Acting 4 Community

Developing Community Connections Through Drama

A Handbook for Schools and Community Organisations
This handbook has been developed from the *Acting 4 Community* project that was piloted throughout 2009 in Sunnybank State High School in Brisbane. The project was funded by the Griffith Community Partnerships Grants program and delivered as part of the larger *Multicultures* project - a multi-partner initiative aimed at promoting intercultural harmony in the Brisbane South Region, Queensland.

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*Note: Some of the drama games and exercises described here have been adapted from a range of different sources and versions of these may appear in other publications.*

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WHAT IS IT?

*Acting 4 Community* is a **community drama workshop model** that aims to develop participants’ skills in drama, foster connections with their communities and build the leadership abilities of “managing self, connecting with others and making a difference”. These outcomes can be aligned with a range of curriculum and social objectives that exist within schools and community organisations.

WHO IS IT FOR?

The model is aimed at **early high school-age young people** and can be used by **school drama staff, community arts workers, facilitators of applied theatre** and **community organisations**. Individual approaches, exercises and strategies may also be transferrable to other projects and settings.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The handbook provides a model for how *Acting 4 Community* worked within the pilot context of Sunnybank SHS as well as generalised strategies for replicating the project in other settings. There are useful games and exercises described, as well as general approaches to partnership work between schools, organisations and community groups.
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1. About Acting 4 Community

**SUNNYBANK SHS PILOT**

The Acting 4 Community pilot project was instigated by the Griffith Applied Theatre Program as a way of engaging with the local community, providing employment and career pathways for Applied Theatre students and graduates, and joining the larger Multicultures multi-partner initiative in its aim to promote community and intercultural harmony within the Brisbane South region.

The project aimed to enhance community engagement within Sunnybank State High School for year 8s who were participating in an elective drama program. Using a community theatre approach, each year 8 group was taken through a process which focused on connecting with a particular target group within their community, and developing a theatre performance for that group.

The project was delivered using a tiered mentorship model whereby an experienced community arts facilitator provided training and mentorship to two experienced Griffith students, who then delivered the project with support from two less experienced Griffith undergraduates. The facilitator team worked together with school drama staff to implement the project.

**ACTING 4 COMMUNITY MODEL**

The following diagram illustrates the process of Acting 4 Community. This is used to assist facilitators in developing workshop plans and to explain the process to participants.
The cyclic nature of the diagram demonstrates the four stages of the project working together as a whole. Starting with understanding self the participants are encouraged to consider their personal space, individual responses to activities and so on. As they move through the program their focus changes to others and dramatic skill development as they devise their performance for the target community group. Next they focus on the experience of performance whilst making a difference in the world. Lastly the participants are encouraged to reflect on the cycle and life skills learnt through all four processes. All of this revolves around a key theme or themes that provide the focus for the program.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS**

*Acting 4 Community* employs the leadership model of Managing Self, Connecting with Others and Making a Difference which has been adapted from Emotional Intelligence theory. The following table illustrates how these elements of leadership interact with community drama to develop participants’ skills in a range of ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life skills</th>
<th>Community Skills</th>
<th>Drama Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Self</strong></td>
<td>• Who am I? • What do I want? • What do I believe? • How do I act?</td>
<td>• Where do I fit in my community? • What do I think about the target group? • What do I think about other groups/cultures in my community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting With Others</strong></td>
<td>• Learning about others • Working with others • Communicating positively</td>
<td>• Sharing stories with the target group • Learning respect for the target group’s needs • Integrating my story with others’ stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Making a Difference</strong></td>
<td>• Teaching/sharing my skills with others • Being an active citizen • Contributing to society</td>
<td>• Giving back to the target group • Engaging creatively with community stories • Forging community connections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Within this structure, the project can also focus on key themes or learning outcomes that the school or community organisation may wish to promote, for example:
  - Values Education
  - Intercultural Harmony
  - Respect

Ideally, a range of themes is explored with the young participants who are able to choose one or more that resonate with them. This gives participants a sense of ownership over the process, thereby increasing their investment in its success.

