

Title: Building Ensemble

Grade: High School Proficient (9th grade)

How can this lesson's inherent content be based on a wide range of resources so that our students of color, students with disabilities, and other marginalized students are integral to the content?

There are a variety of texts and online resources for ensemble-building exercises. These exercises allow students to participate at their own pace and comfortability. The more they engage in ensemble-building activities, the more comfortable they get with themselves and their classmates.

Author: Kristie L. Farr

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Description:

In this lesson, students will engage in a variety of ensemble-building activities that will strengthen their interpersonal team building skills.

Learning Outcomes: The students will be able to:

1. Define ensemble.
2. Identify, define and strengthen 6 skills developed through ensemble-building activities:
 - ★ Building cooperation as a group
 - ★ Building trust/confidence in each other
 - ★ Building awareness of surroundings (observation skills)
 - ★ Building self-confidence and self-awareness
 - ★ Building a sense of attention to detail (concentration skills)
 - ★ Building imagination and creativity.
3. Identify, define and practice proper ensemble etiquette.
 - ★ Listen to one another.
 - ★ Share their opinions while respecting the opinions of others.
 - ★ Work to keep the group energy moving forward.
 - ★ Complete their individual work as well as group work.
 - ★ Be on time, prepared and memorized for all rehearsals and work sessions.
 - ★ Remember that all parts in an ensemble are important.
 - ★ Play off each other in an interactive way.
 - ★ Focus on the reality of the scene if they forget their lines.
 - ★ Know their lines, blocking and objectives.

4. Demonstrate knowledge of the 6 skills and ensemble etiquette through participation in ensemble-building games and activities.
5. Discuss application of these skills to a performance/production cast and crew.

SEL Competencies Taught:

Self-awareness, which is the ability to recognize one's emotions and know one's strengths and limitations

Self-management, which is the ability to regulate and control one's emotions and behaviors, particularly in stressful situations

Social awareness, which is the ability to take the perspective of others, demonstrate empathy, acknowledge and appreciate similarities and differences, and understand how one's actions influence and are influenced by others

2014 National Core Theatre Standards:

TH:Pr5.1.I.a. Practice various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre production.

TH: Cn10.1.I.a. Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas and personal beliefs impact a drama/theatre work.

Time to Teach: 3 - 5 class periods - 45 minutes per class

Materials Required for Instruction:

Large open space and items needed for the exercises selected

Opening:

After the students have settled in the classroom, play a stage version of a large ensemble musical number. Example: "Yorktown" from Hamilton. Once they have watched the scene, invite the students to share reactions about the scene:

- What was happening in the scene?
- What did the scene make them think about or feel?
- What can they tell us about the artists involved?
- What skills must the artists have in order to create the scene?

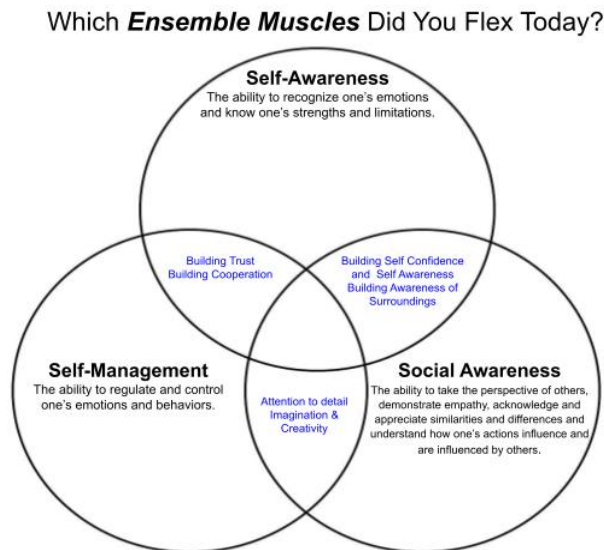
After the students have had a chance to discuss what they saw, write the word: **Ensemble** in the front of the room (smartboard, white board, etc.). Ask the students to silently **think** about what this word means (in terms of theatre). Next, **pair** each student with another and have

them **share** their definitions of ensemble. Ask each pair to share their definitions with the whole class.

