced me to begin to understand the emotional depth of segregation, hatred, and hope.

These are all 'feel-good' examples of why drama education is important for personal growth. But I also know the times—they are a-changing. We are leaving what has become known as the Information Age, an era when so many jobs require sequential and analytical "left brain" skills. Those skills, while very necessary, are in my opinion, far from sufficient. When so many jobs are being shipped overseas or can be performed by computers, there is new value in jobs that cannot be done cheaper abroad and abilities that cannot be mimicked by a machine. No computer can work as a counselor, a teacher, or a nurse. These jobs require creativity and emotional intelligence, the same skills we aim to cultivate in Drama Kids. Yes, I know drama education alone will not turn your child into a well-adjusted leader of his generation. But I do know that the skills he gains with us are skills he will use every day of his life.

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