

**CREATIVE DRAMATICS FOR INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS**

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**Introduction:**

*“Every child is unique with lots of potential, the best possible way to explore that potential is through creativity, creativity to think, creativity to implement, creativity to perform, creativity to present. Present its best, displaying the unique potential with confidence.” – Dr. S. Reshma*

Education for SEN children have always been the concern for most of the educators so as how to merge it with main stream education for the best benefits in favor of SEN students, regular students, schools, and the society. There are wide variations in how ‘inclusive education’ is defined and operationalized; terms such as ‘integrated education’ and ‘inclusive education’ are frequently used interchangeably. Internationally defined inclusive education relates to the education of students with a range of diversities, not just disabilities, included and supported in mainstream schools

Inclusive education looks at both the rights of students and how education systems can be transformed to respond to diverse groups of learners. It emphasizes the need for opportunities for equal participation for any students with disabilities or special needs in the education system, preferably in a mainstream environment. Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on the educational rights of those groups of learners who may be vulnerable or at risk of exclusion or underachievement.

Creative Dramatics can play an important role in binding and developing all the students together as in inclusive classrooms. Music, Dance, and Drama has always been the strong tool for teachers so that the classroom teaching-learning process becomes interesting where involvement of each student is to the maximum and their enthusiasm is fully taken care for better learning outcomes. Creative Dramatics when included with Music, Dance, Drama and Arts Education with Scientific understanding and approach can give better benefits and confident outputs among diverse students.

Through creative dramatics (music, art, dance, drama), many choices, both positive and negative, can be explored--without real-life consequences harming the participant.

**Methodology:**The present study / research was done to investigate about 'Creative Dramatics and Inclusive Classrooms' based on the primary and secondary resources and data. Secondary data is obtained from various published and unpublished records, books, magazines, and journals.

**Objectives:**

1. To know '*What is Creative Dramatics?*'
2. To understand '*How to Create an Effective Lesson Plan of Creative Dramatics for Inclusive Classroom*'
3. To know the '*Challenges for SEN Inclusive Classrooms*'
4. To understand the '*Need of Creative Dramatics for Inclusive Classrooms*'
5. To understand the '*Benefits of Creative Dramatics in Inclusive Classrooms*'
6. To pen down '*Tips for Successful Creative Dramatics Inclusive Classrooms*'.

**What is Creative Dramatics?**

Creative Drama is an integrative process that develops imaginative thought and creative expression in children. Through the use of movement, pantomime, improvisation, story dramatization and group discussion, children acquire language and communication skills, social awareness, problem-solving abilities, self-concept enhancement, and an understanding of theatre. Rather than an attempt to create professional child actors, the goal of Creative Drama is to guide a child to self-fulfillment through the process of theatre techniques

Creative Dramatics (or Creative Drama) was officially defined in 1978 by The American Association of Theatre for Youth, as "an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-centered form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect upon human experience" (Davis & Behm 10-11).

Creative dramatics is solely about process and building the necessary skills for students to participate in theatre, to help students develop new understandings of themselves and the world around them, and to become skilled in new ways to communicate through voice and body.

Creative dramatics allows for participants to have multitudes of creative opportunities, and provides sequential learning activities that build on one another to deepen participants' understanding.

### **Creating Lesson Plans for Inclusive Education:**

While creating the lesson plans for Inclusive Education the educators need to .....