Ensemble Acting: an approach to acting that aims for a unified effect achieved by all members of a cast working together on behalf of the play, rather than emphasizing individual performances. (dictionary.com)

Instructional Procedures:

1. Next, lead the students on a “Gallery Walk.” Using newsprint and markers, place newsprint sheets around the room labeled the following: Cooperation, Trust/Confidence, Self Esteem/Self Awareness, Concentration, Imagination/Creativity, and Responsibility
2. Place the students into 6 groups and give each group a stack of sticky notes and markers. Instruct them to brainstorm how the word on their newsprint can be achieved in theatre. They can pull from their own experiences or from other’s experiences during the brainstorm. (They should put one idea per sticky note.) After 3 minutes, have the students circulate around to all the newsprints. When they get back to their original, have a student volunteer read aloud the answers. (*Save the papers to add their examples to their study sheet.*)
3. Put the following Venn diagram up at the front of the classroom (smart board or newsprint). Ask the students to take the stickies from their newsprint and put the stickies where they fit in the Venn diagram.



Daily Check-in: Where did the games you participated in today, fit in the Venn Diagram?

4. Next, ask the students: How does working in an ensemble build self and social awareness? How might working in an ensemble help you hone skills of self management?
5. The next day, pass out the study sheet (*with the added examples from the activity the day before*)
6. Review the following:

6 skills developed through ensemble-building activities:

- ★ Building cooperation as a group

- ★ Building trust/confidence in each other
- ★ Building awareness of surroundings (observation skills)
- ★ Building self-confidence and self-awareness
- ★ Building a sense of attention to detail (concentration skills)
- ★ Building imagination and creativity.

Proper ensemble etiquette.

- ★ Listen to one another.
- ★ Share their opinions while respecting the opinions of others.
- ★ Work to keep the group energy moving forward.
- ★ Complete their individual work as well as group work.
- ★ Be on time, prepared and memorized for all rehearsals and work sessions.
- ★ Remember that all parts in an ensemble are important.
- ★ Play off each other in an interactive way.
- ★ Focus on the reality of the scene if they forget their lines.
- ★ Know their lines, blocking and objectives.

7. Depending on the time you have (how many days you can devote to ensemble-building,) select a variety of games/exercises to play with your students, focused on building ensemble skills. You know the needs of your students better than anyone, so choose exercises that meet those needs.

Resources:

Drama Games for Rehearsals by Jessica Swale

Drama Games for Classrooms and Workshops by Jessica Swale

Theater Games for Rehearsal: A Director's Handbook by Viola Spolin

Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook by Viola Spolin

8. Introduce the concept that each game is building “ensemble muscles” just like exercise builds muscles.
9. Play a series of games (*this can go over several lessons*), however before each game note the particular ensemble muscles this will build; you will need to prepare this ahead of time. (*see example below)
10. After each day's activities ask students to form peer share groups to complete the ensemble building skills review and discussion

Discussion: In what ways did a focus on building ensemble muscles help you experience any growth in Self-awareness, Self-management, or Social Awareness through these exercises?

How can we apply these skills to a performance/production cast and crew?

Assessment: (following lesson)

Daily: Venn Diagram: Which Ensemble Muscles Did You Flex Today?

Formative Assessment: Ensemble - Building Self and Peer Assessment

Learning for all: Because of the nature of ensemble-building exercises, students can start wherever they are comfortable and practice the skills at their own pace.

Works Cited:

Drama Games for Rehearsals by Jessica Swale

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Theater Games for Rehearsal: A Director's Handbook by Viola Spolin

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Additional Tools & Resources: Games that have worked well for me:

*Example

Large Group Ball Games

Ensemble Skills: Awareness of Surrounding, Group Cooperation, Attention to Detail

Ensemble Etiquette: Listen to one another, work to keep group energy moving forward, play off each other

SEL Skills: Self Management, Social Awareness

1. As a class, pantomime dribbling a basketball and making a basket in slow motion.
2. Next, have the class circle up and practice tossing the basketball to each other.
3. Ask the students to spread out in the room. First have them pick up a bowling ball. Help them focus on the weight of the ball. As they roll the ball, coach them on following the ball with their eyes...have them focus on the pins. You can also try this with golf.
4. Divide the class into small groups (4-5) and have them choose ball games to pantomime for each other to guess.

