Full School Makeover!

Using immersive theatre as a deep thinking tool to drastically change how students see and interact with your spaces

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What to expect this afternoon...

1. Visualisation
2. Picture book read-aloud
3. Space photo gallery walk
4. Freewrite and discussion
5. *The Hysteri Accord* documentation
6. Issues-based exploration
7. Space walk and scene generation
8. Scene presentation
9. Going forward
Let’s start with something of an adventure...
PICTURE BOOK PROVOCATION

Don’t Cross the Line!

Gecko Press

Written by Isabel Minhós Martins
Illustrated by Bernardo P. Carvalho

Here is a recorded version read by Brendon, if you are having trouble finding it in print.
Examining others’ spaces: gallery walk

As you examine the photographs of each other’s spaces, we encourage you to engage in simultaneous seeing, thinking, and wondering. Please write down:

- Elements that stand out to you, either because they inspire or seem to present a challenge;
- Inferences you have about how and why the spaces are being used;
- Questions about current or potential use of the space, as provoked by these elements and inferences.

A photo of a space that:
1) Is well-loved and used by students;
2) Is a low-traffic area / dead zone;
3) Is outdoors;
4) Has various uses by various groups;
5) Reflects your school’s vision of a classroom;
6) Is a community gathering space;
7) You find problematic, in its design or use.
Thinking about your spaces: focused freewrite

For three (3) minutes, write to any or all of the following prompts:

1. What space in your school is the liveliest? What space is a dead zone?
2. In what areas are students most comfortable? Why is that?
3. In what areas are adults most comfortable? Why is that?
4. What spaces are students or faculty using in innovative ways?
5. What spaces are being used in potentially rebellious ways? In ways that frustrate the adults in the building?
6. Are there interesting multipurpose use of spaces? Which ones?
7. What overall feeling does your school building give to students?
The Hysteri Accord

An immersive site-specific theatre production that took over the classrooms, hallways, courtyards, and gathering spaces of our school in June 2017.

An interdisciplinary collaboration between Grade 7 students in Humanities and Drama. All aspects (script, costume, stage management, publicity, music) developed in small student-selected collectives under the guidance of instructors (us!).
“If you want to make [the] audience feel like they are in the show, first, you need to make yourself feel like you are in the show.” - Belle Z.

“From this experience, I learned how to improvise and think up solutions for problems right on the spot.” - Rachel Z.
The Hysteri Accord: Student voices

“The lesson of knowing how much protesters go through in order to get their point across to an extremely judgemental audience... They also have to persuade people of high power to agree with their point... [and] go through the challenge of collecting a crowd of very passionate dedicated people, which is hard to find.” - Chiara M.

“I learned that protest can come in many shapes and sizes. Songs, marches, speeches, art and many more. They are all diverse, but are still effective in their own way.” - Jamie I.
The Hysteri Accord: Student voices

“It was really cool to see how much technicians really influence a performance. Most often actors get credit for a successful production, but participating... helped me realize how much effort on behalf of the behind-the-scenes people really makes the show shine. It was really impactful to see people (not just actors) respond to our scripts, designs, and decisions.” -Mairin B.

“My highlight was seeing my work come to life. It’s one thing to put your thoughts into something, or write a script, or make a movement plan; however, it is another thing altogether to apply it in a certain situation. I think we all put a lot of ourselves into work on the play and... we really got a deeper perspective on protest. I am so proud of how the play turned out and how everyone connected (before and during the show) to produce something I thought was really meaningful.” -Mairin B.
The news as catalyst: issues-based exploration

To create a foundation for this work based on issues that matter to your students, you can (with students at the helm):

- Collect news articles that inspire, provoke, engage;
- Novel or graphic novel study;
- Read for relevant access points;
- Respond in a variety of ways: write, draw, discuss, protocol, present;
- Create characters with student-based voices;
- Students write (or improvise) monologues or dialogues from their (or an imagined) perspective;
- Use these student responses as sparks to begin scripting scenes, exploring further resources on the topics;
- As a group or groups, create many versions of a plot (or plots)-line, don’t stop ideation process until you feel it is right.
- Immigration
- Refugees
- Climate change
- Animal rights
- Access to education
- Religious Freedom
- Women’s rights
- State of our democracy
- LGBT2Q+ communities
- Indigenous rights
- Income inequality
- Privacy & access to information
- March For Our Lives
- Activism
- Privilege
- Healthcare
- Technology
- Homelessness
- Access to food
- ‘‘ clean water
- Violence
- Racism
- Consent
- Democracy
It’s your turn: space walk and scene generation

In your small groups:

1) Find an unoccupied space close to this room (the setting for your scene!);
2) Choose an issue from the list on the previous slide;
3) Create a brief scene that occurs within this setting and that introduces and / or complicates that issue (please don’t feel a need to resolve it in this one scene);
4) Rehearse your scene!

Remember that the scene should intentionally connect to the specific space you are creating in and should be based on your perspectives as adults, both in your treatment of the issue and in your potential as users of the space.
Scene presentations
Consolidation

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Group debrief

Gallery walk follow up
Going forward...

- Who sets boundaries for how your community uses school spaces?
- What is the timing of the use of the spaces? Potential for invisible theatre?
- What are the interdisciplinary opportunities within your school?
- Is there potential to connect with the performing arts department (if one exists)?
- What is the presence of visible student-generated work, and how might that play into your use of space?
- What is the presence of natural light and of greenery in your spaces?
- What are the current co-curricular theatre opportunities at your school?
- How might this be evaluated?
- If the issues presented are too close to the bone or might be too challenging to tackle head-on, what is the potential for fantasy, science fiction, metaphor, abstraction, through the lens of a novel study, etc?
Questions?
The project going forward...

- The model is being tested and refined as we speak.
- Since our school was in the midst of its 150th anniversary, the project became an interesting vehicle to explore the idea of legacy. We are currently generating *Legacy* as an immersive play that involves exploring the archives of the school and interviewing faculty, alumni, and other community members that have stories to tell. The play will be staged on May 15th, please consider this an open invitation to Toronto (no joke!).
- The students who engaged in *The Hysteri Accord* last year are building on that devising experience and are now raising the stakes by staging a full adaptation production of John Wyndham’s *The Chrysalids*. Again, feel free to come see it (May 29th).
- Our immersive project for next year looks like it will connect intimately with new community standards that we are starting to forge as a school. What better way to test them out than to explore them dramatically in our spaces!
Please contact us directly for case-specific questions, access to additional resources, or to connect about similar work happening in your schools.

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