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Structural Inclusion Tools for Theatre Teaching Artists

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STRUCTURAL INCLUSION TOOLS
FOR THEATRE TEACHING ARTISTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The term "inclusion" has been increasing in its use with students of various abilities, specifically students with autism. Creating inclusion work is a growing need within the field of theatre, and a catalyst for this work can be seen through the creation of the Theatre Development Fund's sensory-friendly performances in 2011. These sensory-friendly performances are primarily marketed to families and students who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, as ASD often creates a sensory sensitivity to bright lights, sudden movements, or loud sounds. As a theatre practitioner, the guiding question of my research is exploring whether inclusion practices can be enforced beyond the stage and into educational programming for students with ASD? Can inclusion practices strengthen the intuitive skill sets of teaching artists? How can theatre artists seek inclusion training? Can the use of inclusion practices within classroom settings perpetuate consistent work for teaching artists? The goal for my research is to use the fields of education, psychology and theatre to acknowledge and inform the difficulty in defining inclusion and create a supplemental resource for theatre teaching artists to use in practice. My methodology is reflecting on my experiences as a graduate student pursuing the Autism Spectrum Disorders certificate in addition to my MFA in Theatre at the University of Central Florida.

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For Sarah-P, my forever sparkle twin, who is completely shattering the world's pre-conceived notions about what high functioning autism means and wearing red lipstick while she does it.

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AATE – The American Alliance for Theatre and Education

ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder

ATHE – The Association for Theatre in Higher Education

REP/ The REP - Orlando Repertory Theatre

UDL - Universal Design for Learning

UCF - University of Central Florida

TYA - Theatre for Young Audiences

TDF - Theatre Development Fund

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"I believe that all masters of the arts need to write to try and systemize their art."

- Konstantin Stanislavsky

Through the crafting of hundreds of lesson plans, theatre lectures, and essays, I agree with Stanislavsky that the systemizing of art is vital to its survival. Through the systemizing of my art, I learn how to communicate what is there and eventually recognize what is not there. Unfortunately, systemizing art is a huge personal challenge for my teaching artist self.

My focused practice has been exploring the challenges and insecurities of a teaching artist trying to incorporate inclusion within the creative classroom space. Where does a teaching artist learn about inclusion? Is there a handbook that all teaching artists can read before jumping into the field? Do the companies I work for have a handbook or organized training? If I learn about inclusion as an ideal but have no tangible language or context to understand how to accomplish inclusion, I am not living to my full teaching potential.

My training both at North Greenville University (SC) and the University of Central Florida (FL) has been impeccable. As a trained professional teaching artist visiting many different locations, I defined success by creating and teaching a thoughtful, fun lesson plan; however, I now realize that my gauge for success was not including student interactions or student behavior. Evaluating student behavior has become a huge piece of my understanding of how to use inclusion practices in the classroom, and I now believe that inclusive methods always help create success. My theatre training offers useful general information about how to keep the attention of students during a lesson plan, but when it comes to the practical execution of the work, the resources feel somewhat disconnected from moments happening in the classroom. I

cannot refer to the Stanislavski acting method to find a way to get my eleven-year-old hypothetical "student one" to quit interrupting during "student two's" turn to speak.

My Master of Fine Arts degree focuses on understanding the history and practical applications of theatre for young audiences. I have learned to focus my creativity to hold the attention of students of all ages, I have learned how to structure a very strong lesson plan, and I have learned how to create partnership programs with organizations that are not familiar to theatre. I have learned how to function as a confident creative facilitator in settings where students demonstrate a desire to learn, but I have not learned how to be in control of a setting where students do not want to listen. Part of my inspiration for this research is my belief that as a teaching artist, it is my responsibility to find ways to connect with every individual student. Control can be found in connection, and my disconnection from educational resources started to become very apparent.

Over the last five years, I have recognized a helpless feeling in my classrooms, not knowing how to set disruptive students up for success in my class without labeling them as a "bad kids." The recognition became more consistent as a lot of my experience includes working with students on the autism spectrum, students who have trouble controlling behavior, and students who are put in a theatre class without choice. Through noticing my own struggles of seeing the student and not just the behavior, I have been on a mission to become better equipped for working in theatre classrooms with students who have autism. According to statistics found through a national non-profit called Autism Speaks, one in every sixty-eight people are diagnosed with autism. If I put that into perspective according to the numbers within my classrooms or workshops, I am guaranteed to encounter one person with autism per two classes.

On average, I teach four or five different classes per week. If I look at productions that I direct, I am guaranteed to encounter at least two people with autism in every production I direct. On average, I direct three productions per year. Based on statistics, I will encounter at least five hundred students per year with autism. To me, five hundred is a significant enough number to research education options. The Theatre Development Fund is an important organization to my research because they began researching performance options for students with autism that I believe can inspire educational options.

In 2011, the Theatre Development Fund (TDF) "launched the Autism Theatre Initiative with Disney's landmark musical, *The Lion King*" (tdf.org). This performance marked the first Broadway performance that TDF called "autism-friendly". The American Psychiatric Association defines autism as a lifelong disorder characterized by challenges in the areas of social interaction and communication along with restricted, repetitive behavior, interests, or actions (Quill and Brusnahan 2). TDF recognized that students who have a diagnosis of autism or similar diagnoses had difficulty sitting through an entire performance using proper theatre etiquette. What TDF designed to be "autism-friendly" was re-created in other theaters with a more commonly used term: sensory friendly. The sensory friendly name comes from the sensitivity it addresses. Sensory sensitivity specifically refers to an individual condition that affects the way the body interprets stimuli through the five senses: sight, touch, sound, taste, and smell (Quill and Brusnahan 2). Simple interactions like conversations, playing tag, listening to music can be very painful for students with sensory sensitivities. It is not uncommon for sensory sensitivities to be present in individuals who also have an autism diagnosis; therefore, sensory

friendly performances often include specific marketing strategies to community members who also have autism, or other neuro-developmental conditions.

In a sensory friendly performance, the audience is given the freedom to move, stand, or sit as needed, and it is expected that the audience will react vocally to the stimulation on stage. Technically speaking, the lights, sound, and special effects are adjusted in ways that would allow patrons with sensory sensitivity to be able to see the show without experiencing pain. The actors are prepared and rehearse the show with the technical differences.

Following the example of TDF, many theaters are creating their own versions of sensory friendly performances and programming. Sensory friendly programming has acted as an inclusion catalyst, pioneering in boldness by asking artists and designers to consider adjusting production components to include sensitive audiences. As a direct result, the discussion of how to include the community of patrons who have physical, cognitive, and neuro-developmental disabilities has been a trending topic among regional theaters. When the sensory friendly movement began, I was beginning to work in the area of theatre for social change. Theatre for social change practices introduced me to applied theatre practices, and I began working with students with disabilities.

In 2013, I moved to Greenville, South Carolina to join a playback theatre troupe through the Applied Theatre Center in partnership with the Triune Mercy Center. Playback Theatre is "a theatre based on the spontaneous enactment of personal stories" (Salas 15). The troupe used Playback Theatre techniques developed by Jo Salas and Jonathan Fox to connect and cultivate conversations within the homeless community of Greenville. At the time, I was auditioning locally and focused on building my experience as a performer. I was not a homeless individual,

and I felt like an imposter. I struggled with the reality that by definition, I was excluded from the target demographic; however, I discovered that I could still be an artist who fostered community and conversation within a community that I do not fully understand or identify with. I learned the value and power of being an advocate for the voices of others who were set apart from me socio-economically.

