

Running Head: Design of a Theatrical Presentation

Scenes from an Urban High School: Design of a Theatrical Presentation to Promote Peer  
Mediation

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Abstract: This project outlines my efforts to educate the students at an urban high school on mediation using theatre. The paper describes a six-week rehearsal process that involved ten peer mediators at Madison Park High School. Through the use of improvisational exercises and theatre techniques, the mediators developed an original presentation to promote peer mediation in their school. They performed their show in eleven freshman health classrooms for a total of one hundred and ninety students.

Although a formal research project was not the purpose of this exercise, surveys passed out after each presentation support findings about the efficacy of theatre as an educational tool.

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## Forward

My job as the peer mediation coordinator at Madison Park High School is to provide a place for students to come together and resolve their conflicts. My first step when a case is referred to me is to speak individually with each of the parties involved. I do this to get a clear sense of the conflict, to put the students at ease, and to explain what they can expect when they go to mediation. The second step involves the mediation. With the help of two peer mediators (students at the school that I have trained in mediation) the parties try to figure out a solution to their conflict.

Early in my job I realized that I was mistakenly going into each intake with the assumption that students understood what mediation is. I soon began asking students if they could define the concept. This still remains the first question that I ask when I do an intake. The majority of students tell me that they do not know about mediation. If they say yes, most of the time their definition is incorrect. The most common misconception is students telling me that it is a place where they will be told how to solve their conflict.

I wanted to develop a way to teach more students about mediation. In my initial research into what makes a peer mediation program flourish, I found that the most successful programs utilize a whole school approach, offer good training/support, and have a high profile in school (Cremin, 2002). The whole school approach involves training the entire school in conflict resolution. This is expensive, and in a school like Madison where there are over seventeen hundred students, it is not a practical approach.

Therberge (2004) says that a main factor that inhibits the efficacy of peer mediation programs is general misunderstandings about mediation. Based on these findings, I thought that a positive and entertaining forum to explain mediation would be

useful to let students know that it is an option if they are in a conflict. Having had past theatre experience, I knew what a powerful communicative tool it could be. I thus decided to use my current peer mediators to educate others about mediation by having them develop an original theatrical presentation. I felt that the presentations could address all three components to making a program successful: providing knowledge to more members of the school, offering current mediators continued training, and increasing the program's profile in the building.

I did not want students to go into classrooms and merely explain mediation because I wanted to do something that would engage both students and mediators. I felt that the presentations would be more memorable for the classroom students if they were engaged in the process. I was hoping that through the use of theatre students would be motivated and have a better chance at retaining the information.

I also wanted to give the peer mediators an opportunity to expand their work from solely performing mediations. These students train together for twenty hours and then wait for me to call them for mediations. This is an active program and many students see a high number of cases; however, there are eighteen mediators. Even if they work a lot, there is still down time. I wanted them to feel like part of a group and have a meeting each week to continue their learning process.

This project tracks my experience with developing the presentation that was brought into eleven freshman health classrooms. I started off by teaching them basic acting skills through the use of exercises and improvisational activities. I also incorporated writing exercises so that they would become comfortable with writing scenes.

Once the foundation was set, I moved into having the peer mediators use their theatre skills to develop a presentation. Although it was my idea to have students do a presentation, it was essential to me that they make the presentation their own. I gave them control over the content of the presentation and most of the ideas came directly from the students.

This project describes the process of teaching the foundation of theatre, guiding the mediators through the development of an original presentation, and performing it to eleven freshman health classes. It also includes an evaluation that is based on both my experience and results obtained through a survey that each student who saw the presentation filled out.



### Educational Components of Original Theatre

Many educators are looking for innovative ways to teach their students. In order to accomplish this, some have turned to theatre. Annarella (2000) believes that theatre can provide a motivation for students, which aids in the learning process. “When students are not interested in what is being taught, they don’t learn”(p.3).

Original theatre is produced when the script is developed through the rehearsal process, i.e. there isn’t a predetermined script in which actors are cast as characters. For the purpose of this project, I examine original theatre as an educational devise.