- The project interacts very well with the junior school drama curriculum, where participants can be introduced to a range of dramatic elements through the development of the performance.

- Other positive outcomes exist for participants, including…
  - Development of confidence and self-esteem
  - Development of interpersonal communication and group work
  - Development of creative expression and collaboration
CREATING YOUR OWN PROJECT

For Schools…

*Acting 4 Community* can be implemented through a range of curriculum and alternative activity areas, for example:

- Year 8 elective programs
- Alternative activities programs offered at year-end
- Special programs offered during breaks and/or after school (similar to school theatre production)
- Existing programs that focus on such areas as leadership development, citizenship and community engagement.

For Community Organisations…

Community Organisations seeking to build strong links with schools in their area and to promote community values to children and young people may develop partnerships to implement *Acting 4 Community* either within the school environment (see above) or as a community activity offered outside of school hours.

Resources…

The resources needed to deliver *Acting 4 Community* are dependent upon a range of factors: the length and size of the project you wish to implement, the resources your school/organisation can offer in-kind and the number of partners you wish to involve to name a few. Some of the resources you may need to consider:

- Project Coordinator (to oversee the project logistics and administration)
- Community drama facilitator(s) (including time for consultation meetings, workshop planning, delivery and evaluation)
- Space for workshops and performances
- Publicity (e.g. invitations, posters, flyers etc.)
- Equipment (e.g. props, costumes, workshop materials)
- Catering (for celebratory community performances)
- Evaluation (time and resources for the project to be evaluated successfully)

This is not an exhaustive list, but provides starting point. If you would like more detailed information about the resources required for the Sunnybank pilot, please contact us!
2. Community & School Connections

SUNNYBANK SHS PILOT

Acting 4 Community was set up within Sunnybank State High School as part of the elective program for year 8s. Each year 8 group was to undertake an 8-week cycle of the project, participating in 3 one-hour workshops per week as part of the drama elective. Each cycle would focus on a different target group within the Sunnybank community.

At the beginning of the project, the Griffith project team consulted with Sunnybank school administrative staff to identify possible target groups for each cycle. The first target group was the School Leaders within Sunnybank SHS. This group was chosen due to the relative ease with which connections could be made and the project could “find its feet”. A difficulty with this target group was that as year 12s, they were extremely busy and therefore could not always find time to participate.

The second and third cycles targeted year 4/5 participants from Sunnybank Primary School. This group was chosen due to the close proximity of the primary school and the opportunity it would provide year 8s to undertake a peer teaching role. Acting 4 Community was also merged with a “values education” initiative within the school, whereby the year 8s explored key values with the younger participants. Again, this allowed the project to continue to develop within the relative safety of an already strong community partnership between the high school and the primary school.

The fourth cycle targeted returned servicemen from the Sunnybank RSL. This partnership required more consultation on the part of project staff to develop links between the RSL and the school and design the project to respond to the groups’ needs. This was the final cycle in the pilot, which saw year 8 participants entering into an extremely fulfilling exchange of ideas with the servicemen. Representatives from both the school and the RSL saw this as a unique partnership that promoted vital intergenerational collaboration and the fostering of respect and sharing between both groups.
CREATING CONNECTIONS

*Acting 4 Community* is designed to bring together young people with other groups or community representatives within their region to share stories. The focus is on developing relationships between the young participants and a group with whom the majority may otherwise have limited contact in an educational or structured environment.

The process also develops community connections between organisations, schools and target groups so that further collaboration and communication may result long after the project is finished.

Schools and community organisations may wish to consider what values, ideals and connections could be fostered within their own region and aim to develop partnerships that respond to these. Some examples of target groups that could be involved:

- Special schools or disability support services
- Indigenous elders and groups
- Migrant and refugee elders and groups
- Aged care facilities or seniors’ groups
- RSLs

Of course there may be other groups within your community that would be great partners, and the consultation process will vary depending on who these are, and what their particular cultural and organisational protocols require. Many independent organisations, as well as government funding and statutory bodies offer resources to help with creating effective and respectful community partnerships (see resources page 23).