To further develop my sense of advocacy, The Applied Theatre Center introduced me to an avenue of applied theatre that explored creating and facilitating social skills training with individuals who have autism and/or related disabilities. This was my first experience being hired as a teaching artist for a project that included educating students with special needs. Again, I resonated with the reality that I was not a person with a diagnosis of a disability. I did not belong to this community, but I better understood the value of my position in this group because I was teaching social skills. I had a skill to offer to my students, and the way I navigated the structuring from one point to the next was very different in this group. My job was to create meaningful time together through improvisational techniques for a group of students with various abilities while the parents convened in a different room for therapeutic sharing. Spending six months as a creative facilitator within this group led to my supervisor at The Applied Theatre Center creating a nine-month social skills training program called Spectrum. Spectrum became my main focus at The Applied Theatre Center. The program was intended to create social/emotional/career development curriculum for the students enrolled, without the therapeutic programming for parents. I continued to work on the Spectrum program for the next two years as a curriculum writer and facilitator. As a result of these two years, I committed to always being an advocate for my students of various backgrounds and abilities. I also realized that I needed to be an

advocate for myself and pursue formal training to help me understand the various ways that I can connect with students who have a true spectrum of learning abilities and styles.

In 2015, I was accepted and enrolled in the Master of Fine Arts in Theatre program, specializing in theatre for young audiences (TYA) at the University of Central Florida. The MFA degree introduces a lens of understanding programming for young audiences: the purpose, challenges, vernacular, canon of works, styles of teaching, and practical experience through partnering Orlando Repertory Theatre. Through the working partnership between UCF and The Rep, I began working weekly at the Rep and was officially introduced to my first regional sensory friendly performance.

Seeing a regional theatre proactively create adaptive programming to meet the needs of the disability community confirmed to me that there was room for this growth within the field. As a teaching artist in Greenville, SC, it was very easy to believe that the programming was a niche within the Greenville community that may not apply to anywhere else. Orlando changed that assumption, showing me that the Orlando community was already having the discussions that I wanted to hear. More than ever, I wanted more training in how to work specifically with students who have autism. After my first semester in the MFA program, I decided to dual enroll in the graduate certificate program for Autism Spectrum Disorders. Initially, the certificate program served to be a different option for electives, but after the first year, I was able to navigate my scheduling to be able to complete the entirety of the certificate. The classes within the certificate include: Nature of Autism: Theory and Educational Practice, Communication Foundations and Assistive/Instructional Technology for Communication, Assessment, Diagnosis, and Curriculum Prescriptions for Students with Autism, and Methods of Behavioral

Management. Though the certificate program is traditionally completed by educators within the public-school system, I felt like this piece of my training was a connection to taking the sensory friendly research and creating programs within the theatre that could also be marketed to students with disabilities.

The certificate and MFA programs are not created to be completed in tandem with one another, so finding the right scheduling priorities and balancing the class offerings was difficult. Without the grace and help from professors and local educators, I would not have been able to complete the assignments in both programs. As a result of balancing two different program schedules, many of my research applications of the ASD work within my MFA practices in this document are described retroactively.

It is ironic to me that I began to learn the language of inclusion by including best practices from the fields of psychology and special education. I have heard dozens of actors, students, and theatre practitioners discuss how the sense of community (inclusion) is their favorite aspect about theatre, but I realized that I did not understand how to technically discuss what the word community meant without using emotions and experiences. Finding the best use of language for inclusion is personal and subjective, but in the last three years I have learned how to build bridges to other experts outside of theatre to help me address these challenges appropriately, and I am excited to share more of that language in this thesis.

At this time, it is vital for me to acknowledge and define my personal lens for the delivery of inclusion information: I am a university theatre teacher and K-12 teaching artist who is cis female, neurotypical, and able bodied. It is also important for me to include my definition of a teaching artist. A teaching artist is a professionally contracted artist, usually trained in

acting, musical theatre, or other creative art forms, who works alongside an institution to create

programming for students and adults as requested. The teaching artist is a mobile contractor,

facilitating the programming in various locations including but not limited to: theaters, school

classrooms, community centers, and outdoor spaces. Lastly, I need to acknowledge that the

words "disability", "varied abilities", "challenges", "physical disabilities" and "special needs"

will be used in this paper often. There are many different opinions about which words should be

used, based on how each community or organization chooses to define differences. I have

learned that the word disability can sometimes reflect connotations about the individual's

inability to do something that is asked. I choose to use person-first language, saying that a person

is not defined by their disability; rather, identifying a person with a disability. For example, I

will say a person has autism rather than identifying them as an autistic person. I use the word

disability as a way to honor the national organizations that include the word disability within

their communications: National Disability Association, American Association of People with

Disabilities, National Organization on Disability, and The ARC: for people with intellectual and

developmental disabilities.

CHAPTER TWO: WHAT IS INCLUSION?

In the summer of 2016, I was contracted as a lead teacher for a theater, teaching summer camps throughout June and July. In a typical summer, I meet almost 500 students in and out of my classrooms. Every classroom dynamic is different, as was the theme of each camp week, and every student naturally brought a different set of behaviors learned at home, school, or through television. In one particular classroom, I had twenty-four students, an assistant teacher, and two lead teachers (including myself). Among those twenty-four students, one student showed behaviors that were not typical to other students I had experienced that summer. The student was running around the room during class time, jumping up and down with wrists flailing when appearing to be excited or frustrated, and unable to have verbal conversation or maintain eye contact with other students or myself. It felt like the student's behavior was a foreign language that was impossible for me to understand.

At the end of the third day, I was completely exhausted and worried about not providing a classroom atmosphere that supported this student. It was clear to the other students that this particular student was not under the control we asked for in the classroom, and I was worried that the other students would discount the uncontrolled student. The behaviors were consistently disrupting our classroom dynamic, and I could feel myself wanting to label this student as a bad kid. The only technique that worked to help the student focus was a technique I learned from the Nature of Autism class that I finished earlier that spring, taught by Dr. Cynthia Pearl. I discovered that counting down from five helped the student become focused on completing the task.

With only a week of programming that culminated in a memorized performance at the end, every single moment of classroom time was vital. I began talking daily to the theater staff about options that could help support the learning of this student and the others in the classroom. I was worried that giving extra attention to the student might make the student feel singled out, yet I was more worried that without the added attention, the student could be harmed or go missing. I chose to reach out to the site coordinator for suggestions.

As a result of talking to the site coordinator, I was introduced to the theater's inclusion form, and I also had the opportunity to speak to the student's parent. As a consistently hired teaching artist for a year at that time, I had not seen the use of an inclusion form yet. I learned that the form's main purpose is to ask parents questions about the different ways that students learn. Keep in mind that someone for a diagnosis is illegal. Some of the questions might include: "How does your child best communicate with others?", "If your child gets upset, how do you calm him/her down at home?", and "What are your child's areas of strength?". It was explained to me that some parents feel tentative about filling out a form that discusses the student's behavior, because the parent does not want the student to be labeled or defined by the form. When I met with the student's parent to ask about communication methods that worked well at home, I also asked the parent to fill out the inclusion form. Immediately, I was met with alarm. The parent responded defensively and expressed concern about the student being labeled. I explained to the parent that the inclusion form is not used to diagnose or label, rather to give the teaching artist the gift of consistency from knowing what works at home, at school, or in previous camps. I used the principal that if I understand how to communicate with the student better, it should create a more positive experience for us all. The parent agreed to fill out the

inclusion form. With the completed form, understanding how to modify my use of attention, time, and expectations to help the student succeed was still missing from my experience as a theatre teacher, and it broke my heart. I felt like a failure. Ultimately, I reassigned the teaching support in my classroom by asking one teacher to solely be aware of the student's movement and communication at all times while I taught the lessons.