#### Impact on Participants of Original Theatre

Rehearsals offer more than just theatre practice to the students who participate. Horn(1992) states that rehearsals allow students the opportunity to become skilled at critical thinking, communication and writing skills. The rehearsal process also provides a forum for students to collaborate and understand conflicting viewpoints (all of which allows self-esteem to grow). This may offer an advantage over traditional didactics for students who may learn more from increased participation.

Unscripted theatre also allows students to create theatre which matches their own personal experiences and concerns. In a study conducted at Hillcrest High School, (a New York City High School located in Jamaica Queens) students spoke out about their discouragement over traditional theatre. Students said that scripted theatre was not “for people like us”, “no one looks like us on stage” and “no one writes about the dreams and problems we share.” This indicates that these students did not connect with what they typically saw on stage (Horn, 1992, p.6). Therefore, they embarked on a project to create an original script that would represent them with accuracy.

According to the Theatre Model Content Standards Task Force (2000), students need to be aware that their “imagination and original ideas have intrinsic worth,” and that someone wants to listen. Developing an original script for an audience can spark creativity and self-worth for students because it is based on what they feel is important. This may give them a sense of empowerment and satisfy “the adolescents’ developmental need for self-expression (Janzing, 1996).

The process of unscripted theatre also brings students out of their shells, and may lesson social isolation for some students. One of the benefits of a collaborative environment is that everyone is important to the process. Theatre relies on people working together as an ensemble in order to problem-solve. All students are given the opportunity to take on key roles in the process (Collins, 1991). Once ensemble is established, students who have a tendency to be shy and stay in the background often become more socially interactive. Collins discusses students who hardly spoke during her class later leading discussions (after their inhibitions were loosened through exercises and games).

However, some question possible negative outcomes associated with educational theatre. Alrutz (2003) raises the idea that the critical thinking developed through theatre can potentially conflict with core values that parental figures have instilled in their children from an early age. When examining issues, (such as abortion, religion or race) she states that some students might make decisions that undermine “family values, the school system’s ideology, laws, and even morals” (p. 10). She says that this fear often arises because adults assume that if they do not have control, students will not act in a

responsible manner. However, Alrutz also acknowledges the need for students to express themselves and discover their own ideas, regardless of the risks.

### Impact on the Audience

The theatrical process is not lost on the audience. Although the audience does not have the benefit of the in depth work that the cast experiences, their experiences are also memorable, and can leave lasting impressions on both young and adult members.

Peers in the audience can relate to what they see on stage. Watching a performance written by peers is fulfilling because it gives the audience a feeling of “self-identification and validation of their role in life” (Annarella, 2000, p.4). Students can relate to the issues brought up because the language mirrors their own lives, not a fictitious substitute. Because they can relate, this can open the students up to learning and absorbing the information in a more personal way.

Watching a live performance promotes thinking and discussion. Harding (1996) researched three Chicago high schools and found that kids do not want to walk away after a performance. Instead, they want to discuss what they saw. Issues can be discussed through the actions of the play, which protects the audience from having to discuss tough issues by revealing their own personal experiences. This opens the forum to participation and learning. It also proves to be an educational tool by providing information about the issues and where to get help.

Adults also benefit from an original performance. Unscripted theatre becomes a learning tool for adults. Teachers, parents and researchers all benefit from watching students perform their own work. It is a useful way for adults to learn about “the way adolescents experience life and think about the issues that are important to them”

(Harding, 1996, p.2). This can offer insight into a young person's mind. What young people think is (unfortunately) often times left open to assumptions by adults. Theatre is a way to bridge this generational gap, furthering the students' empowerment by giving them a chance to be heard.

### One Troop's Innovative Approach to Theatre in Boston

Urban Improv is a violence prevention program founded in 1992 and is geared towards young people in the Boston area. It works in area schools, where it delivers a nine-week workshop curriculum touching upon issues that affect young people today. The group combines both improvisational and scripted theatre. The actors begin by acting out a prepared scene. At the pivotal point in the scene, the actors freeze in their roles. At this point, the director invites a student from the audience to take the place of one of the actors on stage. This allows audience members to make decisions on how the scenes will be resolved.