Card and Ball Games

1. Have students break into small groups (2-3) and ask them to choose a card or board game to play. You could have $\frac{1}{2}$ the class play while the other $\frac{1}{2}$ of the class visits each group to guess what game they are playing. Switch positions.
 - a. Ask: "If you could use dialogue, what more could we learn about the situation beyond the details of the game?"
 - b. Brainstorm questions to be answered in dialogue (relationship, age, background and personality).
2. Have students repeat the pantomime adding dialogue.
 - a. Ask: What did we learn about them from the added dialogue? What did they say to make us think that?

Ping Pong and Pool

1. In pairs, students are asked to choose a game that they would play with a table between them.
2. Play the game first as a pantomime, then let the students add dialogue.
 - a. Side coach: Follow the ball with your eyes. Let your hand and body remember by visualizing yourself playing the game. Make some character decisions.

- b. Ask: Tell me one specific thing you did to make us see the ball. What was the relationship between the 2 people? How old did the characters appear to be? What was their attitude toward one another?

Instructions Exercise

Have the students pair up and follow your instructions as quickly as possible. Each task should only be 60 seconds long. The teacher can side coach and even embellish. Make sure for each task, they switch partners.

Reminder:

- There should be NO down time.
- They should not plan or think about it.
- They should just do it!

Activities the students complete with their partner(s):

- Catch a pig & wrap it in tin foil.
- Complain to each other.
- Sell each other your foot.
- Build something from the air.
- Eat the most delicious meal.
- D.U.T & T.U.D (*They must come up with what these words mean*)
- Discover something interesting in the room and talk about it.
- Blast off on the count of 10.
- Make a shape together, then double it, then double it again.
- Gossip silently about your teacher.

Teaching Exercise

Have one student come to the front of the classroom and choose a file card. Their task is to teach the rest of the class what is on the card without telling them what they are doing. The class should do what the teacher asks and **respond with enthusiasm**.

Reflection questions:

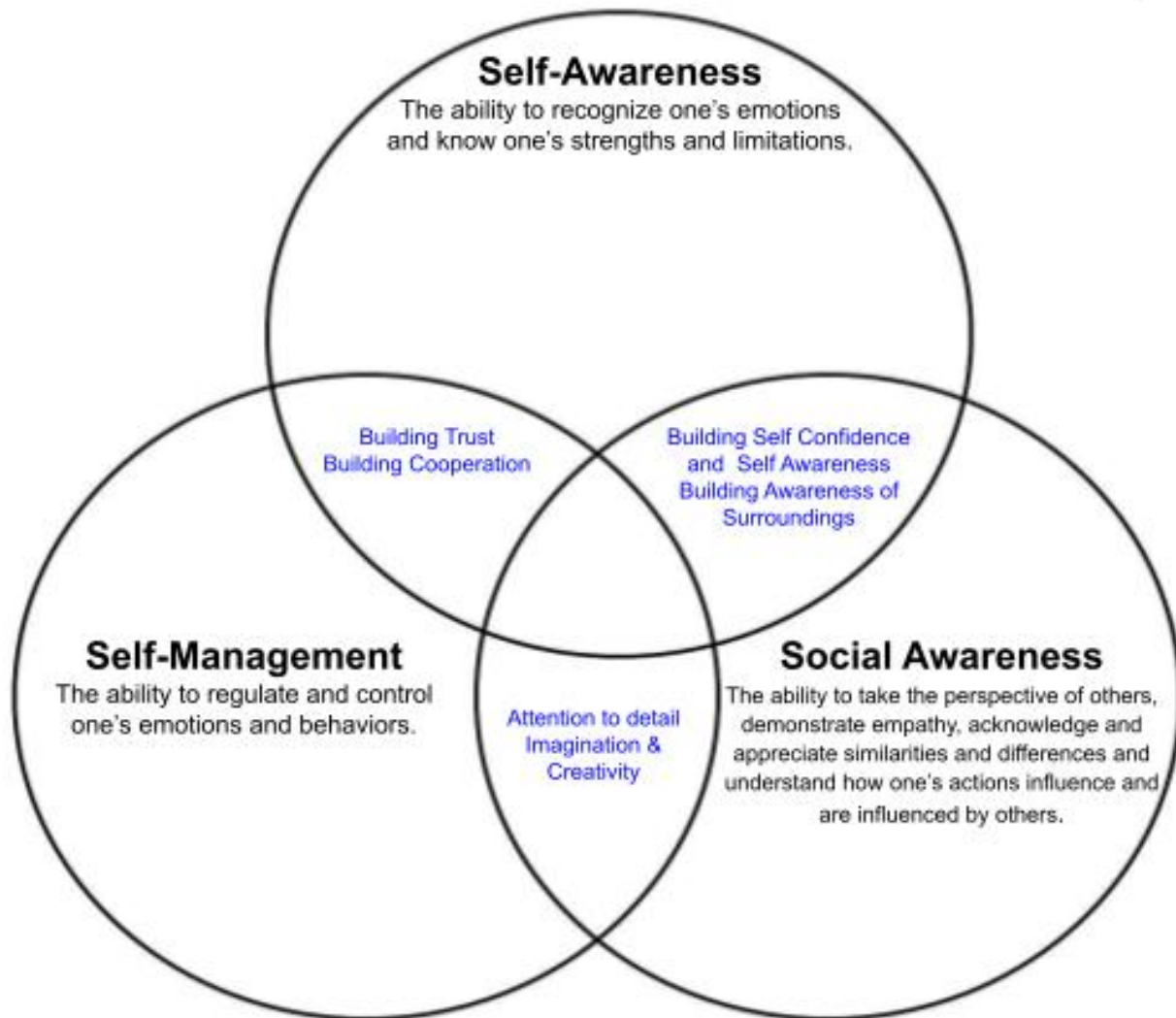
- What makes a good follower and/or leader?
- What positive qualities did this exercise reinforce for the performers?
- What negative reactions did the performers experience?

