

HELP! I AM TEACHING DRAMA ONLINE!



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Help! It was my initial reaction when we received the news that DAS classes, including SES programmes, were going online in Term 2 Week 1. It was not due to the lack of preparation but it was more of the unimaginable apprehension, anxiety and uncertainty.

Being a drama instructor in Speech & Drama Arts (SDA) programme, it didn't occur to me that one day I will teach drama online. A typical drama class would involve a lot of movement activities, role-playing with friends, voice exercises and rehearsals after rehearsals in a big space. "How to teach drama online?" And a lot more questions ran in my head.

It was near to impossible at first but here's how the SDA team rise against adversity...

REVISED CURRICULUM

When the announcement for home-based learning was made, the team set in motion the contingency plan we had prepared prior to the closure. We looked at the activities in our curriculum and identified those that we could adapt to suit online delivery.

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Since it was our first time conducting those activities online, there were some hits and misses along the way. We had improvised the activities as we got better at managing and executing online classes. 'Simon says', 'Rock Paper Scissors' and 'Guess Who Am I?' are some adapted games where the students learn concentration skill, listening skill and at the same time having fun in their online classes.

LEARNING IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

This pandemic has upturned the world and forced us to re-examine how we run our daily routines and livelihoods. At the same time, it has given most of us the opportunity to learn differently and to discover new things. Technology has definitely made it possible for teachers to reach out to students and maintain the social aspect (at minimal) in learning during this period.

Despite this connection, students may miss their friends, their teachers and the feeling of togetherness. This is where the emotional aspect of learning could be affected. In SDA classes, social-emotional learning is one of the building blocks of the programme. We bring in the social-emotional learning aspect in our online classes each week –for example, familiar routines are carried into the online environment and teachers continue to create a safe space and check-in with all students with open-ended questions about their well-being. Most importantly, all students are given opportunities to engage with each other throughout the lesson.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON...WE WON'T LET COVID-19 STOP US!

Class showcases and performances at external venues are essential learning grounds for drama students. They have been shown to improve self-esteem in students and their confidence level. Through the rehearsals, students develop language and communication skills, creativity and encourage teamwork. With these bases, the teachers had decided to carry on with showcases like we always do at the end of Term 2.

This time, SDA will be screening virtual showcases from the different classes in June for SDA parents and families. This is a big leap from where we started!

It is our many firsts – script reading, casting and rehearsals are being done online. Our students have been rehearsing diligently and will be working on this project from the comfort of their homes.

We hope through these experiences, students will develop resilience, an important life skill to tackle challenges in a world that is increasingly complex.