By allowing the audience to participate, Urban Improv gives voice to the audience. This gives the students a sense of self-identification and justification of their role in life, which is one of the values of theatre (Annarella, 2000). Urban Improv plays each scene out more than once. This way, alternative solutions can be examined and addressed (since there is not just one way to solve a problem). The students are then broken into small groups, and each group creates their own scene on the same topic. The topics discussed range from conflict resolution, drugs, teenage pregnancy and violence. They end with a group discussion of the experience, where they focus on choices made in the small groups, and the consequences for those choices.

### Putting on a Show: The How-To of Making Theatre

How does a director conceive and execute an original theatre piece with high school students? Without a script as a guide, the final product is unknown. Therefore, the road taken to find the end result needs to be the director's main focus.

Carlisle & Drapeau (1997) argue that good directors focus on an ensemble effort with the cast, instead of focusing on an autocratic approach. They believe that good theatre stems from performer's desire to reach an audience. In order to do this effectively, the director must turn the "I" approach into a "we" approach. Building an ensemble is the first key factor in accomplishing this task. In order for the latter parts of the process to run smoothly, students need to trust each other and work well as a group.

In the seventies, Aaron Nelson (1976) conducted a series of experiments that studied the application of group training to theatre. Over the span of three years, he studied a college theatre troop, and then compared them with two control groups. Nelson discovered that specialized group work aided the experimental group (the college troop) in achieving "true" ensemble performance.

#### Group Learning for Both Performers and Audience

A cast does not just walk into a rehearsal with a shared vision. Like any group of people, a cast comes to the table with various perspectives, opinions and dynamics. Johnson & Johnson (1975) outline what makes groups either effective or ineffective. They deconstruct group effectiveness into three "main activities: (1) accomplishing its goals, (2) maintaining itself internally, and (3) developing and changing in ways that improve its effectiveness" (p.3). Within these three components, Johnson & Johnson further break down each activity. Included in this is establishing clear and relevant goals,

having effective two-way communication, participation from all members, and sound decision-making procedures.

The group components stated above can be realized through collaboration, which aids in the learning process. Reid et al. (as cited in Yeok-Hwa Ngeow, Karen, 1998) goes over five stages for effective learning: engagement, exploration, transformation, presentation, and reflection. The engagement stage needs to bring a sense of ownership to the group. In the exploration phase, students work on ideas and gather information that relates to their goals. The third stage consists of the transformation of knowledge, where information gets remolded through activities. The presentation stage gives students an opportunity to present information to an audience. Finally, the reflection stage allows students to analyze what they have learned in a collaborative process.

Individualism in student theatre promotes competition. Once energy is spent on competitiveness, the group cannot properly work together. The challenge for the teacher/director is to make sure that everyone is participating in the moment. A good pedagogy to keep in mind is that the “process comes before end-result” (Spolin, 1963 p.12).

Handling potential conflict in a productive manner is essential to group building. Conflict and controversies are natural in a problem-solving environment and should not be ignored. Johnson & Johnson (1975) state that conflicts should be encouraged because working through differences of opinions as a group can lead to creative solutions. In order to do this in a productive manner, they state that the method to solve conflicts must “establish as cooperative interaction as possible among group members” (p.197).

There also must be common language used about conflicts, and discussion beforehand about procedures and terms. For example, everyone must understand the procedures used for decision making in the group. If there is a disagreement, each person will have a chance to state their opinion, but the majority will make the decision. Finally, Johnson & Johnson say that group cohesion needs to be high, problem-solving needs to be effective, and interpersonal effectiveness of the members needs to be strong. Kennedy (1990) recommends listening and taking the time to deal with any emotional issues and conflicts that arise. This builds cooperation skills, and can make the group much more effective at achieving its goals. This will also give everyone a voice, regardless of the outcome.

