

# PROBLEM-SOLVING THEATER

Designing Group Experiences That Develop Creative Thinking Skills

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The components of theatrical story-telling:

Characters: shaped by what they want, why they want it and how they try to get it

Conflict: Obstacles to the characters' attempts to get what they want

Change: How the characters are transformed by their interactions and/or working through the obstacles

Creative experiences – putting a concept into action, improvisatory role-playing, music, theater games – enhances the integration of new information by producing new neuronal connections in the brain and expanding the relationship between those connections.

(Kenneth Wesson, "What Everyone Should Know About the Latest Brain Research," para. 16. 28 Feb 2008  
[www.sciencemaster.com/columns/wesson/wesson\\_2000.php](http://www.sciencemaster.com/columns/wesson/wesson_2000.php))

Structure of Problem-Solving Theater Experiences:

Group creates the characters, defines their wants, and identifies the obstacles to obtaining them;

Group members take roles of: characters and obstacles; internal roles that drive character; external forces that shape character

Role-playing searches for: Deeper layers of the problem

Redefinitions of the problem

Seeing the problem from a range of perspectives

Higher, more "big-picture" thinking that reframes the problem

"The reality of life in the 21st century is that the skills associated with artistic practices--creative thinking, self-discipline, collaboration and innovation--are skills that are in great demand. In fact, in our rapidly changing global economy, the skills the arts teach may be mandatory for everyone's success." Robert Lynch, "[Creating a brighter workforce with the arts: the skills taught by the arts will contribute to success in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century](#)" School Administrator, March 2008

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"As leaders and management educators seek to find other ways of communicating, creating knowledge, and making sense of the complexities of managing in the New Economy, we are likely to see the continued growth of arts based learning in organizations." Cheryl Kerr, "[INTRODUCTION: Re-conceiving the artful in management development and education](#)" Journal of Management and Organization, No. 2008

"Listening to finer music and attending concerts on a consistent basis makes your real age about four years younger," Dr. Michael F. Roizen – the chief wellness officer of the Wellness Institute at the Cleveland Clinic, said recently.

"Whether that's due to stress relief or other properties, we see decreases in all-cause mortality, reflecting slower aging of arteries as well as cancer-related and environmental factors. Attending sports events like soccer or football offers none of these benefits." "[Composing Concertos in the Key of TX](#)" Matthew Gurewitsch, New York Times, March 25, 2009



A study published by Columbia University's Center for Arts in Education Research reports that teachers in schools providing an arts-focused curriculum "spoke of the effects of arts learning along five specific dimensions of ability. These were the ability to:

- Express ideas and feelings openly and thoughtfully;
- Form relationships among different items of experience and layer them in thinking through an idea or problem;
- Conceive or imagine different vantage points of an idea or problem and to work towards a resolution;
- Construct and organize thoughts and ideas into meaningful units or wholes;
- Focus perception on an item or items of experience, and sustain this focus over a period of time."

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Artistically talented but academically at-risk 4th, 5th, and 6th grade urban students who were involved over the course of three years in arts training, learned in arts-integrated classrooms, and participated in an additional program that used the arts to support academic classes made greater gains in reading than did a control group of students who were not identified as artistically talented and who were taught in traditional classrooms that did not integrate the arts with the curriculum. Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development, 2002, p. 64  
study: Using Art Processes to Enhance Academic Self-Regulation

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Artistically talented but academically at-risk 4th, 5th, and 6th grade urban students used more self-regulatory behaviors during classes in which the arts were integrated into the lesson. Self-regulatory behaviors include paying attention, persevering, problem-solving, self-initiating, asking questions, taking positive risks, cooperating, using feedback and being prepared: Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development, 2002, p. 64  
study: Using Art Processes to Enhance Academic Self-Regulation

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## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill Development

### Dynamic Group Creative Process Integrates the Core Learning Skills Required for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Life

"The world is changing so quickly that promoting the ability for creative thinking and promoting cultural adaptability is essential. Remember that kids starting school this year will be retiring in 2065. We don't have a clue about what the world will be like then." Sir Ken Robinson, quoted in "Reading, Writing and Creativity" [Business Week](#) February 23, 20

#### Learning and Innovation Skills

Learning and innovation skills are what separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in the 21st century and those who are not. They include:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration
- Information, Media and Technology Skills

People in the 21st century live in a technology and media-driven environment, marked by access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools and the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale. To be effective in the 21st century, citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills, such as:

- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy
- ICT (Information, Communications and Technology) Literacy
- Life and Career Skills

Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills, such as:

- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability
- Leadership and Responsibility

From: [www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)

