

## **Art's Integration: Role Play for Responsible First Graders**

*Initially, I wrote about using protest art to demonstrate responsible citizenship, but with the movement for whole systematic change in our justice system, I feel this is in poor taste to minimize simple rules for such young children in first grade at this time.*

One of the biggest shocks for a first grader at my school is the “Big Yard.” Prior to first grade, students played in a Kindergarten yard with an apparatus in a closed space. They only played with their class. In grades 1-5 students play on a huge yard, no apparatus, extremely limited equipment, less supervision, and basically one ball per class if their classmates don't throw it on the roof which causes the class to have no ball. It is a tough transition and students need to learn conflict resolution (they will need it) and get extremely creative in their games. Another transition is eating in the cafeteria space, using common bathrooms, and even walking through a hallway than to the outside bungalow. There are many changes. Every year, we have rules for school assembly. Students gather in a crowd and see a video of fifth grade models showing what to do and what not to do in the big yard, cafeteria, and other school areas. It was creative, but my first graders primarily laughed at the big X buzzer sound on what not to do. So I need to create something more memorable about how to be a responsible citizen on the yard.

### **A. Art Form**

**Role Play/ Tableau:** Role play is a great exercise all year round to act out scenarios where students have to be compassionate, understanding, and kind. It helps give students perspective on situations, and reflect upon their own actions without feeling singled out. Students can demonstrate real life scenarios in this dramatic play situation so they are more comfortable with the real situations without me. I will start out by teaching tableau and once students get better at it, we can add on to actually do role play.

### **B. Lesson Enhancement**

Integrating the arts is critical first and foremost for trauma. I had past experience working in a domestic violence crisis facility with families and I was the T/A in a self contained K-12 classroom. I would work with one grade or 8 grades on any given day, but what connected us was art and play. Students would never talk and process emotions unless there was a play based or art activity to do it through. The arts almost create a separation of self and the work so the work can start to show the feelings our self is uncomfortable expressing. Past trauma, art can teach discipline, focus, perspective, collaboration, and attention to detail. These are all skills necessary to the 21st century learning and working. There has also been research into how music programs help students succeed more in school, which I attribute to skills necessary for the arts. Role play, pantomime, and tableau is great for my age of students especially since from ages 2-5 dramatic play is essential in being able to process life's situations. As students get older, many times they get more nervous to act out in front of friends, but I have seen that in this age group, they love it. We even do role play and acting via zoom with core literature as a grade level and I was surprised at how many students wanted to use voices and be sillier.

The attached [google slide](#) on responsible citizens is a lesson from my English Language Development (ELD) lessons at the start of the year. This is a lesson I tend to teach in the first couple weeks of school. I am required to use the text from a program called Benchmark for my ELD lessons. Yet, most lessons are about 20 minutes and the state mandates I have to teach 60 minutes of ELD time a day. I create powerpoints to enhance lessons and make them a bit less dry and add on a grammar/writing component to help with basic language development. Slides 7 and on is where I added in this arts integration. I would love to teach this component of tableau before they write. So they can even practice these rules as well. I want to repeat slides 8 and 9 with different locations. I can also print pictures of how students froze, and hang them up with the rules. I usually have students only draw rules at the beginning of the year, but this might be a nice addition.

### **C. Interdisciplinary Context**

This art form can be used in a variety of contexts for our classroom. That is what is so great about role play.

**ELD:** In [Adjusted Benchmark Lessons for Unit 1](#) look at slides 32-38. This is an ELD lesson where the special education teacher and I role played being Max and Anna. We did this two years in a row where I dropped my dollar and he came in and stole it. I came back in with water in my eyes crying and the students had to decide what he should do. Our first year they liked the special education teacher so much that they told each other not to tell me and he should keep the dollar because he is cool. The second year, many students said he should return the dollar or at least ask if anyone lost it.

**Math:** There have been multiple times that students pretend to be the characters in the word problem to actually understand what it is asking. We once had a 20 minute discussion that resulted in all the chairs being lined up in front of the room and students standing at their desks to figure out how many chairs were moved.

**Science:** Students can role play being an engineer. How would an engineer approach this situation. How can he or she improve upon a design. We also can role play life cycles of plants and animals and changes of states of matter.

**Restorative Justice:** Students have multiple issues in the big yard. We role play often so students can come up with multiple strategies of conflict resolution. Sometimes they just need a teacher though. For example, our class had a big issue with another student in another class, they didn't want to tell me his name because I always say to try to work it out first before just tattling. They asked me to pretend to be him and had me do different things, like steal their ball and run away. By the end, I think they had these solutions before I needed to just ask the principal to keep an extra eye on him: Invite him to play with them, invite him to play with them but remind him that he can only play if he shares the ball, leave to a new area so he can't take their ball, get a yard teacher but don't tattle just say they need help solving a problem first (Kids complain yard teachers only say leave), play rock/paper/scissors to have turns with the ball, ask the yard teacher to just watch their game so he won't break the rules, go talk to his teacher, and tell him he can play one day but not the next with them. When my students ask me to be somebody, I usually

show them I am not listening to their solution to make them come up with more. Our motto is:  
You can control your reaction, but you can't control others actions.