#### Building an Ensemble with a Cast and Teaching Skills

Collins (1991) says that a cast brings varying perspectives to the table and that all perspectives are worthy of acknowledgment. If students are not comfortable, or are in fear of being judged negatively by other members of the group, then there is a tendency to shut down creatively. This lends the risk of having one or two people dominate the process. An effective ensemble understands the need for everyone to have a voice in the process. Also, because theatre relies on a collaborative environment, students who are shy or tend to normally hang back find that they need to participate in the process.

Johnson & Johnson (1975) discuss the unproductive method of a “one-way-with-feedback communication procedure.” They view it as coercive because it relies on the director presenting a message, and all the members responding as if the message is correct. This does not allow for an exchange of ideas. In contrast, the “two-way

communication procedure” relies on both the “sending and receiving” of ideas, which allows for better communication and interaction among members (p.130-131).

Games also improve communication, while focusing on different components of ensemble and skill building development. Dayton (1990) outlines games that can build the following skills needed for an ensemble: (1) cooperation, (2) creating rapport, (3) concentration, and (4) trust. These skills are fundamental to building a performance, and need to be attained before creating an acting piece. She walks the reader through the mirror game, in which two students stand facing each other and try to move as one person (builds concentration and cooperation). She introduces the blind walk, where one student leads a blindfolded student around (works on establishing trust and cooperation). Also, she explains building a machine, in which students work together and use their bodies to develop a working machine (utilizes cooperation and creating a rapport with each other). All of the above exercises help build an ensemble because students are learning to work as a team and support each other, as opposed to competing with each other. These games aid in maintaining the functions for an effective group.

Games also develop the skills that nascent actors need. Their skills get enhanced in a pleasurable way, which makes them more receptive to the learning process. “Any game worth playing is highly social and has a problem that needs to be solved within it” (Spolin, 1963, p.5). By moving towards an objective in the game, growth occurs. The theatre games allow for group learning, spontaneity, and creativity.

Spolin (1963) states that in order to gain the above effects, the teacher must revise the notion that there are right and wrong ways to solve problems. The biggest issue students have in expressing themselves is a fear that they will be perceived as “wrong”



and suffer rebuke. Students do not want to be attacked for their actions. She says that this is bred from authoritarianism that begins with parenting, and then moves into the classroom structure. “True personal freedom and self-expression can flower only in an atmosphere where attitudes permit equality in the process between student and teacher...the problems within the *subject matter* will teach them both” (p.8). This is not the easiest social structure to break, but if done successfully, it will aid in a productive group environment and build ensemble.

Improvisation leads to ensemble building, as well as introducing the more challenging components of acting and script writing. Spolin (1963) begins with the essentials: teamwork, concentration, and imagination. After these skills are mastered, she moves into acting techniques, such as creating believable characters on stage. She accomplishes this through improvisational games and role-plays that allow for fun, while building skills.

The objective in improvisational exercises is to give the students a problem to solve. How a student decides to solve a problem will be a personal choice. Spolin (1963) states that the students should be allowed do whatever they like, as long as they stick with solving the problem. In getting this accomplished, she discusses the “Point of Concentration,” which is imperative to problem solving. “The Point of Concentration relies on four uses: it isolates segments of complex problems; it gives control to creativity in improvisation; it provides a common focus for all the players trying to solve the problem; it frees the student for spontaneous action” (Hoetker, 1975, p.9).

For example, if two people get inadvertently locked into a room, the problem to be solved is how they are going to get out. If, during the scene, a student laughs in

character out of nervousness, but sticks to the problem of trying to get out, the laughter is fine. Another student might choose to cry in that situation, which is also a good interpretation, as long as they do not lose sight of the problem.

The structure of improvisation is established by having a predetermined agreement on a where (environment), who (characters), and what (the reason they are together). The specific plot is not to be determined ahead of time. Hoetker (1975) explains that in Spolin's view, pre-planning what will happen would interfere with the spontaneity of the game, which is critical to learning.

Improvisational games should have a progression and build upon each other. It is a mistake to push actors forward before they have developed the skills needed to take on more complicated improvisations. Echle (1991) begins improvisation on a non-verbal level, and works up slowly to developing dialogue. This forces students to rely on their bodies to communicate, rather than words. When words are added later, they have more skills to draw upon.

