

ABCDE FOCUS

WINTER 2016 NEWSLETTER



2015/2016 Executive

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President's Report

Jan 31, 2016

It is with a strange sense of déjà vu that I start to pen this President's report for our first newsletter of 2016. Newer readers may not know this, but I was fortunate to serve in the role of President for four years from 2009-2012. Initially I was elected in 2009 to serve as Vice-President, but when nobody put their name forward for President, I agreed to serve when the executive asked me to take on the presidency. I must admit that I am very pleased to be back working with the executive and members to help ensure that Drama Education in BC is nurtured, grown and protected. Now, perhaps more than ever with the new secondary curriculum coming in, we need to be a voice for Drama Education in BC.

With the election of the new executive at our October AGM, it is with great appreciation we acknowledge those executive members who did not return to the executive. On behalf of the new executive and the membership, I'd like to extend thanks to John Polishak, Linda Beaven and Ryan Grenier for their service. Our most recent President Lana O'Brien continues to serve on our executive as the past-President, but I'd also like to extend a thank you to Lana for her hard work during the past three years.

The intention of this address is to provide a bit of comment on the past year and tell you where we are going. Our annual conference returned after the cancellation in 2014 due to the job action. It was a successful 2-day conference located at the downtown SFU campus. We also had another successful Provincial Drama Festival, Youthwrite playwriting competition, scholarship recipient and ABCDE Educator awards. In addition to continuing the various activities we conduct, the upcoming year will see the ABCDE respond to the draft Drama curriculum. At the most recent executive meeting it was determined that I would begin the process by drafting a letter that would then be examined and edited by the executive prior to going to the entire membership for input. The ministry representative (who I have spoken with) has indicated that the feedback from our PSA will be considered very carefully.

We also are happy to announce that our October Pro-D conference will be held on October 21st-22nd in gorgeous Kelowna BC. While details are still being worked out, yes a 'party bus' is being planned to take teachers to the conference from the lower mainland. Please mark these dates in your calendar and plan on attending. While your Pro-D funds are likely insufficient to fully cover your costs of getting there, back and the registration, this annual conference is such an excellent way to connect with peers, learn new skills and ensure your membership in our organization continues. ~ *Colin Plant*

Depending on how one perceives the need for change can vastly determine how one accepts proposed changes. In the realm of Drama education in British Columbia, the proposed changes in Drama 10-12 causes some concern regarding the loss of courses whereas the new K-9 curriculum has been accepted (thus far) by the majority of the province's Drama educators.

I was fortunate to serve as the Drama Provincial Specialists' Association president for four year from 2009-2012 and was once again re-elected for a two-year term this past October. One of the reasons I wanted to become President again was to help the province's Drama educators navigate the proposed new curriculum and help to provide input to the ministry.

Drama teachers have heard terms such as "21st century learning", and "personalized learning" and have been somewhat complacent in thinking how they relate to Drama in Education because what we do in Drama already takes those concepts and employs them in our work.

Drama is about exploring the self and relationships with others in a dramatic or theatrical context. It is about problem-solving and looking at creative solutions to challenging situations. It is about gaining empathy for others. The learning is always personal, as finding meaning in the students' work is subjective. For Drama educators these terms have probably not been of concern because we know and recognize the value of our curriculum in helping prepare students for the future.

The reduction of learning outcomes and the reduction of the IRP (Integrated Resource Package) have also been seen as an opportunity for teachers to design their programs to focus on particular aspects of Drama instead of attempting to cover the vast array of learning outcomes that often result in certain areas getting a sprinkling of time rather than in-depth study.

The actual IRP documents have also become outdated as some components (suggested learning resources, assessment strategies for example) no longer contain modern resources or reflect current practice. In the reduction of these learning outcomes and the opportunity for flexibility, Drama teachers will be able to teach to their strengths and adapt the curriculum to their environment while covering the new competencies.

So where is the concern I referenced in the opening paragraph? The concern Drama teachers have with the proposed new curriculum is the loss of provincially-listed Drama courses. Instead of the variety of courses in Drama such as Theatre Performance (both Stage and Film/TV) and Theatre Production, there is now simply Drama 10, Drama 11, Drama 12.

These simplistic designations do not reflect the variety of what is being offered in BC classrooms. Many students will take technical (Stagecraft) and performance (Acting) courses separately. If there is simply only Drama 12, does this mean students will receive the credit twice if they take the two options? Or will teachers be expected to develop their own courses?

Drama teachers in BC expect to have their discipline respected, and like the realms of Science where Biology, Chemistry and Physics are continuing as separate identities, Drama educators will be arguing for the same treatment in our subject area.

While the creation of locally-developed Board/Authority Authorized courses (BAA) may be offered as a means to replace the lost courses, BC Drama educators believe there is no need to 'reinvent the wheel.' Leaving the course names would be a respectful way to allow for the new curriculum to be delivered using the old course names. Not everything needs to be new this time out.