1. Understand children's natural world, creative play, and develop it further using theatre techniques to create learning experiences which are for the students. It needs to be made interesting as per the whole class requirement and the customized curriculum developed by schools in regard to the mandatory requirements by the concern educational boards the school is associated with.
2. Consider the students' individual needs, social health, and group dynamics of the students when planning.
3. Be concerned to make learning a rewarding experience for their students, and to ensure that communication skills, the ability to use language, and the development of problem-solving strategies are related to all aspects of the curriculum and to a range of social situations. The ability to work both independently and as part of a team should be constantly reinforced and developed as the drama contexts are created.
4. Incorporate musical activities, sound stories, dance patterns, rhythm in recitations, drama, mime, creative story-telling, improvisations etc for easier and enthusiastic outputs. Games and exercises can be designed for the whole class at the same time or alternatively with smaller groups. However, care must be taken not to choose activities that will attract the attention of the others who may not be involved, for example, when a lot of noise or movement is involved.
5. Find a way to enable the group to become aware of, and empathize with a basic emotional state (due to a particular set of circumstances), and to discover the consequences while planning for moderate general learning disabilities.
6. Use the opportunities presented by drama to consolidate and apply conceptual and factual knowledge and practical skills in context, as well as individual learning targets.
7. Monitor sensitively the interest levels of the students where too much stimulation can cause confusion, while too little can cause interest to wane.
8. Be aware of the level of social challenge in drama work for some students, and aim to extend their ability to engage in the group activity.
9. Consider situations and stories that have a choice or problem in them which are useful for engaging students' attention and participative responses.

10. Explore everyday situations for drama activities, thereby affording the moderate learning abilities student an opportunity to experience (or re-experience) and explore familiar situations in new ways.
11. Include topics such as bullying, friendship, language work, mathematics, SPHE, etc. while structuring the curriculum plan.
12. Consider elements of drama, such as pace, tension, timing, movement, rhythm, use of space, symbolization, contrast (sound and silence, movement and stillness, light and darkness), dramatic skills such as mime, masks, using light and sound, improvisation, physical drama, explorative drama strategies, such as storyboards, role-playing, narrating, collective role.

### **Challenge faced by 'Special Need' children:**

Special Need students lack self-expression and self-confidence. These are important tools in literacy-building and SEN's educational development. Some students may find 'untaught' group work and communication skills hard. The outlook of regular students towards the SEN Students should not be sympathy rather than it should be an empathy with understanding. Group negotiation and communication skills developed through creative dramatics can help in improving other core academic subjects.

### **Challenges for SEN Inclusive Classrooms:**

1. *Rigid methods & Curriculum:* There is a need of coordination between the educational institutions / universities and schools for the flexible teaching methodology and curriculum development.
2. *Inadequate Resources:* Majority of schools in India are not designed as per the requirement of SEN students while few are equipped to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.
3. *Lack of Trained Teachers:* Many teachers new to special education sense that the active, physical aspects of creative dramatics may be an invaluable contribution to their classes. The teachers are not trained to work with various disabilities and inclusive classroom teaching-learning. Educators need basic skills, professional knowledge, communication, and interaction skills, knowledge about assessment techniques, and resource management, knowledge of multigrade teaching, instructional techniques, peer-tutoring and cooperative learning techniques to include students with disabilities into regular classes.

4. *The Challenge of Modifying Deeply Held Attitude:* Attitudes of the non-disabled are proving to be a major barrier in the inclusion of persons with disabilities. “The more severe and visible the deformity is, the greater is the fear of contagion, hence the attitudes of aversion and segregation towards the crippled”.

**Need of Creative Dramatics for Inclusive Classrooms:**

- 1) For students with challenging behavior or problems creative dramatics provides an opportunity to let off energy within the boundaries of the lesson itself.
- 2) Self-Expression learned through creative dramatics can improve child's life-skills. It's not about acting, singing or dancing (although these are the basic elements of dramatics), but creative dramatics can provide the students with many skills that will be of use to them throughout life. Most importantly self-confidence.
- 3) A creative dramatic activity, whether it be a fun, creative game or a drama performance or a dance / music presentation, it gives the special need student a platform to really come out of themselves and nurture their own imaginations.
- 4) Group activities increases the bond in regular and special need student more strongly. It provides an excellent opportunity to make new friendships as the class itself provides common ground for relationships to flourish. It helps in team building among the diverse students.
- 5) Creative dramatics students develop the ability to make-believe through being immersed within the group drama experience that requires commitment from everyone to make it work. Drama seeks to teach students why people think and behave as they do.
- 6) It helps students with mild general learning disabilities understand the people around them and the social world in which they live. It can help students understand other peoples, cultures, and societies in both historical and geographical contexts.
- 7) Creative Dramatics helps to explore feelings, knowledge, and ideas, leading to understanding in the class.
- 8) Creative dramatics can be helpful to promote social and positive interactions in the classroom through drama.
- 9) Theatre in education affirms the notion that everything can be taught in several different ways. This is a particularly important concept for students with moderate general learning disabilities. It attempts to provide students with several different entry points to the learning area, in order to identify how best individual students learn.