SETTING UP THE PROJECT

Project Team…

The first step in setting up *Acting 4 Community* is to develop a project delivery team that is committed to responding to particular learning outcomes for participants, along side a specific set of needs within the community. The team may be made up of school administration staff, representatives from community organisations, applied theatre students, volunteers and/or independent arts practitioners, and will be responsible for sourcing funding, setting up the project and creating further partnerships with target groups who may be involved.

Once the project has been set up and funding obtained, the project team may shift focus towards the actual delivery of the workshops and performances. A key concern at this stage is to clarify the different roles and responsibilities of the team, especially given the notoriously busy nature of both schools and community organisations. An example of this may be that the project facilitators negotiate with the school drama teacher to deliver different parts of the program, or that the school drama teacher may take responsibility for behaviour management whilst the facilitators focus on artistic development. Here there is a need for clarity about the expectations of each party and for clear and regular communication throughout the project.

Funding…

As described previously, the resources required to run the project are dependent upon a range of factors (see page 7), and funding sources will depend largely upon which organisations, institutions and/or groups are involved. As a community arts project, funding may be sourced from local, state or federal funding that has a community, education, youth and/or arts focus. Additionally, there is a range of corporate and philanthropic funding available that has these areas of focus (see resources page 23). The project can be framed according to the learning outcomes described on page 6 and as a community building initiative.

Administration…

Again, much depends on the size of the project you wish to implement - how many cycles of delivery, how many partners and so on. However, it is important to consider having a dedicated Project Coordinator on the team who is responsible for administration, logistics, finance and communication between project partners. We would recommend accessing the range of resources that exist for the successful establishment and management of community projects (see resources page 23).
3. Running The Project

SUNNYBANK SHS PILOT

The Griffith Applied Theatre Program who received funding from the university’s Community Partnership Project Grants instigated Acting 4 Community. The project was coordinated out of Griffith by a dedicated project coordinator working over 150 hours. Additionally, a Griffith-based applied theatre practitioner acted as consultant and mentor to the facilitator team, attending consultation meetings between the school and community partners, consulting with the team to plan each cycle and delivering specialised training in community arts project management.

The facilitator team was made up of four Griffith Applied Theatre students at different stages of their education and early careers. They were paid emerging arts worker rates for their time and worked in twos to deliver 3 workshops per week in partnership with the Sunnybank drama teacher. The facilitators focused on the community and play-building elements of the project, whilst the teacher was responsible for behaviour management and the delivery of one workshop per cycle that focused specifically on the elements of drama. This was to ensure that the participants were explicitly introduced to the curriculum requirements of the drama elective.

The facilitator team met weekly to plan the weeks’ workshops and discuss any issues that had arisen over the previous week. The project coordinator and facilitator team maintained consistent contact with the school staff and administration, as well as the target groups involved, and regular meetings were held throughout to keep the project on track.

At the end of each cycle, a community performance was held where the target group and school admin staff were invited to view the finished play, and then share food and reflections with year 8 participants. Plays were typically around 15 minutes long, followed by discussion. The final cycle with Sunnybank RSL resulted in a more high-profile performance where Multicultures project partners, Griffith University staff and RSL members were invited to attend. The university’s media department also covered this final performance and celebration.

WORKSHOP PLANNING

The workshop planning for Acting 4 Community is framed around the leadership model of Managing Self, Connecting with Others and Making a Difference (see page 6) and follows the standard processes required for collaborative theatre making.

Workshops should provide a balance between drama games, outcome specific exercises, drama and performance skill development, and rehearsals. Each workshop will be produced as part of an overall workshop plan and designed to specifically suit the group of participants and their chosen theme. As mentioned previously, themes can be agreed upon by the participant group in response to the needs of the target group, the focus of the school or community organisation, or to meet specific needs within the local community.
EXAMPLE WORKSHOP PLANS…

*Note, games and exercises described in more detail from page 14

GROUP BUILDING

Introduction to Program
Participants must have a clear understanding of the project, how it will be administered, what is expected of them and what is expected from the facilitator/teacher.

