

Students Create a Multi-Arts Performance

Length: 30 minutes

Featured School

School:	Lusher Alternative Elementary School
Location:	New Orleans, Louisiana
In this program:	Kathy DeJean, dance teacher Amanda Newberry, theatre teacher Kathy Guidry, kindergarten teacher Carolyn DuBois, fourth-grade teacher Tricia Ruf, student teacher

About This Program

At **Lusher Alternative Elementary School**, a kindergarten class and a fourth-grade class studied various aspects of Cirque du Soleil's *Quidam* over several months. Classroom teachers and dance and theatre teachers used *Quidam* to help teach a variety of subjects. As a culminating activity, the students created an original performance piece inspired by *Quidam*, following the classic "hero's journey" epic structure.

Teachers met for planning sessions every week, and the kindergarten and fourth-grade classes met jointly with all the teachers twice a week. The unit began with background lessons in several subject areas, including math, science, English, and the arts. Later, the children watched the videotape of *Quidam*.

This program includes highlights from four phases of the students' work:

- **Brainstorming *Zoe's Journey*.** Students determine the feelings of the characters in each phase of the journey. Teachers use questioning techniques to probe details.
- **Adding Words and Movement.** The children communicate those feelings through speech and movement. Choices reflect what the children have learned about expression through vocal patterns and dance techniques.
- **Creating Costume Pieces.** Students create costumes to identify the characters. The children explain their choices of colors, materials, and design.
- **Performing *Zoe's Journey*.** Students perform the six-minute piece before an audience for the first time.

Arts Education Standards Addressed in This Program

Dance

- **Content Standard 1**—Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Demonstrate movements in straight and curved pathways
 - Demonstrate accuracy in moving to a musical beat and responding to changes in tempo
 - Demonstrate kinesthetic awareness, concentration, and focus in performing movement skills
- **Content Standard 2**—Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Use improvisations to discover and invent movement and to solve movement problems
- **Content Standard 3**—Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Present their own dances to peers and discuss their meanings with competence and confidence
- **Content Standard 4**—Applying and demonstrating critical and creative thinking skills in dance
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Explore, discover, and realize multiple solutions to a given movement problem; choose their favorite solution; and discuss the reasons for that choice

About This Program, cont'd.

Music

- **Content Standard 3**—Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Improvise simple rhythmic and melodic ostinato accompaniments
- **Content Standard 4**—Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Create and arrange music to accompany readings or dramatizations

Theatre

- **Content Standard 1**—Script writing by planning and recording improvisations based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Collaborate to select interrelated characters, environments, and situations for classroom dramatizations
- **Content Standard 2**—Acting by assuming roles and interacting improvisations
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Use variations of locomotor and nonlocomotor movement and vocal pitch, tempo, and tone for different characters
- **Content Standard 3**—Designing by visualizing and arranging environments for classroom dramatizations
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Collaborate to establish playing spaces for classroom dramatizations and to select and safely organize available materials that suggest scenery, properties, lighting, sound, costumes, and makeup
- **Content Standard 4**—Directing by planning classroom dramatizations
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Collaboratively plan and rehearse improvisations, and demonstrate various ways of staging classroom dramatizations

Visual Art

- **Content Standard 1**—Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Know the differences between materials, techniques, and processes
 - Describe how different materials, techniques, and processes cause different responses
 - Use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories
- **Content Standard 2**—Using knowledge of structures and functions
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas
- **Content Standard 3**—Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Explore and understand prospective content for works of art
 - Select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning

About This Program, cont'd.

Source: *National Standards for Arts Education*, published by Music Educators National Conference (MENC). Copyright 1994 by MENC. Used by permission. The complete National Arts Standards and additional materials relating to the Standards are available from MENC, The National Association for Music Education, 1806 Robert Fulton Drive, Reston, VA 20191, telephone 800-336-3768.

Source, Dance Standards: This article/quote is reprinted from *National Standards for Arts Education* with permission of the National Dance Association, an association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. The original source may be purchased from National Dance Association, 1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1599; or phone 703-476-3421.

Viewing Suggestions

Who Should Watch This Program

This program can be used as a model in professional development units on collaboration between classroom teachers and arts specialists, team building, student-to-student mentoring, and using the arts to enhance learning.

Other audiences for this program might include:

- curriculum or arts project planners, to help them explore strategies to use the arts to enhance learning in subject areas such as math, science, or language arts;
- funders, to build support for teaching the arts and teaching with the arts in your school; and
- visiting artists or artists-in-residence, to help recruit or stimulate ideas with them.

Before Watching

In their work for this unit, students addressed several key concepts:

- the interaction of fantasy and reality;
- the idea that stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- the relationship of action words and topic sentences to movement; and
- science and math principles seen in patterns and textures.

Consider ways that these concepts could be applied to working with other works of art. As you watch this program, consider how the children used these principles in their multi-arts performance.

This unit also reflected several important goals for the students, such as:

- analysis and critical thinking,
- mentoring of kindergarten students by the fourth-grade students,
- teamwork in creating and performing,
- immersion in creating a work of art, and
- understanding a work of art through the process of creation.

Identify ways that students demonstrated their mastery of these skills as they created and performed their original work of art.

Watching the Program

Watch “Students Create a Multi-Arts Performance” (30 minutes).

Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

Suggested Activities and Discussion

Consider the following questions for reflection:

- How would you create a multi-arts, multigrade performance as a culminating event for a unit of study in your curriculum?
- What grades would you combine? Why?
- With which classroom teachers, specialists, local artists, or other resource people would you collaborate?
- What subject matter would you cover? Why?
- What standards would you address?
- What questions would you want students to ask and be able to answer as they create a multi-arts performance?

Below are some additional ways you can build on the ideas in this program in a variety of school and community settings.

Professional Development Sessions for Teachers

- Present a discussion about collaborations with classroom and specialist teachers.
- Present a workshop on basic performance practice and technique, costume building, or stagecraft.
- Investigate using questioning techniques like those used in this program to develop characters and plot lines.
- Attend a performance as a group. Identify the concepts addressed by the performance and how these could be related to subjects such as English and math.

Curriculum-Planning Sessions

- Inventory the skills and resources needed to create a multi-arts piece. Which of these are available at your school? Where would you locate the others?
- Identify topics for a multi-arts piece for your school. How could you use this piece to enhance learning in your current curriculum? How could you use the performance to expand or enrich what you are now teaching?
- Set learning objectives for a multi-arts piece, and identify what standards you will apply. What assessment tools will you use to determine that these standards have been met?

School Board, Parent-Teacher, or Local Government Meetings

- Invite parents or administrators to see students perform. Identify the learning goals and standards used, and show how these have been met.
- Present reflections by students on how their multi-arts work has enhanced their learning.

Additional Resources

Related Video Library Programs

Watch these programs for more information on ideas explored in “Students Create a Multi-Arts Performance”:

- Expanding the Role of the Arts Specialist
- Teaching Dance
- Teaching Theatre
- Developing an Arts-Based Unit

Web Resources

The Arts in Every Classroom video library Web site: www.learner.org/channel/libraries/artsineveryclassroom

The Arts in Every Classroom workshop Web site: www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom

Related Organizations and Resources

Cirque du Soleil: www.cirquedusoleil.com

Southeast Center for Education in the Arts: www.sceaonline.com

The Hero's Journey as identified by Joseph Campbell: www.napanet.net/~aripub/Journey.htm

Notes