- 10) Dramatics in inclusive teaching-learning process increases students' tolerance for each other by contributing each's participation in the group / individual thereby developing an understanding towards the peer members in the classroom.
- 11) Creative drama provides an additional opportunity to develop students' emerging literacy skills (communicating, listening, reading and writing) by an augmentative approach to communication, signs, symbols, and objects of reference which are used to make the subject matter more easily accessible.
- 12) It provides meaningful contexts for the development of student's concepts, knowledge, understanding, imagination, skills, and attitudes across the curriculum.
- 13) It can facilitate the use of non-verbal communication, immediate on-the-spot communication by speech or singing, appropriate communication skills in context, the understanding and use of visual representational information.
- 14) Dramatic role play in the teaching-learning process can let the student wear the shoes of the 'responsible adults' in their lives thereby letting them understand the need for rules and their behavior.

#### **Benefits of Creative Dramatics in Inclusive Classrooms:**

Creative Dramatics allows the individual to invent emotions, create imaginations and get involved with the classroom teaching-learning process positively. Creative dramatics can be viewed as an integral part of all children's lives. They enjoy to tap on the rhythm, sing and play with music, perform in a group, present themselves when cared and given little importance. Creative dramatics also effectively enhance the ability to cope with stress. It is also found that integrating literature and linking the cross curriculum with creative dramatics content helps to bring books alive and that dramatics classrooms encouraged children to relate and participate in all the activities thereby improving their academic scores as well.

1. For Gifted and Talented students: Creative Dramatics helps to focus on deeper psychological process and allows creative expression. It can also let the imagination get extreme for gifted students in adapting their existing abilities in ways that enable them to create productively and constructively.
2. For Speech and Language Impairments: Creative Dramatics is more than a leisure activity. It is like a highly cognitive, linguistic, social, and psychological treatment. It acts like the creative verbal counseling. It provides a form of compensation for those with language impairments as well as a means of facilitating language development.

3. For Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: Creative dramatics has always helped to create physiological responses, which are associated with emotional reactions. Other than drama and dance, 'music also explains the tension release sequence associated with emotional arousal' (Abeles, 1980).
4. For Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorders and Learning Disabilities: Creative exercises and activities helps ADHD students to focus on accuracy and attention via Dance, Music, and Drama. Learning how to dance develops rhythm, self-control, coordination and body-language gestures and postures; how to play an instrument can improve attention, concentration, impulse control; how to perform on stage can develop social functioning, self-esteem, self-expression, motivation, and memory.
5. For Orthopedics and Health Impairments: Music, dance and drama affects heart-beat, pulse rate, and skin responses. It also helps students develop physical fitness, appreciation of the body, concern for sound health practices, and effective stress management approaches.
6. For all round development of the classroom:
  - a. Develops Self-Confidence: Taking risks in class and performing for an audience teach students to trust their ideas and abilities. This confidence is applicable into real-life applications.
  - b. Creates Understanding, Cooperation, and Collaboration: Theatre combines the creative ideas and abilities from its participants.
  - c. Develops Communication Skills: Dramatics enhances verbal and nonverbal expression of ideas. It improves voice projection, articulation, fluency of language, and persuasive speech.
  - d. Helps to imagine creatively: In this era of technology, creative dramatics provides an outlet for making creative choices, thinking new ideas, and interpreting the material in expressive ways that are the essence of dramatics.
  - e. Develops Empathy & Tolerance: Creative Dramatics Inclusive Classroom teaching-learning process encourages all students to work together in and from different situations, time periods, and cultures which promotes compassion and tolerance for others.
  - f. Improves Concentration and Problem Solving Abilities: Playing, practicing, and performing develop a sustained focus of mind, body, and voice which helps in various life-skills in real-life-applications. Students learn to communicate the who,



what, where, when, and why to the audience. Improvisation fosters quick-thinking solutions, which leads to greater adaptability in life.