After this experience, I started questioning the structure of the summer camp program, curious about how and if it was identified as inclusive. Was there something about the way the camp was marketed that made the parent want to put the student in this class? What was it about the term "inclusion form" that made parents afraid to label their students? It seemed like inclusion was being viewed as a bad word immediately, and I was not sure how the negativity surrounding inclusion was being fueled (I still do not have an answer to that question). I reviewed the website marketing material and read that all of the summer camp classes were open to all students. The word inclusive was not used, and all were encouraged to register. After reflecting about the classroom experience, I realize I made a wrong assumption that any child who will be in my class will easily understand the rules and structure of our camp process. I was naïve in that assumption. In my experience leading to that moment, I had no conversations about what kinds of inclusion practices might need to be in my classroom or adapted within my lesson plans if students were struggling. I needed to know how to define inclusion.

The challenge in trying to define inclusion is that inclusion is always changing to fit the needs of its community. Every community is different, just like every classroom is different; therefore, inclusion will always mean something different to every person and organization. The theater where I was teaching summer camp had an inclusion form that could be used, but I still

struggled to know how to define inclusion in my practice. As a person growing up in the era of encyclopedias and dictionaries, I will always have my mother's voice answering in my head whenever I did not know the meaning of a word. She was very good at prompting me to "look it up"; thus, the first place I looked to try to figure out the meaning of inclusion was the dictionary. My good friend Merriam-Webster defines inclusion as the act of including: the state of being included. Great. I was on the right track with my personal understanding of including others, but the dictionary did not help me expand what I already knew. Then, I decided to look to national theatre associations for help in identifying possible resources in implementing inclusion. To me, if inclusion was a word that I recently discovered, perhaps someone else had discovered it and had more practice using it when talking about theatre work. AATE is an organization that primarily focuses on theatre education programming within theaters and high schools, and I thought it would be appropriate as a member to begin there. The Board of Directors for The American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) recently revised and published a new diversity statement for the organization that says: "…We will actively welcome and include all people regardless of race, socioeconomic class, color, national origin, religion, diverse perspectives, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, neurological or physical ability, veteran status, legal status, or education level" (aate.com). As a former member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), I checked their website, too. ATHE's published diversity and inclusion statement within their Operations Manual from April 2017 says, " …To this end, ATHE is committed to fostering and sustaining age, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, economic, and ability/disability diversities, among others, in its membership, in its governance, and in its programming, and to sustaining an association that is geographically,

ideologically, and aesthetically dimensional. ATHE seeks to be responsive to the wider range of peoples and perspectives operating within today's academic and professional theatrical communities…" (athe.org). From these definitions, I am given so many categories to think about regarding inclusion: race, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, neurological or physical ability, geographic and ideological differences, legal status, veteran status, or education level. I appreciated these parameters to think about inclusion, but I was still unsure about the bigger intention and the practice of working towards inclusion.

It was within my ASD certificate classes, where I began to learn the definition of inclusion within the fields of social psychology and special education. For this thesis, I am using a definition that helped me understand both the literal definition of inclusion as well as the greater intention of using inclusion. This definition of inclusion is from an article titled *Developing inclusive teacher education?* written by Tony Booth, Kari Nes, and Marit Stromstad. It says, "…inclusion is about consciously putting into action values based on equity, entitlement, community, participation and respect for diversity. Increasing inclusion is always linked with reducing exclusion. It is concerned with the reduction of inequality, both economic and social, both in starting positions and in opportunities. … it is about reducing barriers to learning and participation for all learners. It is about reducing discrimination on the basis of gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and family background…" (Booth et al 2). The challenge of putting values into action is where I struggle the most. Because each person holds different values, I had no idea how to connect my theatre training to my personal values; therefore, I decided to start with deciding how I connect to the values of inclusion as an individual, then as a teaching artist.

<u>Identifying a personal view of inclusion</u>

One way that I can be consistent in my inclusion policies and procedures is to identify what I believe as an individual prior to teaching a class. This requires homework and thoughtful effort before the class begins. The definition of inclusion given above lists a variety of guidelines that can be used to examine ways to create personal guidelines when creating a program through a lens of inclusivity: gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and family background. Below are some questions that I have found helpful to ask myself before beginning a new class, workshop or camp:

Gender: How do I identify as a human? What types of pronouns will I use to describe myself? Are there any pronouns that I am excluding in my classroom? Can I create programming that is not gender normative? Am I making assumptions about my students? If my students ask for a different pronoun, am I willing to make space to honor that request?

Class: How do I identify as a human? What class am I? Is my classroom a place where privilege can be discussed in its variety of forms? Is there a focus on class instead of who each person is? Does class hinder the opportunity for students to come to my classroom? In what part of town is my classroom based? Am I being paid to target a specific class with this educational offering?

Disability: Am I able bodied? Is my ability easy for others to see? Do I have an invisible disability? Do I understand that mental illnesses can present as invisible disabilities? Is my programming possible for students who have cognitive delays? physical impairments? emotional or behavior deficits? sensory sensitivity? Is there a quiet room where students can go if they

become overwhelmed mentally or emotionally? Does my program need to be targeted for a specific disability or challenge? Do I have the support of other aides or staff during class times?

Sexual Orientation: What is my sexual orientation? In this classroom, will it ever be appropriate to discuss the sexual orientation of others? Will I ask my students to identify their sexual orientation? Am I creating programming that is dependent on sexual orientation rather than the students in the room?

Ethnicity: What is my ethnicity? Do I make references that isolate students based on their ethnicity? How can I include cultures into my lesson plans? Will my ethnicity get in the way of creating a safe space for students?

Family Background: What is my family background? Do I have a mother and a father? Am I assuming that students will all have the same definition of family? Am I only inviting mothers and fathers to performances? Am I making behavioral assumptions based on family background?

The categories above are not exhaustive. Depending on the type of work, the categories may comprise of more or fewer. After identifying what I personally believe within each of these categories, I then look to other strategies through the lens of a teaching artist to see if there are principles that I might be able to incorporate into my classroom.

<u>The school of education and inclusion</u>

The school of education, specifically exceptional education, sometimes still called special education, can help give examples of models of inclusion that are actively being used within the school systems. This section will introduce Structured Teaching, The Autism

Spectrum Disorder Inclusion Collaboration Model, Universal Design for Learning, and learning styles. Each model is listed and described with the understanding that due to the nature of subjectivity in putting values into action based on classroom needs, the specifics of each model are left to the teaching artist to decide. The first two models, Structured Teaching and The Autism Spectrum Disorder Inclusion Collaboration Model, help me to provide a big picture approach to managing a classroom and environmental framework; whereas, I use Universal Design Learning and learning styles to help inform my micro managed style of lesson planning.