What is Drama?
Have a brief discussion about the meaning of Drama. What is it? Why do we use it? What are some examples of where you see Drama implemented?

Have you even seen a theatre performance? What did you like? etc.

Share some Information
After the introduction you now need to introduce some ‘Low Focus’ games/exercises to ease participants into being the centre of attention. Start with small requests asking them to speak in front of the group and as the program progresses you can ask for ‘Higher Focus’ from participants. Start by asking them to share their name with the group and something they think is interesting about themselves or a favourite food or colour. This will help you to remember their names.

Name Game (Zombies or Look & Walk) *
A name game is great for building individual focus, group dynamics and for establishing a fun and playful environment.

Expectations of the drama space *
It is vital that participants and facilitators/teachers understand what is expected of them while they are working in the drama space. Encourage the participants to come up with a list of rules and expectations for the program. This will give them ownership and responsibility to enforce their own rules.

Keeper of the Keys
Participants must successfully work as a team to complete the game. Keys are set behind a student with their back to the group. The group must walk up to the keys (freezing anytime the student turns around) collect the keys and get them back to the start without being caught.

Keep It Up
Using a balloon the group must count together each time the balloon is kept off the group. Start with a goal of 50 hits and has the cycle progresses lift the target to 100 hits.

Animal Pairs
Ask the group to move around the space. The teacher calls out a number. The participants must forms groups of that number and sit down as quickly as possible. Once in their groups they are given 10 seconds to form an animal with their bodies. This is a fun way to introduce them to performing in front of other others and using their bodies in imaginative ways.
CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

The participants should have at least **THREE** opportunities to meet with the target community group. **Meeting 1 & 2** are a chance to get to know the community and understand issues affecting the Community. **Meeting 3** is the participant’s drama performance.

**Preparing Participants for the Meeting**

Participants should feel prepared before they meet the target community group. They should brainstorm appropriate behaviour and try and understand what the target group might be feeling when the participants meet them.

**Freeze Frames –theme**

Before the participants meet the target group they should prepare some freeze frames based around the proposed theme of the program. They should perform these freezes to the new Community and ask for feedback. The feedback will help them develop ideas.

**Teaching & Leadership**

Separate the participants into smaller groups and ask them to prepare a game/activity to play with the target group. They must rehearse how they will lead the game to ensure the instructions are clear. The participants will then be given the run of the workshop with the community to give them experience in teaching and leadership.

**Observation Skills**

Finding a metaphor – can you think of a fairy tale that has an example of your theme?

**Kia**

An excellent energy/warm up/warm down game that can be played by any aged participants. This game is an excellent way to finish the community workshops. It brings all the participants and target group members together.

**Reflection: Self/Others/Making a difference**

Reflection after workshops with the target community is paramount to the success of the program. Participants should reflect on successful and unsuccessful behaviour, reactions from the target group etc. The focus of the reflections should be – Self, Other & Making a difference.
DEVISING PERFORMANCE

Brainstorm Themes
Allow the devising process to be governed by the theme(s) surrounding the target group. Ask the participants to consider a genre and performance style 1) That they think the new Community would like 2) That the participants themselves would like the perform i.e. comedy, musical, naturalism, collage…

Role Circle *
A role circle is a useful technique for creating a narrative or story line for devising performances. Information selected from these role circles can directly influence the action in the performance.

Freeze Frames *
Freeze Frames are an excellent way to start the devising process. Using words, images, sounds or objects as stimuli ask the participants to create freeze frames or postcards. You can extend the freeze frames, asking for 3 difference frames 1) The beginning of the story 2) The middle 3) The end of the story. They can then bring those freeze frames to life creating short improvisations.

Short Improvisations
These short improvisations can then be extended to create full - length scenes and if they are all addressing a similar issue the full-length scenes often run together easily to generate a performance.

Scriptwriting*
Giving clear parameters, ask the participants to script one scene and one transition. Make sure the participants have answered the “five Ws”: What is Happening? When is it happening? How, where and to whom is it happening?