ABCDE Awards given at 2015 AGM by Colin Plant

Congratulations to Gordon Hamilton, Shon Thomas, Linda Beaven and Sharon Conrad for receiving the ABCDE Teacher Awards for 2015.

Gordon was the recipient of the Drama Teacher of the Year. Nominators spoke of Gordon's commitment to Drama, excellent interpersonal skills and dedication to Drama at Brookwood Secondary and the province.

Shon received the Drama in Education award for his excellence in teaching Drama. His nominators spoke of the incredible influence he had on students; both those who have gone in the profession and those who grew as people as a result of simply being in his class.

Linda Beaven and Sharon Conrad shared the Distinguished Service Award for their advocacy for Drama in BC schools and for their work in supporting the goals of the ABCDE. Both Linda and Sharon served for many years on the executive and took on important roles in various activities that supported Drama in BC. As a result of receiving their award, they were also made Honorary Lifetime Members of the ABCDE.



Gord Hamilton



Shon Thomas

Lana O'Brien, our Past President, had the honour of presenting the awards to our deserving recipients.



Linda Beaven and Sharon Conrad

If you know of a Drama Educator that merits recognition for their teaching and service to Drama in Education, please visit bcdramateachers.com and select the Member Teacher Awards tab.

Deadline for nominations is September 30, 2016.

Drama 9/10 Created by Jenn Ohlhauser, Rockridge Secondary



Characters and Scenes inspired by
Popular Toys

Choose a popular toy to create a character from...

Example sources include:

- Flyers (eg. The Bay, Walmart)
- Websites: www.disney.com, www.mattel.com, www.fisherprice.com, www.hasbro.com www.toysrus.ca
- Visit Toys R'Us

Materials

- Photo or drawing of the toy you have chosen
- Character journal questions on the toy's characteristics
- One costume piece or prop that helps us to recognize the character

Day 1	- Introduce Project - Brainstorm in Journal
Day 2	- Come to class prepared with your toy selection - Photo or drawing in journal - personality, voice, concentration, physicalization - essential gesture - Journal: diary in character
Day 3	Full class long form IMPROV Peer tutor/teacher leads as "store owner" – tidies up the store and closes up for the evening. Dim lx. Then toys in the store come alive; explore space and relationships. (Past students have successfully explored this improv for 25 minutes.) Cue: store owner is returning soon. Return to shelves; conflict, conclusion. - Post-improv discussion. - Journal: reflection on process and product
Day 4	- 1 minute improvised monologue - Journal: character pockets

Evaluation

Character: personality, voice, gesture, physicalization
Appropriate Choice and Use of one prop/costume piece

Concentration
Journal Questions



Toy Story – characterization work – FIVE MORE IDEAS you can add to this Unit.

Essential gesture: an attitude or a movement of any part of the body that expresses an idea.

Gestures are small movements by the actor. These may involve the use of the hands, feet, arms or legs. Gestures can include pointing a finger at another character, waving, stroking your fingers through your hair, scratching an ear etc. Effective use of gesture often marks an average actor from a powerful one, as sometimes it is the subtleties in acting that make the difference in character believability.

Waking up – short form improv:

Characters wake up from being assembled for the first time. They start sitting. And slowly, silently, stand up and discover themselves. What's on your head? What is your prop/costume like? What kind of movement can you do? Move a little... then after that... make a sound...

Character sort:

In 2 or 3 groups: Sort in character to be in alphabetical order according to the name of your character. Talk and move in character to get there.

Cross the circle:

– cross the line: number off 1-4 == == cross when “2s” are called:

Topic: Where I live, Weather

Strand: Communicative Competence, (Cultural Awareness)

Strand unit/ Language skill: Listening (instructions)

Time: 3-5 mins.

The emphasis here is on ‘walking through a particular environment’

- Walking in character –straight
- Walking through a busy lane
- Hurrying because you are being followed
- Walking with an injury to your lower left leg
- Being thrown through the air

Journal in character: WHERE are you? Describe finding yourself in a warehouse/hospital/daycare/home for the first time.

Don't forget...ABCDE Youthwright submissions are due on February 15th

SPOTLIGHT ON... Rockridge Secondary School, West Vancouver, BC

Programs:

Drama 8 Fine Arts Rotation

Drama 9

Drama 10

Acting 11

Acting 12

Theatre Production (Theatre Company) 9-12

Theatre Production: Technical (Theatre Company) 9-12



Jr Improv team and Sr Improv team competing in the Canadian Improv Games.

Facility: Rockridge has one black rectangle for the Drama room with two small props rooms, one costume closet and the dimmer pack room. There are lots of black boxes. We also have a Player's Hall - a multipurpose space with a stage. The stage has only two wings and the space has acoustics that make us work on our projection a lot. We benefit from community use of the Kay Meek Theatre and Studio space.

Productions:

Theatre Company is producing

NEXT! (Two comedies by Jonathan Rand: Hard Candy and Meet the Roommates)

Finding a job, finding a roommate & finding it funny!