Spolin (1963) recommends starting with sensory exercises before beginning scene work. This way the students can get in touch with themselves before worrying about acting well. She recommends an orientation exercise called Exposure. In Exposure, half the class observes, while the other half stands in a single line in front of them. The director says: "You look at us. We'll look at you." Soon, the students on the stage will grow uncomfortable. Once everyone is uncomfortable, they are given a task to accomplish. It can be as simple as counting tacks on a bulletin. Once they are focused on a task, their bodies will become more relaxed and they will be less self-conscious of

the fact that they are being watched. Focused energy, (having something to do) is the central component of this exercise.

Once students are ready for improvisation, there is no limit to the possible scenarios. Sometimes just one line will get a scene going. Stating a relationship can also open up possibilities for scenes. Kohl (1988) lists different relationships and motivations to set the stage for improvised scenes. One example is a situation in which two people are best friends, and a third person wants to break up that relationship. Role-plays give students opportunities to place themselves into other people's shoes. This allows them to explore different perspectives and grow through those experiences (Janzing, 1996).

There are steps to getting the most growth out of improvisation. In order to get the most benefit from the exercises, some procedures should be followed. Side-coaching is important during the process. This is when the director calls out a direction for the actors to follow, while the scene is going on. The students should listen to the voice, but not break character. Spolin (1963) states that side-coaching is "worth a dozen lectures on blocking, projection, giving reality to stage objects, etc" (p.29). It keeps the actor in the process and aware of what is happening. Side coaching also can be used to end an exercise. When the director calls out, "One minute!" the actors know that they need to solve the problem in one minute.

Spolin (1963) also discusses the importance of evaluating an exercise after completion. The evaluation should be based on what was communicated to the audience. Basically, was the problem solved? This is not supposed to be a vehicle for personal prejudices or to point criticisms of style or presentation. For example, someone might think that the problem was not solved because it was not done the way they would have

done it. Evaluation should be kept on simple terms. Did they reach a resolution in the allotted time frame? Was the relationship between the players clear? Why, or why not?

### The Mechanics of Performing

Spolin (1975) believes in avoiding the how. She says that pre-planning only get you in trouble. The important component is establishing relationships, not actions. Knowing beforehand that the scene is between two sisters is enough. If they know their relationship, the rest will fall into place. Improvisation teaches stage presence and acting naturally. These traits are the stepping stones for scripted work. If students are aware of their bodies and the characters, acting will fall into place naturally.

### Some directors have trouble maintaining a balance using Spolin's techniques.

Hoetker(1975) cautions that some teachers have difficulty utilizing Spolin's games because they "misunderstand or over generalize Spolin's remarks about necessity of eliminating authoritarianism. And, a closely related difficulty...they ignore or perhaps overrule her insistence that preplanning "story-telling" and "playwriting" not be permitted in the course of an improvisational game" (p.6).

Dropping authority does not mean dropping discipline. A good instructor will not allow students to sabotage a game, or not take an exercise seriously. If they do, they should not be allowed to play the game. Authoritarianism can be replaced with approval, comments and suggestions. It is not taking away all control; rather, it is taking away the judgments that create competitiveness (Hoetker, 1975).

### Developing Playwriting Skills

Asking students to improvise and be spontaneous first, and then to generate a script might seem counterintuitive. Yet, I believe spontaneity can teach a student about

dialogue and the flow of language. It is imperative that the students are comfortable with improvisation before moving into script writing. This will help the students communicate more clearly. Clarity of expression is the basis for script writing (Echle, 1991).

Playwriting is a variant of writing prose that is based on conversation, not description. In order to facilitate turning improvised scenes into script for a show, there are some other exercises geared towards strengthening writing skills. Horn (1992) studied the progress in a New York City High School where freshman students can sign up for a theatre course. When they are seniors, they must choose a final project to present to an audience. She documents the process of one group, where twenty-nine students embarked on the process of creating a script. In order to develop playwriting skills, they used exercises that helped them become aware of speech patterns. The teacher had them write observations about street activities. She also had them “eavesdrop” on conversations, and write in the moment. In the beginning of the process, students did not even feel as if they had anything worthy to say. By the end of the process, they had too much to say, and had difficulty editing material out of the show.

