

2019-20 Wolf Trap Grant for High School Performing Arts Teachers

Proposal Information (short answer)

Name of Project :

Synetic Synthesis

Approximate Number of Students Served :

27 (one classroom of advanced students)

What learning objectives (national, state, or county) will be covered through this project? :

At the Virginia State and Fairfax County level, the following learning objectives for Theater Arts will be covered:

Week 1: What is Physical Theater?- Students will learn what Physical Theater is and begin to apply techniques to their own character interpretations. *VA Standards (TIV.1 1-3, TIV.2 1-2). FCPS Standards (Theatre IV 2.A.4)*

Week 2: Clowning is Serious Business- Students will work with Synetic Artistic Director Paata Tsikurishvili on a clowning master class. Students will also work on body isolation and how specific physical choices can go a long way in telling a story. *VA Standards (TIV.4) FCPS Standards (Theatre IV 2.A.4)*

Week 3: Divisive Devised Theater- Students explore tactics in devising theater. Students will work in small groups, with help from Synetic Teaching Artists, on creating a short devised piece to show each other, This piece will be inspired by something from their own lives. *VA Standards (TIV.6 1-4) FCPS Standards (Theatre IV 1.B.5, Theater IV 1.C.4)*

Week 4: The Shape of Stories-This week will be dedicated to students telling their own stories. They will discuss and learn about different narrative story shapes and begin working on using Physical Theater to express social issues relevant to their own lives. *VA Standards (TIV.6) FCPS Standards (Theatre IV 2.A.2, Theatre IV 1.C.4)*

Week 5: Practice how we Play- Students continue to develop their devised stories, emphasizing social issues that are important to them, using all the techniques from previous weeks. *VA Standards (TIV.12, TIV.13) FCPS Standards (Theatre IV 3.A.2)*

Week 6: Committing to Choices- Students take feedback and practice their devised pieces in preparation for a final showcase performance open to the public. *VA Standards (TIV.16, TIV.17), FCPS Standards (Theatre IV 3.A.2)*

Definition of Standards

1.B.5 Devise and assess a theatrical work developed through improvisation.

1.C.4 Collaborate to develop and create aesthetically unified performances.

2.A.2 Demonstrate and refine individual artistic choices to support ensemble performance.

2.A.4 Integrate and refine effective physicality to enhance performance

3.A.2 Identify artistic choices and demonstrate in rehearsal and performance.

TIV.1 The student will work independently and collaboratively as an actor to create formal and informal presentations, including

1. depicting multidimensional characters;
2. depicting given circumstances; and
3. living truthfully in the moment.

TIV.2 The student will create a personal acting technique by

1. investigating both external and internal acting approaches;
2. applying different acting approaches to different pieces (e.g., improvisations, monologues, scenes, plays)

TIV.4 The student will apply movement skills in characterization—posture, gait, gesture, leading center, balance, poise, timing, and facial expression.

TIV.6 The student will work independently and collaboratively as a director to create formal and informal presentations, including 1. depicting multidimensional characters; 2. following the playwright's intent; 3. depicting given circumstances; and 4. realizing directorial concepts.

TIV.12 The student will critique performances, focusing on the acting or directing.

TIV.13 The student will evaluate the qualities of a theatrical production that elicit an audience response, including the director's interpretation, the production elements, and the actors' abilities to sustain and project believable characterizations.

TIV.16 The student will explain how personal aesthetic criteria are applied to personal performance and direction.

TIV.17 The student will justify personal perceptions of a playwright's intent, as filtered through the director's vision

Please provide a short description of your project. Include information about the project's goal and how students will reach this goal.

The Lee High School Theatre Department will partner with Synetic Teaching Artists to produce a 6-week "Synetic Synthesis" workshop where 27 advanced students will create and then perform an original piece of physical theater that reflects their own stories, interests, and ideas. Lee's Director of Theatre Arts, Shannon Lynch, received her master's in Educational Theatre from New York University, where her program centered around devising original theater with young adults. Likewise, all Synetic Artists specialize in physical creation and adaptation - transforming words into original storytelling through movement.

The goal of this project is to empower students to explore a collectively understood, yet deeply personal topic (being an outsider, coming of age, multiculturalism, bullying, following your passion, etc.), through embodied storytelling. students will create both their own characters and the story as a whole, all under the guidance of advanced Synetic Teaching Artists using physical movement to amplify the story they tell. They will receive training in Script development through improvisation, develop artistic relationships, work as an ensemble, and train in physical theater techniques. Their learning will be supported by Synetic Education Director Christopher Rushing and students will have a chance to learn from Synetic's founding artistic director and physical theater master Paata Tsikurishviliduring during twelve classes over six weeks, culminating in a final performance at Lee High School open to the community.

How will this project impact student learning beyond the current school year?

A fortuitous byproduct of this collaboration will be Synetic incubating a new outreach residency curriculum - guiding students to devise their own piece - which is a core growth initiative for

Synetic this season. Synetic will learn from this iteration and then scale to other programs throughout the Washington DC Metro Area in the years to come.

Students will gain theatrical experience that will help prepare them for both the collegiate and professional acting world. They will develop critical thinking and evaluation skills that can be applied to future projects. Students will be taught exercises and techniques, that if they continue to apply, will help them develop a greater physical acting vocabulary. Students will also strengthen their ability to take their own personal experiences and turn them into an artistic expression. Students will develop storytelling skills that can be applied to other areas of interest in the future.

This project is also an opportunity for Shannon to use her expertise in devising work with young theater artists, while developing a new set of skills. The work we do with the project this year will be applied to future classes and will help us develop a more robust theater program. This project will serve as the groundwork for similar projects in the future at Lee High School.