

Shanan Custer - Writer, Actor, Director

Objectives: Shanan Custer has spent many years in theater as both an actor, a writer, and director and spent many years with the comedy theater, Brave New Workshop. Being an improviser, a person who can perform something “on the fly” (with little to no preparation), has made Custer a better writer. It allows her to keep momentum and say “yes” to herself, as she views it as a scene with herself. “Improve is disposable” - if something doesn’t go right, it’s ok, move on, and grow from the experience. In this activity, you will create your own improve performance with a partner and work together to create your own improvised story.

Standards (Suggested 5+):

ELA:

5.8.1.1 - Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners building on each other’s ideas and expressing their own clearly

Arts

4.1.3.4.2 - Describe how theatre communicates meaning

4.2.1.4.1 - Use movement, voice, costume, and props to create a scene or sequence of scenes based on life experience or an existing piece of literature

4.3.1.4.1 - Perform a character form an original scene or sequence of scenes or an adaptation of an existing piece of literature

Tools/Resources:

MN Original video clip, pen, paper



Video Clip: <https://www.tpt.org/mn-original/profile/shanan-custer/>

Activity

- 1) Watch the segment and discuss:
 - a. Why do you think improvisation has made Shanán Custer a better writer?
 - b. Why would “failing faster” be an important lesson to learn?
 - c. How does improv differ from other forms of theater?
- 2) Brainstorm various topics that could be a good starting point for an improvised skit with a partner
- 3) Working with a partner, compare your brainstormed topics and choose 1 - 2 to perform
 - a. Think of simple scenarios
 - b. Take turn, each partner performs or retells one to two sentences in the story/topic
 - c. Sample story starters...
 - i. “Once upon a time...”
 - ii. “My first day of school was crazy!”
 - iii. “One dark and stormy night...”
- 4) If necessary, write notes down to remember the basic idea of your story - however, do not write down specifically what each person should say or do (overarching idea, not details)
- 5) Share your performance to others

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