Although creative dramatics and planning the curriculum has always helped the inclusive classrooms to progress positively with best possible results, but at times there may be some disadvantages as :

1. It becomes difficult to manage and control the class as students get involved into those activities thus enjoying it very much and doesn't want to switch it with any other academic requirements.
2. At times activities are difficult to monitor both physically and verbally by the teacher.
3. Activities may not cater to all students uniformly. The activities that succeeded with a group of students may fail with another.
4. It may encourage incorrect forms of language if the teacher is not encouraged to correct mistakes immediately so as not to discourage students.

However, the positives are stronger with more advantages, hence it becomes mandatory for the teachers to plan effectively and they should be willing to bring about the positive changes strongly in the students and the way each student start correlating themselves as an important part of the society.

#### **Tips for successful Inclusive Creative Dramatics Classrooms:**

1. Lessons and activities should be planned considering the whole class.
2. Students should feel that teacher is the part of the creative dramatics activities and their learning process.
3. If the desirable output is not being achieved than the teacher should make the desirable alternations for the successful output or if required should discontinue the activity.
4. Teacher should guide the students about what is going wrong. It is important that belief and value in the work is established in the early stages, or it will prove increasingly difficult to contain problems later when sincerity is needed.
5. Repeating the activities will help the students to acquire the format of the activity and develop confidence in the students to get the best output.
6. The atmosphere / ambience should be calm and uncritical. This will help to build trust between the teacher and student.
7. Teacher should encourage each student to have the sense of responsibility towards self and others in and out of the classroom.



8. Criticism is must for the development of students but it should be constructive. Avoid letting the student feel embarrass in front of other students / class.
9. If a student is being extremely difficult, teacher should allow the student to become teacher's special assistant, or to sit outside the activity for a time. Hopefully, they may wish to rejoin later. It is also important not to force a student to engage in an activity if he / she genuinely appears not to want to. There may be many reasons for this. After an initial period of observation, he/she may choose to participate quite willingly, when it is seen how much fun and enjoyment pertains to this way of learning.
10. Teaching-Learning should be made interesting, enthusiastic, and fun

**Conclusion:**

Creative Dramatics activities allows us to embrace rather than reject unique behavioral traits and interest. By including Creative Dramatics in the inclusive classrooms, we channelize this energy productively, we give this a place and space to be nurtured in a routine environment. The quandary lies not in knowing what [social] skills young people need, but in how best to teach them. Creative Dramatics is the best vehicle for social skills development, because drama involves students in concrete, hands-on practice of behavior where the abstract becomes bodily concrete.

Inclusive classrooms need particular designing of the lesson plans where Music, Art, Dance, and Drama is of much importance where collaborative learning can speed up the academic development process and provides the teacher with the opportunity to present students with various cross curricular links and models of communication and language use, and can stimulate reasons for communication in meaningful contexts.

Fun is learning, and learning is fun. If we remember this and try to incorporate fun in our classroom teaching-learning process, our students will definitely enjoy the learning process. Students enjoy dealing with and discussing real life issues and problems, they like figuring things out, doing interesting things, doing things differently –creative dramatics gears towards this and more. Creative Dramatics and Inclusive Classrooms can be used as a teaching and learning tool to help students make meaning of several skills they need for their overall development to be a well-rounded individual. It further allows them to experience and explore the world around them through different characters and roles, further building on their relationship with others and things.

Creative Dramatics in Inclusive Classroom simply brings all students together irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses, by letting them be together, bond together, learn together allowing them to find different characters that best suits them, different roles to express who they are, and different ways to build upon and develop social awareness.

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