Understanding dramatic elements through rehearsal
Once the basic structure of the performance has been created the participants will start to learn the basic elements of drama through the blocking and rehearsal process.

“I learned that if you treat people with respect, they will do the same for you”
EXAMPLE GAMES & EXERCISES…

NAME GAME - ZOMBIES

**Purpose:** Getting To know Each Other/Focus & Concentration

**Requirements:** None

**Rules:** Ask the participants to stand in a circle. You need one volunteer to start as the ‘zombie’ standing in the middle of the circle.

“We are going to go around the circle and say our name and something interesting about ourselves, it can be a favourite food, sport, colour etc.”

“Now the Zombie in the middle of the circle will come to life. The Zombie starts by choosing someone to walk towards with his/her arms stretched out in front. Whoever the Zombie walks towards has to say the name of someone else in the circle to avoid being caught by the Zombie. The Zombie then switches and starts walking towards the person whose name was called out. This continues until everyone can remember someone’s name. The way that you can get out is as follows. 1) If the Zombie touches you on the shoulder before you say someone else’s name. 2) If you step back or lean back to try and avoid the Zombie 3) If you say ‘Um’ or ‘Er’ or any noise other than someone’s name. 4) If you say the name of someone next to you (unless we are very close to the end of the game). If you get out you have to sit down on the spot. The last two participants can do scissors/paper/rock to choose the winner.

EXPECTATIONS & GUIDELINES EXERCISE

**Purpose:** Establishing & Understanding the Drama Space

**Requirements:** Butchers Paper, Pens, thumb - tacks

**Explanation:** If your group is larger than 10 participants, split the group into smaller groups of 4 or 5 participants. Give each group some butchers paper and coloured pens.

"Each group needs to come up with a list of 7 guidelines for the drama space. Consider how you would like to be treated? Think about how you would like to feel in the workshop and what guidelines might help you. Think about what you expect from others in the space, not just other participants but guests and teachers as well."

“Once you have got your list together choose a spokesperson for your group and present your list to the group. What are some examples of this rule working? (i.e. ‘Respect Each Other’ – How can we do that? What are some disrespectful things we might be tempted to do in the drama space? How do we avoid doing those things?)”

Once you have your lists you can either compile them together or just hang up the rules somewhere in the workshop room for the participants and teachers to refer to throughout the program.
FREEZE FRAMES & SHORT IMPROVISATIONS

**Purpose:** Devising Performance Script

**Requirements:** Stimuli relating to the theme i.e. Words, Images, Objects, or Sounds

**Explanation:** Split the participants up into small groups between 3 -5 participants. Give the participants the stimuli and ask them to create one freeze frame in response to the stimuli. Once they have made one freeze frame you can also ask them to extend the freeze frames, asking for 3 difference frames

1) The **beginning** of the story (the story can be fictional)
2) The **middle** of the story
3) The **end** of the story

NB: To establish the freeze frames the teacher should count back, “**3, 2, 1 and Freeze.**” to give the participants an opportunity to move from one freeze to the next. Perform to the rest of the group and invite positive and critical feedback. They can then bring those freeze frames to life creating short improvisations but limit the amount of words in each improvisation to maintain a clear focus.

The short improvisations can then be extended to create full-length scenes and if they are all addressing a similar issue the full-length scenes often run together easily to generate a performance.

ROLE CIRCLE

**Purpose:** Creating A Narrative for your Performance and Ownership of Performance

**Requirements:** Paper & pen with a student working as scribe

**Explanation:** Ask the group to stand in a circle. The teacher/facilitator stands in the middle of the circle. The group is to focus on the theme and generate a character(s). “**I’m going to ask you to think about a character. If I point to you then you need to make up the next fact for our story. It can be anything at all but just make sure it relates back to our theme.**” Here are some leading questions the teacher/facilitator can use:

“What’s the character’s name? How old is she? Where does she live? Does she have any siblings? What is happening to her? What happens next? Who else is there?” As you are asking all these questions recap over some of the key information and you can respectfully drop any suggestions that don’t fit or are inappropriate. Ask a student to write down the story line as it is being created. Allow the participants’ imaginations to run free.