Kay Meek Studio

March 8, 9, 10

Teachers:

Jenn Ohlhauser

Avril Foster



Fall Conference 2015

This year's Fall conference has come and gone, but it was a wonderful event for those who attended. After having to cancel the conference in 2014, it was so nice to get together again with colleagues, to learn, play and have fun. The conference took place at SFU School for the Contemporary Arts in downtown Vancouver, on October 23rd and 24th. It featured the usual excellent selection of workshops, and merchants, and a great performance from Green Thumb Theatre. Over 130 delegates took part in workshops on improv, Shakespeare, Voice, improvisational a capella, lighting, and so much more. It was a great opportunity to connect with colleagues and be the student for once, instead of the teacher. Evening activities included a delicious dinner at the St.Regis hotel, and late night karaoke with the usual crowd of crooners and belters. (If you've never taken part in the annual karaoke, you really should try it next time. We'll find a place to sing if it's the last thing we do.) Next October we invite you to join us in Kelowna, BC, where we will be hosted by Okanagan Mission Secondary School. It promises to be a fantastic event, so mark your calendars now! Thank you to Gord Hamilton and Lana O'Brien for their hard work on the conference. We hope to see you all in Kelowna.



Heather Lee and Christine Knight, getting ready to welcome delegates



Some of the Karaoke crew



Improvisational A Capella with David Hatfield

WL Seaton Theatre SHOW and TELL by Lana O'Brien

2015 proved to be a banner year for our WL Seaton Secondary's 27th Street Theatre and I'm pleased to 'show and tell' about the productions we presented.

With the increase in class sizes we have morphed into having only one stagecraft class per year (30+ students) instead of 2 smaller classes. I opted to place the stagecraft class in the same semester as the musical theatre class in September 2014 when we began work on *Anne of Green Gables* (which was presented in January 2015). Early in the *Anne of Green Gables* process, I finalized my decision to produce *Romeo and Juliet* in May 2015. At that point, I decided to design a set that would accommodate both shows. Each production required many locations and our theatre has no stage left wing space and limited flying capacity, so I designed a "neutral" space which provided many levels, and interesting entrances/exits. I used roof lines and only the necessary furniture pieces in *Anne of Green Gables* to represent the locales. The colour palette was the reds and greens of Prince Edward Island and we used the cyclorama.



When it came time for *Romeo and Juliet*, the colour palette and mood shifted into Steam Punk. The audience didn't even notice that we played in the blacks, and the grassy colours were replaced with grey cobblestones and metallics. The simple roof lines of Green Gables were replaced with a ceiling full of steam punk "junk" symbols which always visibly provided a 'ceiling' with each representative piece flying in for the locale (cross for Friar Laurence, balcony rail and lanterns for the party, etc...) The one piece I used consistently was the fractured clock. It was treated with split gels (red for Capulet, and purple for Montague), LED lights and rotating gobos to punctuate the moods being expressed in the text. The reds and purples were also echoed in the costume details.

Everything was torn out at the end of the year and we were happy to see the ramps disappear after working on them all year, and to make room for a fresh canvas on which to prepare for our Fall 2015 production of *SEUSSICAL The Musical*. Thank you Dr. Seuss, for not creating ANY straight lines. Much paint and lumber were consumed in construction but the results were super fun. Three arches were built with the mid stage arch being half Who House-esque and morphing into Jungle. The upstage arch was all jungle. The biggest issue in the design was how to help tell the story of the two primary locations - the Planet of Who and the Jungle of Nool - while still leaving room for 50 actors to sing and dance. I moved the black traveller to mid stage, just behind the mid-stage arch, to take advantage of upstage levels and the cyclorama again, as well as creating a more intimate environment downstage.

I certainly enjoy the challenges of set and lighting design every season. Each show provides fabulous problems to solve and I learn something new every time. I have a long list of things I would do, and a longer list of things I wouldn't do, the same again!

Here's to life-long learning, creative problem solving!!!



WL Seaton's "Steampunk" Romeo
and Juliet

and

SUESSICAL the Musical





British Columbia
Teachers' Federation

Become a member of the ABCDE... a PSA of the BCTF

#1 Do you want to join/subscribe to the ABCDE? Need to renew your membership? On-line registration can be found at <https://www.bctf.ca/psa/join.aspx>

#2 Do you prefer to print off the application and mail it in? Find a link to the form at www.bcdramateachers.com

#3 Join our moderated email list-serv and connect with other Drama practitioners! Share ideas, ask for help, post info about your shows. Almost anything Drama-related goes. Anyone can read our list-serv, but only members/subscribers can post (membership has its privileges). (*sometimes we will post FREE offers for teachers on behalf of non-members)

To join our list-serv:

Use the drop-down list to select "psa-abcde" (fortunately we are the first one in the list!). To post a message to our list-serv, please send an email to Colin Plant at colin-plant@shaw.ca Our list-serv is moderated to avoid getting spammed.

Not sure of your membership status? Please contact the BCTF at 1-800-663-9163 and ask