

PREPARING FOR PUSH

HOW PUSH VALUES STUDENTS

- Our performances for children are never “one size fits all”. We select performance pieces in coordination with the venue and take into account school/district wide themes, curriculum focus areas, key words/concepts as well as areas of concern to create an event that reinforces the goals and values of the presenting school/organization.
- All performance are grade level specific. That means we won't treat your high-schoolers like they're still in elementary school – promise.
- We know that children, in particular, are likely in a highly impressionable state due to the performers ‘celebrity’. We realize that what we say and do can have a huge impact (positive or negative). We strive to reflect the core values of the presenting school/organization both on and off the stage. The performance exists to serve the children in the room rather than just our artistic vision.
- We will guide the students throughout the performance.

GETTING READY FOR THE PERFORMANCE/WORKSHOP

- » Discuss the importance of body language in communication. We all speak with our bodies all the time. We especially notice this when someone's words and body language say different things. For instance, if your friend says “I feel fine.” But their head is bowed, arms are folded and they are frowning it might be a good idea to ask more questions.
- » Use every day actions as opportunities to raise awareness of the way in which movement affects us emotionally (i.e. waving hello, fixing hair or clothes, excited or nervous fidgeting, etc.)
- » Study the human body in sculpture and art; for instance Michelangelo, Da Vinci and Greek Statue Forms.
- » Try role-playing, in which the students attempt to communicate an idea or thought without props or words.
- » Use PUSH's free teaching videos as inspiration for a lesson, group exercise or individual creative assignment: shorturl.at/luJWZ
- » Select appropriate video clips of PUSH's performances: <https://www.youtube.com/pushtheatre> (note: while there is no explicit content in PUSH videos, some videos may not be appropriate for all ages)
- » Older students may benefit from ‘fact finding’ assignments from the Academic Resources page on PUSH's website: <https://pushtheatre.com/academic-resources>
- » For teaching artists: PUSH's work is a hybrid of different movement forms: Corporeal Mime, Illusionary Mime, Modern Dance (specifically Hawkins Release Technique), Acrobatics (see Cirque Du Soleil), Non-Traditional Partnering (see Pilobolus). For other Physical Theatre Companies see: shorturl.at/pFGLY
- » PUSH uses knowledge of physics concept such as equilibrium, fulcrum, lever, mechanical advantage, etc. to work with each other's bodies. Basic Yoga and/or gymnastics balances taught in Phys Ed can be helpful introductions for the students prior to seeing the performance.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE PERFORMANCE

- » There will be music. Not too loud, but not quiet either.
- » PUSH will usually perform three to four ‘pieces’. One of the performers will talk briefly in between each piece to contextualize the work in an age-appropriate way.
- » Best practices for having a great experience during a PUSH performance:
 - » If you see something funny - laugh out loud
 - » If you see something impressive - clap
 - » You probably won't see anything scary. But if you do - cover your eyes or ears for a second it will be over in a moment.
 - » If you have a question, hold it until the end. There will be time for questions.
 - » Wait until after the performance to talk to your friend. We know you have lots to share but you don't want to distract anyone from enjoying the show too.
 - » If you see a PUSH performer in the hallway or around the school. It's OK to say hi. We like to stop and chat if we have time.
 - » If you don't understand something, it's OK. Not everyone understands art in the same way. Just use your imagination. What do you feel? What does the movement remind you of? Listen carefully to what is said just before the performance. There are lots of clues to help you understand.
 - » Q&A: All performers will be present. The children can be encouraged to ask questions of all the performers. We're open to any question and have found that students are often interested in our own lives or relationships. Our performers are equipped to deal with awkward, embarrassing or inappropriate questions using humor and re-direction to find valuable teaching moments.
 - » Note about behavior: PUSH tends not to have many behavior problems in our audiences. Unless a student is being excessively disruptive to other students enjoyment we're OK with most responses to the performance. Remember, we're a group of adults throwing each other around, climbing on each other, wearing weird costumes. Getting used to it is all part of the process.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE WORKSHOP

- » Students should be prepared to move. The workshop is fast-paced and they should expect to sweat a little - or a lot.
- » Students will feel most comfortable wearing clothes such as workout or gym clothes. Clothing should cover the body appropriately when students are bending or upside down.
- » If possible, students should wear adhesive nametags with student names written clearly in block letters.
- » This kind of movement can feel vulnerable and scary. We don't embarrass students but the fear that they may be embarrassed can be difficult to overcome. Here are a few things you can do to help:
 1. Join in. This may be difficult, but students are far more likely to engage if all the adults in the room do too.
 2. If students seem especially afraid of the idea of 'dancing' or 'acting', don't use those words. It's physical theatre, movement tricks or physical structures.
 3. If a student needs to sit out it's OK. However, if too many students are sitting out as observers it can make it very difficult for those who are participating to be unselfconscious.
 4. You know your students better than us. If you have students with an injury, special physical or emotional needs, behavioural concerns or anything else - let us know. We love working with everyone on whatever level they feel comfortable.
- » Workshop content will be dictated by students age and the specific workshop we're doing. If you have questions, curriculum tie-in ideas, classroom themes feel free to call or email us.



AFTER THE PERFORMANCE/WORKSHOP

- » Discuss the content of the work. Students (esp. younger students) may have different interpretations of the meaning. Encourage a lively discussion that highlights why these differences occur, making sure to validate each individual interpretation as being right for them.
- » Have the students repeat the pre-performance/workshop role-playing exercises using the communication tools that they learned.
- » Have students give written examples of concepts and emotions and have them draw a comparison between those better communicated with words and those better communicated with movements.
- » Discuss ways that the performance relates to areas of study. For instance, connections may be made with physics and simple machines like levers; ELA may connect with storytelling structure like 'beginning, middle, end'; Visual arts students could benefit from a discussion of composition; Math students could discuss musical timing and counts.
- » Theatre or dance students may want to create their own work of physical theatre. PUSH tends to use the following steps in their artistic process:
 1. At the beginning don't get stuck talking about ideas. Just get up there and try things out. Be comfortable failing in front of each other and realize that 90% of what you try will fail - have a laugh about it and try something else.
 2. Do some improvisations (no talking). Have someone watch or video tape so you can discuss what you did.
 3. Discuss what characters and relationships the movements might suggest. Or find a few 'sticky images' - great moments that you remember.
 4. Improvise some more based on this information.
 5. Discuss what kind of 'story' or theme is growing out of this work.
 6. Try building a few 'moments' or 'movement sketches' that might fit into the final piece. You can split into small groups to do this and then come together to show each other what you did. Most of this won't make the final piece but it will help you decide what might work.
 7. Go away and think about it, you might want to add words here and flesh out the story.
 8. Now try creating enough of a structure to run the whole thing in a rough form.
 9. DON'T BE A PERFECTIONIST. Nothing needs to be finished at this stage.
 10. Edit out anything that doesn't quite work (be ruthless, don't get emotionally attached to your favorite ideas)
 11. Rehearse like crazy - BE A PERFECTIONIST.
 12. Do one last edit to remove/change anything that isn't working.
 13. Perform it for your class to riotous applause. Get an 'A+'. Become the most popular person in your school. Write the Hollywood movie version. Win an Oscar (don't forget to thank PUSH during your acceptance speech).