

**TheatreMoves, Inc.**  
**Learning through Movement Theatre**

**A Guide for Teachers**

**A companion piece to “The Art of Collaboration”**

**Written by Neil Intraub, Paul Rajeckas and Carol Fineberg**  
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### **Introduction**

Learn to read by not reading? Learn math and science by *moving*? That doesn't sound right. We all know that we learn to read by reading, right? And math concepts and skills are internalized by memorization and drill. Not quite. We really learn to read once we have acquired the power to listen and speak. We learn to listen and speak because we experience life that requires communication. We learn to comprehend what we are reading when it resonates with our experience; the more we experience as young readers, the more likely we will be able to understand what we read. We learn principles of math and science by trying them out in the physical world.

What about writing? We try to teach our students that writing has a form and style and adheres to a number of traditional and innovative conventions – all of which help us communicate. Our job is not only to help children make letters, words and sentences, but to communicate meaning about our life's experiences.

**A note to school  
administrators:**

**Schools throughout the US  
hire TheatreMoves Inc. to  
help teachers and students  
approach academic subject  
matter in a way that enhances  
learning through the multiple  
intelligences.**

What kinds of experiences? We all know that children chock a whole block of activities into their daily lives; kids don't always realize that what they do from waking to sleeping has importance. The writing we do in school can help validate children's activities by encouraging them to talk about and write about a game they played with a friend, a trip to the store that they took with their parent, a picture they made in art class, a fight they had with a neighbor, and so on. Every minute lived can be grist for a young writer's mill. Our job is to help them put their writing into some kind of form so that we will be interested and understand what the writer wants us to understand, recognize what the writer wants us to recognize.

For reluctant writers as well as budding authors, physicalizing meaning is an important part of learning to communicate effectively. And this is where *TheatreMoves* comes in. By using the various exercises and culminating activities of *TheatreMoves, Inc.*, students and teachers learn the concept of form, conventions, and style with a method that is analogous to the writing process. *TheatreMoves* artists, Paul Rajeckas and Neil Intraub, demonstrate how children can develop and apprehend meaning through involvement with physical theatre games.

The *TheatreMoves* process emphasizes techniques of physical communication that lead to choreographing one's own stories. Teachers who complete a series of *TheatreMoves* workshops should be able to lead students in a variety of activities that show how physical theatre techniques enhance achievement of academic learning standards.

TheatreMoves artists, Paul Rajeckas & Neil Intraub introduce innovative, challenging activities that combine English Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Science with Theatre skills.

The activities are drawn from theatre exercises described in the *TheatreMoves* teacher/student guide, "**The Art of Collaboration.**" References to learning standards are based on *Learning Standards from New York State* unless otherwise noted. The New York State standards are sufficiently generic to apply to schools in other states.

**We encourage teachers to use this Guide to stimulate their own original ideas of translating scientific theories or language arts/social studies ideas into physical scenarios that in turn can be transformed into explanations of various mandates in the prescribed curriculum.**

For schools that are standards based, or schools that are arts centered, and for all schools that nourish the multiple intelligences, these activities are helpful. TheatreMoves artistic directors Paul Rajeckas and Neil Intraub hope that this Guide helps teachers and students to continue their search for meaning using a bag of tricks that unite theater arts and academic domains.

**A sampler of activities that  
reinforce selected New York State or National  
academic learning standards.**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Learning Standards</b>
<p data-bbox="709 315 842 342" style="text-align: center;"><b>Photograph</b></p> <p data-bbox="226 344 1323 574">Students will clump into a group photograph while maintaining a neutral facial expression according to teacher’s directions regarding the context of the photograph. Teacher follows directions from “The Art of Collaboration,” conducting students through a series of exaggerated facial expressions suitable to the story behind the photograph. After successfully completing the exercise, students will be asked by their teacher to write the data, facts, or ideas gleaned from the animated photograph. This should result in a list of information which can then be transformed into an informative, short essay. Essays will be assessed on basis of writer’s use of information and appropriate writing conventions (paragraphs, use of personal voice).</p> <p data-bbox="716 607 835 634" style="text-align: center;"><b>Morphing</b></p> <p data-bbox="226 636 1312 833">Students will select a scene from a narrative poem, short story or novel that they have studied in class. One student will act as “director” and lead a group through a Morphing exercise, using the facts of the scene drawn from literature as the basis of the exercise. Students will assume various characters and clump together in order to be directed through various transformations keyed to the work of literature.</p> <p data-bbox="226 867 1323 964">The student audience will interpret the morphing scene and apply their insight into a brief group essay on the meaning of the literary piece that they have just read.</p> <p data-bbox="226 998 1228 1057"><b>(See additional exercises below that relate to math and science standards.)</b></p>	<p data-bbox="1352 321 1902 542"><b>Standard 1, English Language Arts (ELA):</b> Students will read, write, listen, and speak for <b>information and understanding.</b></p> <p data-bbox="1352 584 1934 857">As listeners and readers, students will <b>collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge</b> generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.</p> <p data-bbox="1352 901 1923 1057">As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to <b>acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.</b></p>

### More morphing

Select a poem with nonsense syllables such as “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll. Use the “new words” to invent morphing movement pieces to go along with the invented words. Older students might use onomatopoeia techniques to enhance the improvisations.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.  
"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"  
He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought --  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood awhile in thought.  
And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came!  
One, two! One, two! And through and  
through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.