Found in *Accessing the Curriculum for Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Using the TEACCH programme to help inclusion*, it was in the 1960s when Eric Schopler, co-founder of Division Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) created a style of teaching for students with ASD. At that time, ASD was defined as an emotional disorder, attributing the main cause to parental influence. Eric's work was to create a series of autism-friendly materials, strategies, and settings for classrooms which became known as Structured Teaching. At its core, Structured Teaching was created to help address neurological differences in students with ASD. The Structured Teaching model is widely accepted and adapted all over the world and can be combined with other models and systems, too. An example of Structured Teaching in practice that I have observed to be successful in classroom settings is the Picture Exchange Communication System (PCES). Within PCES, pictures are used to communicate and reinforce ideas, feelings and expectations to and with students. (Mesibov et al 127). I have seen examples of PCES used to create If/Then tasks for students, helping them understand the order of a day, labeling items and spaces within the

classroom, and also used to help the students select which reward they would like to receive when work is completed.

Structured Teaching helps supplement information for students requiring sensory stimulation, social interactions or rules, attention and memory, expressive communication, and receptive language. Structured Teaching creates its own work system that includes tools like a daily schedule, color coded information, task lists, reward centers, and behavior expectations. In addition to a created work system, Structured Teaching also creates a visual structure. If language is a barrier for the students, visual structures and instructions will help assist each child in success (Mesibov et al 7-10). In my own practice, I have found that the addition of daily schedules and a reward system is incredibly helpful for my students, specifically within summer camp classes. Summer camps are longer than a general class or workshop, and a daily schedule helps both students and teachers get through each day. In terms of a reward system, I have used stickers, pencils, and lanyards that students can wear as a reward. Determining whether students respond more to attention, accolade, or tangible gifts is an important distinction for me to make. Of the methods listed in this chapter, Structured Teaching has given me the most natural considerations for my theatre classrooms, but The Autism Spectrum Disorder Inclusion Collaboration Model helped me to realize how vital it is to seek outside sources for help.

According to *Educating Children and Youth with Autism* by Richard L. Simpson and Brenda Smith Myles, in 1998, the revised version of The Autism Spectrum Disorder Inclusion Collaboration Model was published and put into practice in educational settings, specifically for teachers who were the primary educators of students with autism. A detailed look at the Autism Spectrum Disorder Inclusion Collaboration Model can be seen in five components:

environmental and curricular modifications (physical components within the classroom, category of classroom as general or exceptional education), general education classroom support (personnel in each classroom, reduced classroom size), attitudinal and social support (administrative support), coordinated team commitment (including experts from other areas of the school or outside of the school), recurrent evaluation of inclusion procedures (both from an outsider perspective and in-house), and home-school collaboration (involving parents in student education goals) (Simpson and Myles 359).

What makes this model particularly applicable to a theatre artist's craft is its emphasis on collaboration through the major components of environmental and curricular modifications and attitudinal and social support. Being able to perceive my class as an intentional environment (requesting staff, regulating temperature), having the freedom to include any modifications that may help students connect the curriculum in class to other classes or situations (where are students before and after my class, is there a way this work can connect to their lives at home), and communicating to supervisors and parents about what is happening in the classroom can make a big difference!

Another educational model that began in the 1990s and is useful in applying structural guidelines within lesson planning for teaching all students is the Universal Design for Learning. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) "is a research-based set of principles to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and effective for all." (cast.org) UDL is simply a collection of various guidelines based on the styles of learning that help articulate and research applications of teaching when crafting lesson plans. The UDL guidelines are similar to a study guide, taking educators through the various styles of learning and interaction within a subject

matter. The UDL guidelines can be broken into three major components, each with sub-categories and lists beneath them. The three major components to learning are engagement, representation, and action and expression. Each component focuses on three areas within itself: access, build, internalize.

Engagement is described within UDL as the "why" to learning. If following the UDL guidelines, educators will strive to create curricular options for recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and self- regulation. Representation is described within UDL as the "what" to learning. If following UDL guidelines, educations will strive to create curricular options for perception, language and symbols, and comprehension. Action and Expression is described within UDL as the "How" of learning. If following the UDL guidelines, educators will strive to create curricular options for physical action, expression and communication, and executive functions. (cast.org)

In February 2018, I attended an access and inclusion conference through AATE. Access to the arts is a narrower focus on addressing physical and socio-economic barriers; whereas, inclusion within the arts is a broader focus that includes mental, emotional, and social barriers. During a workshop discussing inclusion practices, UDL was presented as a way for teachers to reenvision their lesson plans to include more opportunity for various types of interactions for students. Within an assigned small group at the workshop, a colleague brought up a really great point: asking teachers to modify existing lesson plans to adhere to UDL guidelines can be discouraging to teachers because it is time consuming and cumbersome. To me, UDL represents a way to actively bring inclusion into classrooms where teachers may not be utilizing all possibilities of engagement; however, I also empathize with feedback from a teacher who

believes his or her method is working well in the classroom and does not need to take the extra time to adjust the lesson plan.

In viewing UDL guidelines through the lens of a teaching artist, I believe that using the UDL guidelines as a supplemental tool to create future lesson plans can ultimately be a strength within the field of teaching artistry as it relates to the school of education. As a teaching artist, I am often hired to go into a school system, perhaps as part of an arts integration program (integrating theatre into a non-theatrical subject) or perhaps for an after-school program. If the school teacher is informed that the teaching artist is utilizing UDL guidelines, the school teacher has the option to access the UDL guidelines through the UDL website. Having a more established understanding of collaborative tools between teaching artists and teachers leads to better support overall.

UDL provides a system of guidelines inspired by different learning styles, but if a teacher or teaching artist is intimated by a tool as large as UDL, approaching work through ways that the teaching artist interprets the various learning styles could be a good first step to start. The various styles of learning include: visual/spatial, aural/auditory-musical, verbal/linguistic, physical/kinesthetic, logical/mathematical, social/interpersonal, and solitary/intrapersonal (learning-styles-online.com). I am a teaching artist trained in theatre arts, music performance, and improvisation. Connecting to a curriculum creatively is easier for me than using a methodology, and the list of various learning styles provides a simple place to start crafting lesson plans in a new way.

As a review, using the selected definition of inclusion gives an artist a starting point to think about the classifications and identities that students bring into the room. If choosing a

methodological approach to work specifically with students who have disabilities, Structured

Teaching and the Autism Spectrum Disorder Inclusion Collaboration Model provides a strong

base for understanding how to enhance curriculum and collaborate with experts in other fields.

Similar in methodology but different in practice, suggesting use for all students, is the Universal

Design for Learning. UDL provides guidelines to structure lesson plans and experiential

workshops in addition to providing a website full of free support. If the above structures feel

overwhelming, the teaching artist could explore the various styles of learning. If including the

styles of learning into a lesson plan, the teaching artist will also have an easier time of

identifying the presented styles in the classroom.