A majority of writing does not take place because students feel that what they write will be perceived as worthless. Writing in a stream of conscience manner (i.e. do not take your hand off the page and keep writing) allows the students to push through this inner critic.

Horn (1992) also states that the teacher had the students write out character sketches, descriptions of space, scenes and situations. The writing took the form of either monologues or dialogues, to get them used to script writing.

One teacher recommends starting the writing process through an exercise entitled, “statues.” A few students freeze into a group of statues (or composite statue). Then, (working in small groups) the other students develop a skit based on the statue, focusing on prior, present and future actions. Afterwards, each group performs, so that they see how many different versions of a story get inspired from one vision (Collins, 1991).

### Turning Process into Product

The Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning (1997) have devised a guide that deconstructs the playwriting and performance into different tasks, leading up to a final end product (the performance for an audience). The guide was developed by classroom teachers for the high school level to describe the tasks associated with developing a script. By following a step-by-step approach, the task never appears daunting. It makes the play manageable because it focuses the students on each step towards achievement, rather than looking only at the end product.

### Decide What You Want the Show to Accomplish

Before a show can be written, decisions need to be made about what the cast wants accomplished. Logistical information also needs to be accounted for in the planning stage. Bilehik (2000) outlines the steps that are necessary to think of when planning a presentation: Who is the audience? What information are you trying to get across to the audience? Why is this show important to you? What are your goals for the audience? What outcomes do you envision? How long do you have to perform? What space will the performance take place in? What equipment is available for use? Who is your audience and how many audience members will there be in the space?

Thinking about these questions prior to a performance helps prepare the students for what they will experience, as well as keeping them focused on their goals. Planning for a show will be different if the performance space is a classroom, or an auditorium. It would be potentially disastrous for performers to be surprised the day of a show by putting them in a situation that they are not prepared for in advance.

### Turning Improvisation and Writing Exercises into a Script

What is discovered in improvisation can be transformed into a script (Kohl, 1988). Once the actors decide what they want out of their presentation, deciding which improvisations get that point across becomes clearer.

The Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning (1997) suggest that in the first draft, certain questions need to be addressed. Among these questions are looking at different perspectives on an issue, deciding plot, and deciding on the most effective, dramatic way to present the conflict to the audience. The second stage consists of expanding the characters, developing the dialogue, devising alternative resolutions to the conflict. After the first two stages, a working script is developed. They say that the working script must also include “(1) exposition: a. what happened in the story before the play begins? b. historical and cultural background, and (2) staging directions” (p8).

The director can also aid by writing the scripts and then having students change the wording (so that it sounds authentic). “It’s easier for students to memorize material written by themselves or peers” because the language and wording is more natural than if an adult writes the material (Kennedy, 1990).

## Methodology

I approached both the headmaster and the freshman academy director at Madison Park High School to get permission for a project to bring student theatre presentations of mediation into the classrooms. Once I had approval, I had an initial meeting with the freshman academy director to discuss the project. He suggested targeting health classrooms, since every freshman student is required to take the course. He offered to set up the presentations with the health teachers; however, I decided not to contact them until later.

I next got in touch with the peer mediators from the program in which I currently work. At the time, there were eighteen active peer mediators. I began an initial verbal survey to see who was interested. Fifteen out of the eighteen wanted to take part in this project.

### Scheduling Rehearsals

I spoke with each student to find a meeting time. Initially, I had trouble with scheduling. I was able to work something out, but the number of participating students decreased. Therefore, the total number of students who took part in the process from start to finish was ten.

Weather interfered with rehearsals. We lost two rehearsals to inclement weather. A Wednesday rehearsal was cancelled due to bad weather, and the make-up rehearsal on Friday was cancelled because of a school closing. We were unable to make up the rehearsals because they occurred close to the presentations, and all available rehearsal time was already scheduled.