**Counterbalancing**

Students will perform various counterbalancing exercises led by the teacher and write their responses in letter form to a friend. The letter might start like this:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (friend),  
 You won't believe what we did in English class today!  
 Our teacher, \_\_\_\_\_, led us through an exercise  
 called \_\_\_\_\_ where I had to  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 I understood that the purpose of the exercise was to  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I was surprised by the way I  
 felt as I \_\_\_\_\_. I guess this kind of  
 exercise is particularly important when you need to  
 \_\_\_\_\_. I wonder what will happen in class  
 tomorrow!  
 Sincerely,

**Paul and Neil advise teachers to:**

- Encourage students to be very detailed (give them a minimum count of words to fulfill the assignment well) in their letters, filling the letters with sights, sounds, feelings, and insights.
- Ask students to view a scene from The Taming of the Shrew and identify moments where actors have to trust each other. Ask students to select other scenes from a video version of a play to demonstrate trusting behavior.

**Standard 2, ELA: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.**

Students will read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances, **relate texts and performances to their own lives**, and develop an understanding of the **diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions** the texts and performances represent.

As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for **self-expression and artistic creation.**

### Telephone

Telephone is a variation of the children's game where a message is whispered from one end of a semi circle to the other. In the TheatreMoves version, students send a physical message – a gesture or combination of gestures – and the message is repeated and sent through all members of the semi circle.

Teachers should divide the class into two groups: one group will observe the other in Telephone. The student observers should be asked to write a critique of the performing group's work, noting how well the messengers vary their sounds and movements, how well each individual performer captures the details and spirit of each phrase. Students report their critiques to the group, focusing on specific examples of how well they followed each other's signals. Students can work on oral and written observation and feedback skills.

**Standard 3, ELA:** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for **critical analysis and evaluation.**

As listeners and readers, students will **analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others** using a variety of established criteria.

As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and **from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues.**

**The Object Exercise:**

Divide the class into two teams; ask each member from Team A to select an opposite person in Team B. Each person is asked to think of an object: a pencil, deck of cards, a baseball bat – something recognizable). A Team A person, without speaking, “uses” the object in an action directed to A Team B partner. The miming must be done clearly with the student adding one detail and then another. It is up to the Team B person to determine what the object is. Ground rules for this exercise include adding only those actions that are reasonable so that your partner has a decent chance of guessing right. To make things more challenging, the Team B partner needs to prove that she or he understands what the object is by adding a detail that also is appropriate and functional.

For example, if mimed “eyeglasses,” the partner might wipe them clean, use them as a headband, or in a rage, throw them on the floor and stamp on them.

Teachers should initiate conversations among the students, asking them to describe and evaluate the exercise as played by different teams in the class. Require each conversation to make use of one or two key words such as “weight,” “counter weight,” and various body parts (shoulder, knee, elbow, etc.). Encourage students to refine their improvisations so that as they describe it, others can enact their descriptions.

It is important to start with an object that is familiar to the players and as they add details in the improvisation, it is possible to edit your movements for clarity.

It is possible to move from an isolated object to one that is associated with an occupation or profession. Or the object could be specific to a cultural group. Students can create objects in such a way that someone who is not familiar with their culture could identify it.

**Standard 4, ELA:** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for **effective social communication** with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to **enrich their understanding of people and their views.**

<p><b>Clumping and Morphing</b>  Students can physicalize the geographic levels and land forms using the clumping and morphing techniques. They can create a performance piece around a journey that takes someone from form 1 to form 6 through a director's instructions.  Such as plains, mesas, waterfalls, canyons</p>	<p><b>Standard 3, Geography:</b>  Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth's surface.</p>
<p><b>Clumping and Photograph</b>  Students will create a voiceless theatre piece that demonstrates the effects of common forces (pushes and pulls, levers) of objects, such as those caused by gravity and magnetism and mechanical forces. Teacher will lead students through clumping and photograph to show these principles of physics in action.</p>	<p><b>Standard 5, Science:</b>  Energy and matter interact through forces that result in change in motion. (5.1) (5.2)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Telephone</b>  (See above for description of this exercise.) Use to reinforce the concept of mutations. Teachers can also lead students in a discussion of how the process of mutation occurs in morphing and clumping, and could be a metaphorical statement related to various genetics theories</p>	<p><b>Standard 4, Science:</b>  Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Clumping</b></p> <p>(See above for description of this exercise.) Use a floor grid to complicate the clumping process; students can turn the floor into a grid using masking tape, showing the various clumping designs as completed. Students can diagram the grid on notebook paper and use a computer program such as Excel to diagram the clumps.</p> <p>Students can use clumping on grids to demonstrate population changes in distribution around the earth.</p>	<p><b>Standard 5, Mathematics:</b> Students will apply technological knowledge and skills to design, construct, use, and evaluate products and systems to satisfy human and environmental needs.</p> <p><b>National Standard 4: Geography</b> Students will analyze geographic information about the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on the earth's surface.</p>
<p><b>Webbing</b></p> <p>In this version of counterbalancing , everyone holds on to and supports each other. Start out in a circle and lean backwards, hold on and two people raise their arms and make a bridge and start to twist around, and begin to create shapes. Develop other group movements that represent principles of physics – lever and fulcrum, centrifugal and centripetal force, etc.</p>	<p><b>Standards 1 &amp; 4: Science:</b> Engineering design 1 – “generate, draw, and model ideas” Scientific inquiry 1 – “represent, present, and defend explanations of everyday observations”</p>

A final note....

The process of physicalizing learning demonstrates to students the power of metaphoric thinking, one of the highest forms of cognition. By thinking metaphorically, we are able to solve problems that on the surface may seem unsolvable.

By matching activities to learning standards of whatever origin, teachers are given the power to demonstrate how learning through the arts is not a diversion but a valuable aspect of the teaching practice. We hope that the activities described above will encourage teachers and students to develop other scenarios where performance art enhances, reinforces, and uplifts the learning process to its rightful place.

If you are interested in further information about TheatreMoves, Inc., please write to

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