Practical application of inclusion

I have talked a lot about how to adopt ideas and methods of inclusion into the

classroom, but I have yet to give a specific example of how inclusion has worked in my

classroom. Please forgive the time jump in this example, but it was the Spring 2017 semester

when I realized that what I was learning in Methods of Behavioral Management class could

inform my MFA theatre work. As a reminder, the Methods of Behavioral Management class was

one of the four classes offered in the ASD certificate program, and it was the second class

completed in my progression. This class introduced me to a student-first ideology and practice,

making me realize that my teaching style was focused more on what I was bringing to the lesson

rather than who was in the room. I learned that the understanding of a student's immediate

behavior could indicate to me whether the student was understanding or communicating. I began

to look more intently at behavior in my classes, and for the first time in my career, I developed

the ability to see the behavior of my students as something that was separated from their personality. I began intentionally structuring my classroom spaces to help me build the trust needed to modify unhealthy behaviors.

For my specific example, I was hired as a contracted teaching artist specifically to teach in a pre-professional musical theatre program at the Center for Contemporary Dance in Orlando, FL. The program was 10 months in length, and my job was to create a curriculum that would enhance the acting and expressive skills of trained dancers ranging in age from nine to sixteen. The curriculum focused on communication, developing relationships on stage, and creating a stage presence when auditioning. I began to notice in my classroom that my students all struggled to establish and maintain eye contact. Making eye contact is a skill that translates into many areas of life as well as on the stage. I decided to accept the challenge of applying my behavioral management structures to my neuro-typical students in my dance class in hopes of modifying the behavior of my students. This was the first time in my career when I did not treat students differently based on diagnosis. I instead saw each student as a set of behaviors that could tell me about how the student learns, communicates, and processes information.

I set up a nine-week behavior modification plan, as outlined in an assignment, for one of my students, using data collection within my classes. My detailed plan identified the behavior that I would like to modify in a student and listed the ways I would be attempting to modify said behavior. To help support an atmosphere where open feedback could exist, I instilled an opening ritual for my class each week. Each student was to sit in a circle on the floor and tell the group about the week leading up to class. The consistency in the opening ritual helped me to understand environments experienced by the students. The ritual also helped me to give

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opportunities for growth to everyone without singling out one student. With only five students in my musical theatre class, I had to be very intentional about correction and reinforcement! I also found it helpful to communicate to the students that my taking notes during class was a support that would help me as a teacher. The use of ritual and communication help set up the environment for verbal prompting. If a student was having difficulty maintaining eye contact, I would use the verbal prompt, "who are you talking to right now?" This prompt would refocus the student immediately. My introduction of this evaluation process began with my telling the students that they all needed to work on consistent eye contact (because they did), but for the purposes of my Methods of Behavioral Management class, I only kept specific data for one student.

Table 1: Eye contact data for "student A"

Key for Eye Contact x: no prompt -: prompt	WK 1	WK 2	WK 3	WK 4	WK 5	WK 6	WK 7	WK 8	WK 9
Start of class	-	x -	x-	xx-		x-	x-	xx	xx
During Lesson							x	x	x
Direct Response			xx-	x			x	xx	xxx
To Classmate				xxx-				xxx-	x
End of Class	-	x	x	x		x-	x	x	xx
Extra:									
Hallway Time				x		x-	xx		x
Bathroom Req.				x					

As evidenced in Table 1, the final week of data shows that the student was using consistent eye contact with peers without being prompted, on multiple occasions throughout the class period. Because I was consistent in my prompting and understanding of how to use prompts in a positive way, the student was able to change her behavior and improve her ability to

communicate with others in life and on stage. Consistency is a key component for recording data, and I learned that using consistency in my work as a teaching artist is an area of weakness that behavior management structure helped me identify. If I were to apply this style of consistency to a larger class, I would consider using a sticker chart or other visual aids for behavior tracking through verbal prompting and the possible reward of a sticker that the student is given to mark his or her progress.

CHAPTER THREE: INCLUSION OR EXCLUSION

In the previous chapter, a definition of inclusion was chosen to help guide the framework of this thesis. Within the definition was this phrase, "…Increasing inclusion is always linked with reducing exclusion…" (Booth et al 2). If I could amend the phrase within the definition, I would state that inclusion is always linked with reducing isolation within experiences. In this chapter, I would like to challenge the assumed binary relationship between inclusion and exclusion. Up to this point, I have not discussed or defined exclusion because it could naturally be assumed that inclusion is the opposite of exclusion. My biggest discovery throughout this process is a newfound understanding that inclusion and exclusion are not opposite values; rather, inclusion and exclusion can be viewed by the teaching artist as opposite approaches to get to the same value: creating ensemble and safety within a group.

When viewed through a prevalent negative lens, exclusion means to be left out. My human experience often provides stories and feelings of exclusion in situations that leave indefinite negative impressions, but what if I focus on a positive connotation of the word exclusion? Exclusivity is often used within popular culture to infer that something is special and cannot be attained by all. I hear about exclusive offers or an exclusive design that will only be available for a limited time, creating an understanding that not everyone will be able to attain the designed item. I propose that theatre thrives on the strategic tension that exists between exclusivity and inclusivity while creating support for both. For example, when a theater holds auditions for a show, the auditions often include anyone who would like to be considered. Then, the theater may hold call-backs, indicating that an exclusive group of actors have been called-

back to be seen again for consideration. Finally, the theater will post a cast list that is an exclusive listing of the actors who were cast in the show, and an ensemble is created.

When viewed through the lens of a teaching artist's experience, the binary can be seen in the way that classes or programs are marketed. Summer camps like the example listed in a previous chapter are approaching marketing through an inclusive lens because all are welcome; however, a production camp that requires a student to audition or an opportunity to be on a student advisory board is marketed through the lens of exclusivity. All of the above opportunities can be helpful and beneficial to the student, but the lens of participation being interpreted as exclusive or inclusive may impact the experience.

A famous quote by Elie Wiesel helps me to articulate this binary tension: "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference." (goodreads.com). Exclusion is not the opposite of inclusion, rather a different use of a group dynamic. Inclusion and exclusion are two methods along the same psychological spectrum of social behaviors. This chapter looks to the use of social psychology to help explain the impacts of using inclusion and exclusion within group settings, also proposing that theatre artists can determine the most beneficial approach to programming and increase chances of receiving funding for the programming.

Psychological theories of inclusion and exclusion

There are multiple benefits to identifying the structures and methods found within the field of psychology that are actively practiced in the theatre classroom. One of the most valuable

and difficult concepts to explain is the benefit to a student taking part in a positive group environment. Within the setting of a theater, almost every project is group based. When describing the value of programming to grant funders, parents, or students, I often feel limited to three benefits: social skills practice, development of self-confidence, and learning a new craft. Each is a valid skill to learn, but I believe that making connections through the study of group behavior within psychology will create a stronger potential to gain an audience and be funded. I find it very difficult to talk about theatre work that is not solely emotional, or experience based; therefore, I believe my ability to talk about my art can also be based in widely accepted research. This section seeks to identify social psychological theories, through the publications of Dr. Marilynn Brewer, and other methods that will help theatre artists understand how to discuss work experientially and emotionally with the help of science. This is by no means an exhaustive list of theories used; however, it will give the teaching artist a starting place into where to look for descriptions.

Whether discussing inclusion or exclusion, the fundamental assumption when discussing group psychology is the assumption that everyone has a desire to belong (Abrams et al 2). It is with that assumption that I introduce the first theory: Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT). In the article *The Role of Exclusion in Maintaining Ingroup Inclusion* by Cynthia L. Pickett and Marilynn B. Brewer, it states that the ODT theory is unique in the way that it stresses the importance of a person finding identity within social groups. ODT proposes that identity based in social groups requires a "depersonalization of the self", separating the group from the individual and only relying on commonalities discovered within the group to connect. In effect, this creates a larger understanding and acceptance of others in the group (Abrams et all 92).