### Rehearsal Process

We rehearsed a total of nine times; I split the students for rehearsals seven and eight into two groups (thus each student had eight rehearsals). Rehearsals ran for two hours. At first, I scheduled two hour time blocks, but after the second rehearsal I scheduled two hour and fifteen minute blocks to allow for socializing without compromising rehearsal time. One student attended every rehearsal, six students attended all but one rehearsal, and three students missed two rehearsals. With the exception of two instances, I was always notified in advance if a student was unable to attend a rehearsal. The rehearsal process and exercises are reviewed in detail in the following log [see pp.25-55].

Rehearsal agendas were drawn up on a weekly basis. I made an agenda for each rehearsal, but maintained flexibility. The changes to the agenda were always made during rehearsals within a general time frame. The first three rehearsals were meant to establish a foundation for improvisation and theatre without addressing the presentation. The fourth, fifth and sixth rehearsals were used to develop the performance. These rehearsals were tape recorded for later review. Using the recordings, I wrote out a script for the students using key points from everyone's improvisation. The script was then used as a rough guideline rather than dialogue to be memorized verbatim. I also used the recordings for process notes. The seventh and eighth rehearsals were done for student review and addressing last minute issues.

### Classroom Presentations

Prior to the fourth rehearsal, I contacted the two health teachers and scheduled eleven presentations. I was told that the average class held eighteen students, but to

expect a range of twelve to twenty-four students. I then had performers sign up for every classroom presentation in which they *could* perform. Based on this list, I scheduled three to four students per classroom.

Once the groups were determined, I gave each student a CP form (excused absence) to get signed by their teachers. This allowed each student to be marked present at their class, even though they would be with me. After each presentation, the students were asked to complete a short survey [see Appendix D].

Three presentations were videotaped by a student in the TV production department. The classrooms videotaped were given prior notification. The students were informed that if they did not want to be recorded they could bring a note from their parents, which would excuse them from class. The parents also signed permission slips found in the student handbook allowing their children to be video recorded at the start of school. I went through the recorded footage with the AV department, and arranged a sampling of the presentation. Out of the three recordings made, two came out well, and one was unusable because of focus and lighting problems. We met a total of four times, and I compensated the AV department for their effort.

## **Rehearsals Logs and Schedules**

### **Evening before first rehearsal: January 7, 2005**

I keep thinking that I will wake up and magically know what to do during each rehearsal. That is why I have been tentative to get started. I keep waiting to feel certain about my rehearsal agenda. However, I know just as much today as I did three weeks ago. The most important thing for me to do is to get started because most of my anxiety stems from the unknown.

I am also concerned that students will not show up. I only found out the afternoon before rehearsal that we have access to the building tomorrow morning. This did not give the students a lot of notification and I already know some that cannot make the rehearsal.

### **Rehearsal Number One: Saturday, January 8, 2004 (10AM-12PM)**

#### **10:00-10:15: Breakfast and introduction**

This is the first opportunity for me to sit down with everyone and discuss the project. I briefly tell them how I will use rehearsal time, and tell them that they will be taking the skills they learn in rehearsals to develop the presentation.

#### **10:15-10:20: Hello Warm-Up Game**

**Goals:** (1) get comfortable with each other, and (2) to build ensemble

**Instructions:**

1. Have students greet each other by shaking hands. Just a simple hello will do (I instructed them not to carry on a conversation).

2. Give them directions on how to greet each other. For example, tell them to greet everyone happily or angrily. I also had students greet each other like the other person stole five dollars from them the other day, or like they were running into their ex's new girlfriend/boyfriend.

**Evaluation:**

This exercise works well as an opening warm-up. It takes a few tries to get everyone involved, but they all end up getting into the exercise after the initial tentativeness. Some students have difficulty taking my directions, especially if my instructions go against their personality. For example, when I instruct everyone to say hello angrily, Tasha says, "When I'm angry I don't say hello." However, the exercise is fun and breaks the ice.

**10:20-10:30: Zip Zap Zop**

**Goals:** (1) to build energy, and (2) to work together as an ensemble

**Instructions (Zip, Zap, Zop):**

1. Have everyone stand in a circle.
2. One person starts by saying zip while clapping to the person next to them.  
The next person says zip while clapping to the person next to them (this continues in a circle).
3. At any given time, the receiver of the zip can turn back around and zap the person who zipped them. This changes the direction of the zip.