Ask the group after the activity what information they wish to keep and what they might like to drop. Is there anything else they would like to add? From this information you should have the framework for your performance narrative. This exercise can neatly link in with scriptwriting (below).
SCRIPTWRITING

Purpose: Establishing a Script for the Community Performance

Requirements: Butchers paper & pens.

Explanation: Depending on the number of scenes you need to write ask the participants to break up into groups (3 – 5 participants in each group).

“I’m going to ask you to write a script for one of the scenes in your performance. The script needs to follow the following guidelines. You can only use 15 lines*. There can be up to 3 characters in your scene and you must have 1 problem that needs to be overcome by the end of the scene. Before you start writing the script you will need to establish The Five W’s.

What is happening? When is it happening? Why is it happening? To Whom is it happening? Where is it happening? How is it happening? Once you have written down the answers to these questions you can turn your butchers paper over and start your script.”

*Lines Example:

1. A: I’m Hungry
2. B: Shhhh! We need to be quiet right now.

ENERGY GAME – KIA!

Purpose: Teamwork & Energy Building

Requirements: None

Rules: Ask the group to stand in a circle.

“The first move is about passing an energy ball around the circle. The first move “KIA!” is a handclap in the direction the energy is being passed. Let’s start by passing the Kia around the circle. Try and keep the energy really high and the energy moving quickly around the circle. Next we will add a roadblock, when you do this action (arms crossed in front of chest) and say “Ooshy-Mooshy” it changes the direction of the Kia. The Kia must then go back in the other direction. The third, and final move in this game is “Fling” (Make eye contact with someone on the other side of the circle, point fingers in their direction). This jumps the Kia to another part of the circle. The person who receives the ‘fling’ can then Kia in any direction they choose. Once you have established the game we can then play elimination.”

You will be eliminated if you:

1. “Ooshy-Mooshy” a “Fling”
2. “Fling” your neighbour
3. Don’t have enough energy
4. Make a mistake
5. Take too long to make your move.
PERFORMANCE

The final performance of the workshop program can take many shapes and the style and structure of the performance will be a reflection of the themes and issues being addressed by the participants. Some points about the performance:

- Performances can be devised in a range of different theatrical styles depending on the participants, the target group, the teaching team and the resources available. Performances might be drawn from one or more of the following styles: Naturalism, Collage, Abstract, Physical Theatre, Clown, Cabaret and many more.

- Ensure when the performance time is set that the focus is on the community event rather than the achievement of a highly polished outcome. The focus should be on the celebration of interaction between two community groups. Providing food and drink can help encourage conversation and interaction after the performance.

- During rehearsals, continue to remind the performers about their target audience, they will need to remember to keep the show’s content appropriate and also use acting techniques to engage that audience e.g. vocal variety, physical tension etc.

- If possible, find an opportunity to do a final rehearsal in front of a trial audience e.g. older drama students, students from another class, administrative staff etc.

“I learned that you don’t have to come first to be a winner”
EXAMPLE PERFORMANCE…

Theme: Values Education: Care & Compassion/Fair Go/ Freedom

The Magic Parrot
(A Children’s Theatre play performed to year 4/5s)

Scene 1: Narrator
Introduces the values (theme) explored in the play.

Scene 2: School Bullying Scene (Freedom)
Two school bullies push in line at the tuckshop and steal other participants’ money to pay for their lunch.

Scene 3: Lack of tolerance in a public situation (Care & Compassion)
Two people with disabilities are trying to make a purchase in a shop. They are rudely pushed aside by an impatient costumer. They eventually pay for their item but forget to take it from the shop. Some young girls buy a pair of shoes and offer to return the shirt to the two people with disabilities. They are lying and instead keep the shirt for themselves.

Scene 4: Being excluded from school activities. (Fair Go)
A school playground, participants are picking teams for a rugby match. The shortest kid is excluded from the game and told to ‘Get out of the way!’ During the celebrations after the match the same participants is bullied and has to run away for his safety.