The Optimal Distinctiveness Theory stands out to me because it includes both an inclusive attitude of what the group decides to be, as well as an exclusive view of self-identification being set apart from the group identity. Theatre groups offer exclusivity in the name, age, theme, or even performance of the group; however, seeing beyond that exclusivity of the group name and focusing on inclusive commonalities is why I believe the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory works well with theatre work.

As a theatre practitioner, a very important goal for all of my students is to have a safe place to feel included in hopes that each student will be able to leave the room empowered and ready to face the rest of what life has for them. What I did not realize until doing this paper was that there is a psychological model that reflects the same qualities that I listed above. The original model is called Attachment Theory Model but applying it to theatre requires a blending of the Attachment Theory Model as well as Ingroup Belonging.

The Attachment Theory Model was developed by psychologist John Bowlby. The Attachment Theory is a concept within developmental psychology that claims, "the ability for an individual to form an emotional and physical 'attachment' to another person gives a sense of stability and security necessary to take risks, branch out, and group and develop as a personality" (psychologistworld.com). Psychologists Smith, Murphy, and Coats explored the ways that the Attachment Theory could be applied to group settings, exploring specifically how attachment issues for the individual may relate to their group experience, particularly in the areas of attachment anxiety and avoidance. (Smith et al 20). In her article, Dr. Brewer describes the findings from Smith, Murphy, and Coats to mean "security within groups involves both the willingness to rely on the group and the belief that the group will be supportive of the self in

times of need" (Abrams et al 89). Connecting psychology to the work of theatre means that I am now able to describe my work beyond using emotions and personal experience. I like to say that theatre is a study about the human experience and storytelling, and I have been so intimidated by the idea of including the theories of psychology and exceptional education to help me learn the language of the human experience.

There is one more theory that I want to discuss in this section, and it is a theory that focuses more on understanding and regulating human behavior. As mentioned in a previous chapter, I discussed that one of my greatest challenges as a teacher was finding ways to manage classroom behaviors while struggling not to label students as "bad." The most impactful course of the ASD certificate program at UCF was the Behavior Management class. Within the construct of this class, I was encouraged to see the meaning in the behavior of a student without needing to see a diagnosis. Behavior has meaning, and the Behavior Management class gave me the knowledge to understand how to reinforce the positive behaviors in my classroom and try to regulate the negative behaviors. The psychologist who is known for his work in positive and negative reinforcement is a man named B.F. Skinner. The name of his theory is Operant Conditioning. In this theory, Skinner discusses that there are environmental reinforcers and punishers that impact the likelihood of a repeated behavior. The Operant Conditioning theory led to the use of schedules of reinforcement and behavior modifications (simplypsychology.org).

In my own practice, using positive reinforcement has created more open and sincere relationships with my students. When I look at the example from my musical theater class used in the previous chapter, I can identify Skinner's theory of positive reinforcement. The students began openly discussing moments in conversations or in scenes when they were not using eye

contact and then actively working towards correcting their own behavior. I felt like I had unlocked the key to the universe, but in reality, I was simply connecting proven psychology to theatre.

<u>Institutional and individual parameters of inclusion and exclusion</u>

When naming an approach to programming through the lens of exclusion or inclusion, I do not believe that one is better than the other; rather, knowing the mission of the institution and finding an approach to accurately reflect the mission is key. If the institution is familiar with the approaches to inclusion, I can collaborate differently than if I am only relying on my own inclusive understanding to practice within the classroom.

In 2015, I collaborated with The REP and UCF-Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (UCF-CARD) to create an exclusive program housed at The REP. This type of exclusive work was comfortable for me because a lot of my previous experience before I was accepted into graduate school was marketed with exclusivity. I spoke with the UCF CARD leaders, asking them if they could identify a need for theatre-based programming. The need was identified as a potential program for young ladies ages eleven through thirteen who were diagnosed with autism. Since the participants in my group were entering a pre-puberty age range, I had decided to build a creative curriculum to teach students about starting conversations with potential romantic partners, encouraging the practice of self-care like using deodorant, and dressing in ways that helped exude confidence. On day one of the program, I realized that the girls had never been in a room with other girls who have autism. Many of the girls were coming to this program from their integrated classrooms. Classroom integration is one tool that public-

school systems use to try to create an inclusive environment; however, in the integrated classrooms at school, the girls were often identified as being the only student with a diagnosis among neuro-typical peers. Though the school system has good intentions by trying integration to foster inclusion, the results were actually isolating, according to the girls. Immediately, I understood that my plans needed to reflect the very present need for making friends and understanding how to thrive in a community with similar individuals.

One day, halfway through the program, I was brainstorming the possibilities of extending the class to more students, when a theatre staff member asked me if creating this group exclusively for students on the spectrum could negatively exclude other students from joining? This question was the catalyst in my exploration of understanding the uses of exclusivity and inclusivity when creating programming. Before this moment, I had never been a part of the collaborative development process as an individual working with an organization's mission. In working with The Rep, I understood the relationship of my views of individual inclusion being filtered and shaped through the institution's incorporation of inclusion.

In contrast to being an individual bringing a specific lens of inclusion to an institution, institutional inclusion occurs when an organization is created on the foundations of including a specific community, demographic, disability, or subject. Within my understanding of institutional inclusion, the institution's principals of inclusion are physically built into the facility, and teachers/teaching artists are brought in to adapt teaching methods to the design of the facility. One institution that helped me realize this relationship was Princeton House Charter School. I have had the opportunity to teach and shadow classroom teachers at Princeton House Charter School, which is a school that specifically serves students with autism in grades K-5th.

Princeton House Charter School is equipped with locking doors, quiet rooms, accessible bathrooms, interactive technology, and sensory furnishings. During my time working at Princeton House, I understood the connection between a facility and inclusion. It was natural to think about incorporating inclusion practices into the lesson plans, because I had a lot of tools built into the environment around me.

Examining the environment surrounding a teaching artist is the focus for the next chapter of this thesis. Teaching artists experience many different environments through the pursuit of contractual work. The use of inclusion and exclusion speak to creating an environment within a given space, but I would like to take a broader look at a teaching artist's environment that requires a specialized application of inclusion that I call social inclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL INCLUSION AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE TEACHING ARTIST

It is 2018, and the news is still filled with stories involving school shootings, cyber bullying, and the tangible effects of a lack of educational funding. With the recent murders at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, there have been heated debates regarding the responsibility of teachers to maintain safety and control in the public education system. Currently, the debate is asking whether or not arming individual teachers with guns is the next step to protecting our schools or not. As a teaching artist, an awareness of the educational and social movements within society help me understand what students bring with them into the classroom emotionally, mentally, and physically. Having an awareness of educational and social movements also helps to create a context for how I respond to certain behaviors or topics that come up in the classroom.

A teaching artist can easily fall under the radar of expectations and school policies, because teaching artists do not have mandated practices through a system, other than the institution through which the teaching artist is contracted. In response to times of hostility and danger, like the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, policies may change to help keep students protected. Understanding what is happening in the world around me is what I call social inclusion, and I believe this social inclusion awareness can help keep a teaching artist safe.