Activities on the cards:

- The newest dance craze on Mars
- Melt
- King Kong Aerobics
- Get a Bull's Eye
- Twinkle
- Play tennis on the moon

- Get out of a tornado
- Tie yourself into a knot.
- Tiptoe through the tulips

Which *Ensemble Muscles* Did You Flex Today?



Daily Check-in: Where did the games you participated in today, fit in the Venn Diagram?

Ensemble-Building Self and Peer Assessment

Instructions:

1. Using the left hand column, please rate yourself on a scale from 1 (didn't accomplish) to 10 (I totally nailed it) for each of the effective ensemble behaviors shown.
2. Fold the paper in half down the middle to hide your answers, then trade with a trusted peer review partner.
3. Complete the same exercise as a review of your partner's ensemble behaviors for today.
4. You may also want to ask your teacher to complete the "Peer Review" side for another source of input.

SELF REVIEW	PEER REVIEW
<p>I respectfully share my opinions and ideas with my ensemble members. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I respectfully share my opinions and ideas with my ensemble members. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I respectfully listen to the opinions and ideas of my ensemble members. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I respectfully listen to the opinions and ideas of my ensemble members. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I enthusiastically encourage all members of my ensemble to share their ideas; their voices. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I enthusiastically encourage all members of my ensemble to share their ideas; their voices. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I work enthusiastically to keep the group energy moving forward. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I work enthusiastically to keep the group energy moving forward. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I play off and react to each member in an interactive and positive way. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I play off and react to each member in an interactive and positive way. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I clearly and calmly recognize my strengths and challenges in a group setting. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I clearly and calmly recognize my strengths and challenges in a group setting. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I consistently identify and recognize my emotions and effectively monitor my behavior. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I consistently identify and recognize my emotions and effectively monitor my behavior. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I pay close attention to details in any written work or performance. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I pay close attention to details in any written work or performance. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I am self-motivated to take healthy risks while performing/participating and try to think outside of the box. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I am self-motivated to take healthy risks while performing/participating and try to think outside of the box. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>
<p>I am open and flexible with my thoughts and actions while working with a group. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>	<p>I am open and flexible with my thoughts and actions while working with a group. ___1___2___3___4___-5___6___7___8___9___10</p>

Name _____

Peer Reviewer _____

Ensemble Study Sheet

Ensemble Member Etiquette

Ensemble Members will

- Listen to one another.
- Share their opinions while respecting the opinions of others.
- Work to keep the group energy moving forward.
- Complete their individual work as well as group work.
- Be on time, prepared and memorized for all rehearsals and work sessions.
- Remember that all parts in an ensemble are important.
- Play off each other in an interactive way.
- Focus on the reality of the scene if they forget their lines.
- Know their lines, blocking and objectives.

Ensemble Members build the following skills:

- Cooperation.
- Building trust and confidence in each other.
- Observation skills; building awareness of surroundings.
- Building self-confidence and self-awareness.
- Concentration; attention to details.
- Building imagination and creativity.