Scene 5: Narrator – Suggests the Magic Parrot as a solution
All the scenes freeze. The narrator steps out of the action and shouts “Stop!” He suggests that the group go on an adventure to find a magic parrot who will help restore the values in the community.

Scene 6: Travelling through the Forest (ninja)
Two participants travel through a forest at night in search of clues as to the location of the magic parrot. They get caught in a giant spider web and have to get saved by a team of ninjas. They collected a feather belonging to the magic parrot.

Scene 7: Travelling underwater (dancing)
Two participants travel underwater in search of clues and find a feather stuck in seaweed. There are sharks circling the feather. They do a underwater dance to distract the shark and collect the feather with a clue on it.

Scene 8: Travelling through the Desert (Singing)
Three participants travel through the dessert in a quest to sing for the King. One student loses her voice and has to drink from an oasis to get it back. They find a feather from the parrot at the oasis and continue their search.

Scene 9: Finding the Magic Parrot in a dark cave
The participants find the parrot in a cave. The parrot offers them THREE WISHES. They wish that for the values in their community to work again.

Scene 10: The values are corrected and everything is right again.
All the participants repeat scenes 2 – 4 changing the outcomes so that they all have examples of values working.
4. Evaluating The Project

**SUNNYBANK SHS PILOT**

Evaluation was a key stage in the Acting 4 Community Sunnybank pilot. It was important to maintain continuous improvement and a high standard of work throughout the program, to develop the practice for similar projects in the future and to provide sound outcome reporting for the funding body. The evaluation framework for the pilot was adapted from one that was developed by Dr. Andrea Baldwin for use within the wider Multicultures project. This framework acknowledges three kinds of data:

- **Quantitative** – focusing on numbers of performances, participants, audience members, community partners and so on.
- **Qualitative** – focusing on the descriptions and narratives of project participants, facilitators, staff and partners in reflecting on the process.
- **Performative** – focusing on the actual performance outcomes, video recordings and still images that reflect the activities undertaken.

Within this framework, we collected surveys from participants, conducted reflective sessions at the end of each cycle with participants and facilitators, collected anecdotal accounts from teachers, admin staff and participants and recorded performances and workshops through video and digital photography.

The production of this handbook was a vital element in the evaluation process, representing a dynamic way to present project evaluation data and outcomes so that others may benefit in practical ways.

**DESIGNING EVALUATION**

Project evaluation aims to improve each individual workshop and the program as a whole through questionnaires, reflections and observations. Evaluation should be approached as being equally important as any other element of the project. It can be completed through several formats:

- Surveys for participants and target groups
- Recorded reflective discussions with participants and facilitators/teachers
- General observations from the facilitator or teachers
- Digital/video documentation of the process and performance outcomes.

**Surveys/Questionnaires...**

The most basic form of survey can be administered to participants at the end of the program, assessing the program’s success in engaging participants and meeting the project objectives of Managing Self, Connecting with Others and Making a Difference.

Other surveys or questionnaires can be administered to participants at different stages during the project and designed to meet the needs of the funding body, the organisation, school, partner(s) and so on. Administering a baseline survey at the beginning of the program and then the same survey again at the end can help to gauge the impact of the program on attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of participants.

Surveys should contain a mixture of multiple choice answers and space for comments in order to provide a range of data. Facilitators/teachers should allow sufficient time to complete surveys and incorporate this into the workshop program as a structured reflective activity.
EXAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS…

Q1. This is how much I enjoyed the Acting 4 Community Program
0 it sucked 1 It was okay but needed a lot of improvement 2 It was okay
3 It was pretty good 4 it was really good 5 It was fantastic!

Q2. This is how much I learnt from the Acting 4 Community Program?
0 Nothing 1 A little bit 2 A bit
3 A reasonable amount 4 Quite a lot. 5 Heaps and heaps!