How social inclusion impacts safety

This semester, I was hired as a teaching artist for an elementary school's after-school program. My job was to teach musical theatre to students, and as part of the process, there was

also a creative writing component. One day, the upper elementary students were assigned to groups and asked to take turns writing a story as a group. Each student's turn would last for one minute, and the following student would get the opportunity to continue the story that was previously written. At the end of class, I collected the stories to review at home. When I was reviewing the stories, I read one story that that discussed using a gun to shoot at people. I panicked, trying to rationalize why the student would write this. This incident happened only a week after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, and I felt helpless and scared. Was this student suggesting that a gun would be brought to school? I immediately called and emailed my supervisor with pictures of the story text, pictures of each writing group, and any of the identifiable information that I had about the student. The official word from my employer was that she would report it to the school, and it was now up to the school to handle the situation. For the first time in my life, I was scared to go to work the next week. I was scared of the reality that the assumed safe space that I was working so hard to create would be shattered. What if the student was upset and wanted to hurt me? What if I had overreacted? Before our next class, I was informed that the school representatives handled the situation, and the students were very sorry for writing a phrase that had a heavier meaning than intended. The next week, the student came up to me and apologized and also wrote me an apology letter. Everything was okay. After the situation, I realized that it was more important than ever to be diligent, sensitive, and aware of society when incorporating inclusion efforts.

The particular movement against gun violence is called #NeverAgain. If I was not aware of what was happening in the world around me, I would not have been concerned with my student's writing, probably excusing it with an age or a gender assumption. In this case, using

social inclusion helped me to be safer and take the appropriate precautions for myself and the other students in the room because I was aware of the world outside of my classroom.

Where I draw the line

As a teaching artist, I often craft a lesson plan around a topic. I struggle with the idea of drawing a line that would keep me from creating inclusive safe spaces for students. For example, I am a cis-female. If I am asked to lead a workshop that creates space for a discussion about transgender exploration, I want to feel confident enough in my craft to do so. I can create inclusive environments that empower students to identify their outlook, their way of thinking, and their decisions. I believe that teaching artists have the responsibility of knowing the art form of theater and teaching practices well enough to confront any topic. There are so many trending movements that seek to bring attention to injustice, marginalized, abused, or targeted groups of people within society including: #Metoo, #TimesUp, and #BlackLivesMatter. Many groups in society are crying for inclusion, and if hashtags are used in the media, I should expect them to be present in my classrooms.

A strength in understanding inclusion is understanding the power in creating space emotionally, mentally, and environmentally for change. Theatre teaching artists are not therapists. Our work is often therapeutic; therefore, it is important for me to understand the language and tactics used to communicate ideas, principals, and psychological connections.

The only line I believe in drawing as a teaching artist is the line of accountability. I am accountable for the information that I am teaching. I am accountable for working to create an inclusive environment; I am accountable to use clear and concise language that will help my

audience and employer know the power of my work; I am accountable to know the ways that my

institution either supports my views or can be educated; I am accountable to connecting my

curriculum to real life. I am accountable for myself and my integrity as an artist. Though it may

seem extreme to include this information, I have learned over the last five years that being a

theatre artist is not for the faint of heart. I have to be prepared, and I have found that the best

tools for my preparedness can be referenced throughout this thesis. When I first began this

project, I imagined finding the best practices for inclusion work around the country and

compiling them, but I have learned that when it comes to inclusion, I can only speak for the best

practices that have worked for me in trying to honor the experiences of my students and myself. I

will always be growing and changing.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the combination of research and ever-changing practice over the last three years, I have formulated three major recommendations to support teaching artist efforts to incorporate inclusion.

My first recommendation is for teaching artists and organizations to use an inclusion form for every student taking every workshop or class that requires registration. The form does not have to be titled "inclusion form", as parents or guardians may be apprehensive about the title, but I strongly believe that it is important to use the term inclusion somewhere on the form. In my experience, I have only seen inclusion forms used when teaching artists or organizational leadership may already be aware that there are existing behavioral or emotional differences in how a child participating in activities interprets and reacts to information. When pre-existing knowledge exists, the use of an inclusion form serves a secondary role, merely confirming what is already assumed and possibly alienating the parent/student in the process. I believe that inconsistency in requiring inclusion forms is feeding into the perception that inclusion is a term that is used to label a person rather than provide freedom. If an inclusion form was made public on the theater's website, educating about the requirement for every student to fill one out, I believe that a theater could begin to create a positive understanding of the inclusion as well as an open environment for teachers to have constructive conversations inspired by every form. I have created an inclusion form in the Appendix section of this document, for any readers who may want to use it as a starting inspiration for creating your own.

My second recommendation is to pursue education outside of theater training. I will address this recommendation with two scenarios. First, I am a graduate student who is pursuing a

specific MFA degree in Theatre. My degree is not in teaching; however, I have come to see the value of including other disciplines within my scope of study. My department at UCF allowed me to spend credit hours in another school of study, and I would recommend that any creative MFA program that provides teaching experience include courses from the school of education. If I could recommend one particular course for every teaching artist to take no matter what, it would be a behavior management course. The Behavioral Management course offered through UCF is housed under an "exceptional education" title, and I might not have discovered it without my specific interest in Autism Spectrum Disorder; therefore, beginning with a special interest certificate program or searching through a school of education's courses is recommended.

The second scenario for the recommendation of pursuing additional education outside of theatre or another primary specialty is directed towards contractual teaching artists, specifically those working with students ages two through eighteen. My recommendation is to begin pursuing training through non-artistic organizations that inspire, sharpen, and challenge the experiences of young people. For example, finding national organizations like Autism Speaks or To Write Love on Her Arms can offer a different lens of approaching working with students. I completed a graduate certificate because I was in graduate school, but if school is not an economic factor in your life, research other certifications and trainings. An interesting option is becoming certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Another example here in Florida is connecting with an organization called New Hope Center for Grief Support and becoming a grief counselor for students. Find ways to enrich your teaching experience based on new education. I believe that acting on this admonition is critical to maintaining relevancy in any classroom.

My final recommendation is to become familiar with the people and places within the field of theater who are having conversations and creating programming with inclusion in mind. Listed below are individuals and institutions that have been influential to my inclusion journey within the field of theatre, specifically in theatre for young audiences.

The Applied Theatre Center in Greenville, South Carolina, uses the term "applied theatre" to describe work that uses theatre within other disciplines or groups of people who may not normally have access to theatre. Applied theatre is a sub category in the field of theatre that incorporates inclusion practices. Literally, applied theatre seeks to apply theatre to given situations or groups, which by nature highlights diversity and inclusion. I mentioned some of my experiences within this company in chapter one, and I have grown a sincere appreciation for applied theatre because of this organization.

First Stage in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has a program called Next Steps. The First Stage website's description of the Next Steps program is this: "Using research-based best practices, Next Steps Theater Academy classes serve young people through our philosophy of teaching life skills through stage skills. We strive to help each student take his or her next steps as an artist and a person. We serve both verbal and non-verbal students, students with classic autism, PDD-NOS, other sensory processing disorders, and Asperger's. With small class sizes, our curriculum explores acting, singing, dancing and improvisation, through which students improve social understanding, fine and gross motor skills, empathy, conversation skills, public speaking and confidence." Through working in the Next Steps program, I learned the structural requirements, budgetary needs, and value of partnerships within programs that are specifically for students with special needs. Remember, inclusion does not only mean that programs are for students with

special needs; however, a lot of programs do think of using inclusion more specifically in these types of settings.

