

Yes, And...

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Developing
Social Emotional Learning
& Academic Skills



Improvisation activities

These two sample activities are easy to master and have great potential for classroom application. More detailed descriptions and loads of other activities are included in *The Second City Guide to Using Improv in the Classroom – Using Improvisation to Teach Skills and Boost Learning in the Content Areas* by Katherine S. McKnight and Mary Scruggs, 2008.

SPACE WALK

This basic, adaptable exercise offers opportunities to imagine, visualize, explore, and discover through kinesthetic learning. Skills are developed in focus, following directions, self-awareness, and self-confidence.

INSTRUCTIONS: Invite any number from ten students to the entire class into the playing area, as space will allow. Instruct students to walk through the space. While they are walking, keep talking to the students so that they become accustomed to keeping one part of their focus on listening to instructions while the rest of their focus is on the exercise. For example, instruct students to freeze and unfreeze, to walk:

- as though the floor is covered with sticky goo,
- as if they are in a space suit, walking on Jupiter, and gravity is pulling them down
- as though they were 3 years old, then as if they were 90 years old, or
- like someone who is happy, sad, angry, and so on.

After students have grown comfortable with the activity, invite them to incorporate eye contact or other non-tactile way of contacting each other as they pass.

PEARLS ON A STRING

In this exercise, a group of students create a story one sentence at a time.

Skills are developed in focus, listening, oral communication, self-confidence, critical and creative problem solving, and idea generation.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Invite eight to twelve students to form a back line.
- Tell students they are going to create an original story, one that has never been told before. Each student will contribute one sentence for this story.
- Ask a student to offer a beginning line for the story. Instruct that student to step forward and take the first position in the story line.
- Ask a student to give a final line for the story. Instruct that student to step forward and take the last position in the story line.
- Tell the remaining students that they can fill in a sentence any place on the line. They do not have to fall into the line one after another.
- Each time a student takes her place in the line, the story is retold from the very beginning. This helps the students track the story.

At first glance, it may seem that a “game” could have little educational value. On the contrary, such activities engage students while developing their skills in collaboration, negotiation, focus, and attention, all of which are essential to learning.

What is improvisation?

Improvisation is “creating or performing something spontaneously or without preparation, or making something from whatever is available.” The concept of Yes...And means **accepting** what another person suggests and **building** on it.

The Social Emotional Connection

The principles of improv are all linked to SEL Guiding Principles. Through ensemble building, teamwork, sharing focus, and giving/receiving side-coaching, students learn to **care, practice, ask, reflect, respect, communicate, and empower**.

Improvisation can enhance classroom community, encouraging an atmosphere in which creative risk-taking is the norm rather than the exception and where all students are truly included.

The Education Connection

Improv is an ideal pedagogical strategy for teaching and learning because it has both inherent **structure** and **flexibility**. As a teaching method, it facilitates a student’s ability to unlock textual meaning, generate ideas, and solve problems.

It really works!

For over 12 years, Dr. Katie McKnight’s **Yes... And: Improv in the Classroom method** has earned unqualified raves! Teachers all over the country have seen their students grow **intellectually and emotionally** as they speculate, reason, and predict while participating in improvisation activities.

Improvisation is effective in developing skills necessary for literacy development including:

- Self-efficacy
- Self-confidence
- Critical & creative problem solving
- Idea generation

FOR SIMULTANEOUS SKILL DEVELOPMENT & SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Student success is determined by creativity, problem solving, and self-regulation combined with Social Emotional Learning. Fortunately, these skills can be developed simultaneously with literacy improvement!

Energize faculty and staff!

CONTACT ENGAGING LEARNERS FOR A FREE, NO-OBLIGATION CONSULTATION

Dr. Katie McKnight and the Engaging Learners presenters are uniquely qualified to train K-12 teachers in the principles of improv for the classroom and help them identify effective applications in any content area.

Teachers leave each session with tools they can use in their classrooms the very next day. Let us know when you're ready to include improvisation and active learning as part of *your* literacy development plan.

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“Innovative. Creative. Enthusiastic. Supportive.”

— Julie Mitchell, Curriculum and K-8 Instruction Coordinator

The Second City Guide to Improv in the Classroom
by Katherine S. McKnight and Mary Scruggs

Many of the insights in this brochure come from work done with schools in the Chicago area and The Second City of Chicago, the improvisational comedy enterprise.

Buy the book online at Amazon.com