Q3. Some of the things I enjoyed most were…

Q4. Some of the things I have learnt:
   a) About community…
   b) About myself…
   c) About working with others…

“I enjoyed acting for the younger children in grades 4/5”
PARTICIPANT REFLECTION…

Participant reflection is paramount to reinforce learning during and after the project. Reflection sessions should be scheduled into workshops at key stages throughout the program, for example:

- Stage One: after each visit to the target community group.
- Stage Two: mid-way through the devising process.
- Stage Three: following the final performance.

Reflection should be structured around the program’s theme(s) and the overarching goals of managing self, connecting with others and making a difference.

Example 1: Small Groups

Small groups, using butchers paper and brainstorming techniques to reflect on a specific experience. The teacher/facilitator can ask leading questions to deepen the reflection. How did you feel before/during/after the workshop? What did you do well? What would you change?

Example 2: Whole Group

Using the white board ask the participants about their experiences as a group and individual. Promote ongoing discussions regarding issues that needed fixing. Focus on the positive experiences but also cover negative issues. Encourage the participants use the dramatic and technical language they have learnt throughout the program.

PROJECT TEAM REFLECTION…

As you progress through the different stages of the project ensure that the project team has time to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the program as a whole, as well as the individual workshops. Allowing time to reflect on the processes being used will improve the overall program and the experience for participants and project team members alike.

Possible focus questions for facilitators:

- How did the group respond to this activity?
- Why were they behaving in that manner?
- Which activities excite the participants?
- How is my energy affecting the workshop space?

Possible focus questions for the project team:

- How is the program responding to the needs of all participants and partners?
- How effectively is the workload being distributed?
- What are we all learning from the project?
- How effectively is the project building community connections?
5. Conclusion

It is hoped that this handbook has provided a useful model for school/community engagement from an applied theatre perspective. The authors wish to acknowledge that we have a shared background in applied theatre with a recent and still developing interest in how community groups and schools can work together using participatory arts. Our knowledge of state education systems is limited to our involvement as visiting artists, and therefore we hope that other resources have been and will be produced which continue to explore this fertile territory.

We therefore encourage readers to use this resource purely as a platform from which their own exciting insights and innovative projects might spring. And we also encourage the sharing of practice to continue.

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- Multicultures Youth Interagency Team members from Mt Gravatt PCYC and Brisbane City council
- Griffith University Applied Theatre Program staff and students
- Participants and staff at Sunnybank State Primary School
- Sunnybank State High School 2009 Leaders
- Sunnybank RSL

And most importantly, the dedicated, creative and wonderful participants in year 8 at Sunnybank State High School (2009) who made Acting 4 Community a unique and rewarding experience for all.

“I found the students’ performance very moving in the way that it brought back memories to me and I shed some tears”
6. Additional Resources

The following resources are by no means exhaustive, but may provide some signposts towards getting an Acting 4 Community project up and running in your region. The funding sources and resources listed here are relevant to participatory arts and applied theatre projects that have a youth and/or community benefit focus.

APPLIED THEATRE TEXTS


SUPPORT FOR PROJECTS

Youth Arts Queensland – www.yaq.org.au
Young People and the Arts Australia - www.ypaa.net
Visible Ink Youth Space (Zillmere and Fortitude Valley) – www.visibleink.org
Arts Yakka (online arts project resources) – www.artsyakka.com
Community Cultural Development in Australia (online resources) – www.ccd.net

FUNDING SOURCES

General/Corporate...
Philanthropy Australia (online resource) - www.philanthropy.org.au
Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund
Coca-Cola Foundation
Myer Foundation
Telstra Foundation
Optus
Sony Foundation
Harold Mitchell Foundation

Federal...
Australia Council for the Arts - www.australiacouncil.org.au
Department of Immigration and Citizenship – Diverse Australia Program

State...
Arts Queensland - www.arts.qld.gov.au
Disability Services Queensland
Gambling Community Benefit Fund
Department of Communities
Queensland Community Foundation
Multicultural Affairs Queensland - Multicultural Assistance Program

Local...
Brisbane City Council – Community Grants Program - www.brisbane.qld.gov.au