Imagination Stage, in Bethesda, Maryland, is a theatre company that is built on the ideals of access and inclusion. Access focuses on any physical barriers standing in the way of a student being able to join the programming. Taken from the Imagination Stage website, "Imagination Stage endeavors to create an inclusive and welcoming environment, as well as equitable access to all artistic and educational programming for students, staff, patrons, professional artists, and visitors of all abilities. We offer both inclusive and peer group settings, and our staff works with students and their families to identify and provide the most successful experience for each student. Parents are encouraged to provide complete information on registration forms for classes at Imagination Stage and will be contacted by a member of our Access team to discuss reasonable and respectful accommodations and support strategies. Strategies may include pre-program student/family visits, specific strategy implementation, additional staff support, and continued observation and follow-up." Through networking within The American Alliance of Theatre and Education, I have been able to meet personnel from Imagination Stage who have always been happy resources of information and discussion. Through discussions at the Access and Inclusion conference in February of 2018, I was reminded that a successful strategy used when discussing inclusion groups that are for students with disabilities and neuro typical, able bodied students is the discussion about behavior. Everyone has different behavior habits. If teachers can see passed the stigma of a diagnosis and focus on the behavior and its meaning, creating inclusion is possible.

Orlando Repertory Theatre has been an amazing place for me to explore inclusion classes with students who have special needs. Through the support at the REP, I have been given the opportunities to practice my theories, practice communicating about classes, and practice learning how theaters can begin to incorporate new programming. I also appreciate the way that I have seen the sensory friendly performances done so well here. I conclude that if a theatre is investing their time and money into sensory friendly performances, it will be a great place to have a conversation about adding educational inclusion programming.

Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois, has a student run organization that is pioneering the discussion and application of inclusion practices and opportunities for students and families. Seesaw Theatre focuses on "producing original, multi-sensory theatre for those with autism spectrum condition and other developmental differences." The company will host events for entire families to enjoy, including specially designed activities for students with autism. There is a really supportive community of artists associated with Northwestern University who make this work possible.

A practitioner who has been quick to answer questions and invest in the conversation of inclusion is Sally Bailey, currently at Kansas State University, directing the drama therapy program. Drama therapy is another sub category within the fields of both theatre and psychology that explores the use of theatre tools to assist in the emotional and cognitive processing. Sally wrote a book called Barrier Free Theatre that focuses on "including everyone in theatre arts – in schools, recreation and arts programs – regardless of (dis)ability." Her book is an amazing resource that compiles the sources she has found in her search for inclusion best practices within theatre arts. Through the AATE website, I posted that I was on the hunt for theaters who were

intentionally using inclusive theater within their programming. Sally replied with a list of theaters around the country, officially launching my thesis research.

It is unrealistic to believe that becoming a more inclusive teaching artist will mean that I will have all of the answers to good teaching or be able to create the perfect classroom. It is enough for me to create an authentic and safe classroom, acknowledging that perfection does not exist. The last three years have taught me about the value in practicing my craft of teaching, applying research to practice, and then revolutionizing my practice just in time to discover new research and start over again. I believe the development of a teaching artist is never finished, but I now know with confidence that my process, and hopefully others, can be improved through the incorporation of interdisciplinary structural tools that help my creative mind find its bearing.

APPENDIX A:
PERSONAL TEACHING ARTIST CHECKLIST

Personal Teaching Artist Checklist: identifying inclusive values

1. Individual: this portion is meant to begin a reflective process. Writing out the answers to each task may be helpful for some, but it is not required.

   a. Self- Creativity:

      i. Describe what you love about this class: Is it the subject matter? The location? The connections? Why are you the best person to teach this class at this time?

      ii. Identify what you need personally to feel supported: affirmation, results, job security?

      iii. Identify which type of class you will be setting up (inclusive/exclusive), and brainstorm positive reinforcement methods: stickers, awards, daily charts, color coding behavior.

   b. Self-Preservation:

      i. Ask contractor about safety protocols: CPR training? Background Checks? Mandated reporting of abuse?

      ii. Ask for a copy of and create a binder with emergency protocols from the place where you are teaching. Is there an evacuation plan? Lockdown procedures?

      iii. Invite observations and requested feedback from your employer to make sure expectations are being met.

   c. Curriculum Planning:

      i. The "Classroom":

1. Know your space: If possible, visit the space where the class will take place prior to the start day.

2. Examine your space: Locate emergency exits in the building, any doors/windows within the classroom, electric outlets, types of walls, if there is a drawing board or not.

3. Note whether there is enough space for chairs or taped places on the floor. If you are preparing for a sensory class, ask for permission to create a sensory wall, purchase bean bag chairs, etc.

4. Practical applications for space: Create a sign for your door, divide the classroom space into sections based on classroom activities, decorate your space with encouraging posters or phrases, label any area where students should not go, test sound acoustics to make sure that singing or dancing will not be harmful to the ear.

ii. The Curriculum:

1. Curriculum will change for every class; however, always have an outline that you can use to create a daily schedule.

2. Use a copy of your lesson plan while you teach.

3. Reference Styles of Learning information to see how many styles of learning you can include in one lesson plan. UDL guidelines will also help.

4. Confirm with employer about connections to school standards.

5. Keep a list of games and call and response exercises for the students.

6. The way you speak to your students will set the tone for the entire contract. Day one is vital.

7. Connect curriculum to life outside of the classroom. Yes, this will require research. Research the area, local places to hangout, ask the students what cartoons they watch, music they listen to, and incorporate it into your planning.

8. Be Flexible.

9. Know that you do not have to know all of the answers, you just need to create a safe space for the questions.

10. Remember that everyone has a desire to belong, though that may present itself in many different forms.

2. Institutional: upon hiring, ask the institutional representative about the below resources.

a. Completed Paperwork

    i. Photo Release Forms

    ii. Inclusion Forms or forms used by the theater to encourage parents to identify how each student best learns.

    iii. Behavior policies

b. Read the Mission Statement and know how educational programming helps fulfill the mission.

c. Identify institutional goals for the work. Is the goal inclusion? Is the goal creating an exclusive place for community? How do classes impact audience development?

d. Invest in your institutional ally. This person is your partner for the process, so keep open communication and work to develop trust.

APPENDIX B:
SAMPLE INCLUSION FORM

Sample Inclusion Form

Welcome to "name of theatre"! As a partner in education with us, we would like to know more about the ways you learn, process, and communicate. Please answer the below questions to the best of your ability and return to the educational director at least one week prior to the first day of class/rehearsal.

1. Please give your/your child's rating for the below activities on a scale from 1 – 5, with 5 being the least enjoyable:

   a. Reading

   b. Writing

   c. Playing Video Games

   d. Coloring

   e. Playing with Play-Doh

2. If you/your child is upset, is there something that you have or can do that helps you/your child to calm down?

3. Is there a specific topic that may trigger an upset reaction from you/your child?

4. Would you describe yourself/your child as an introvert or extrovert?

5. What do you/your child enjoy about theatre?

6. Is there any information you would like us to know about how to help you/your child have a good time/ feel successful in this class?

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