

IMPOWERMENT IMPROV UNIT

OVERVIEW

Take improv beyond the misconception of “just games” to the next level of life-building skills

OBJECTIVE

To use improv exercises as a method for skill building

DESCRIPTION

Taking risks, learning to see failure as a gift, finding courage when we don't feel it, and having the awareness that what we say has an impact are social and emotional skills students will take beyond the classroom. These are skills that can be built through improv exercises. The exercises in this unit are designed to create a safe environment in which students can go beyond their old patterns to take risks, embrace failure, and be more confident and aware of the effects of their word choices. Improv gives you the opportunity to draw attention to these important concepts and to talk about them.

DEBRIEFING

The debrief is key to this work; it is as important as the exercise. The debrief is what gives the exercise context. It's in a debrief where you will have interesting conversations with your students. We want them to talk about what they're experiencing. If they take nothing else away from it, the conversations will stay with them. Sometimes these debriefs will lead into deeper conversations. You can use this process to address the bigger issues like bullying and anxiety.

Time Management: Each lesson in the unit is structured for one class period. A class period is defined as 75 minutes. However, do not get caught up in fitting these exercises in a set time. All times are just suggestions. Improv doesn't conform to a time limit! If students are enjoying the exercises, let them go longer. The more they do them, the more they will experience and explore the concepts of the unit. Additionally, the time exercises take will depend on the discussions that occur during the debrief questions. Again, if you're having worthwhile discussions, don't cut them short to fit a schedule.

OUTLINE

- Lesson 1: Risk-taking
 - To encourage students to take risks and allay fear
- Lesson 2: Failure
 - To encourage students to embrace failure as a positive aspect rather than negative
- Lesson 3: Confidence
 - To practice and apply attributes of confidence
- Lesson 4: Positive and Negative Speak
 - To identify and have self-awareness of positive and negative speak

ASSESSMENT

It is highly suggested not to formally assess this unit. The goal here is to have students practice self-awareness, to analyze what they do, and become aware of their impact on others. Alternatively, you can assess through process and skills:

- Process assessment: How are students engaged in the lesson? (active listening, collaboration, discussion participation, effort)
- Skills assessment: How are students demonstrating skills? (e.g., focus, physical engagement, vocal engagement)

You can also assess on a binary scale. If students engage, they receive an A. If they don't, they receive an F. This way, you're never judging "talent." This unit is not about how "good" your students are at improv. Take "good" and "bad" or "right" and "wrong" out of it. There are no wrong choices, only strong choices.