4. At any given time, the person zipped can say zop, clapping at anyone in the circle. That person then zips in any direction that they choose.

**Evaluation:**

We start off slowly, but once people become more comfortable I speed the game up. It is important that the students clap with purpose and energy (otherwise the game is lifeless). It starts off dull, but picks up once speed comes into play.

**10:30-10:40 Digits**

**Goal:** (1) building ensemble, and (2) working together

**Instructions:**

1. Stand in a close-knit circle. Have the students' look down at the ground and close their eyes.
2. Someone randomly starts by saying, "one." It is unknown who will say the next number. If two people accidentally say the same number at the same time, everyone has to go back to one.

**Evaluation:**

This is a huge hit. It is not an easy game, so they are forced to concentrate. The more mistakes they make, the more determined they are to reach twenty.

I stop them at one point because of a growing frustration that they are not reaching their goal. We have a quick discussion about the goals of the game, and when they go back to counting they are more relaxed. They make it to twenty shortly after.

**10:40-10:55: Spolin's Exposure exercise**

**Goal:** (1) to get comfortable in front of an audience, and (2) to set the foundation for the point of concentration

**Instructions:**

1. Split the group into two. One group stands up and faces the other group, who acts as the audience.
2. Tell each group to look at each other.
3. The group standing should grow uncomfortable. When this occurs, give them an activity to do. I instructed them to count snowflakes (that were hanging from the ceiling). Tell them to keep counting, even if that means recounting the same object repeatedly.
4. Switch the groups and repeat the first two steps.
5. Discuss how they felt, and what they noticed.

**Evaluation:**

They start off looking very confused, but everyone participates. Most of the students look visibly uncomfortable while standing; however, a couple of students are incredibly comfortable with this exercise.

Once the students are given a task, their bodies and facial expressions grow relaxed. They stop being aware of the audience, and focus on counting the snowflakes.

In our discussion afterwards, everyone gets the point of the exercise.

“When we had something to do, we were comfortable, and when we didn't we felt mad awkward” Shaneka says.

**10:55-11:05: Conflict Discussion**

**Goal:** (1) to get them thinking about conflict at Madison Park, and (2) to hear their ideas on what conflicts are important to them at school

**Evaluation:**

We sit in a circle, and I say that I want them to brainstorm conflicts at Madison that they feel are prevalent. They are talkative, wasting no time in listing off conflicts. They also discuss which conflicts are more likely to occur in ninth grade. Below is a list that I jot down as they are talking:

1. He said/she said.
2. Boyfriend/girlfriend disputes.
3. Best friend disputes.
4. Fighting because a friend doesn't like someone (having a friend's back regardless of personal feelings).
5. Dating my baby's daddy.
6. Sisters/family related.
7. Theft.
8. Baby/Mama drama.
9. Friend betrayal.
10. Fighting over how someone looks.
11. She looked at me/comments.
12. Misunderstandings.
13. Not minding your business.
14. Rude for no reason.
15. Fighting because someone has better stuff than you.

**11:05-11:15 Conducted Story**

**Goals:** (1) to begin the process of playwriting

**Instructions:**

1. Sitting in a circle, one student starts a story. After a few sentences, the person stops and the student sitting next to her/him continues where they left off.

2. Discussion afterwards.

**Evaluation:**

They perform this exercise twice. The first time, there is a lot of repetition of information previously introduced, which they pick up on in the discussion. I have them tell a new story. In the second story, students take the information that is said earlier and expand it (instead of merely repeating the information).

**11:15-11:25 Break**

**11:25-11:30 Digits (same as above)**

(I was not planning to do this exercise again; however, the students ask if they can try it again, so I say yes. The same comments apply this time around, as well.)

**11:30-11:55 Park Bench**

**Goals:** (1) to begin character building, (2) to relay information through actions instead of words, and (3) to build ensemble.

**Instructions:**

1. Have one student sit on a “park bench.”
2. Another student enters the scene with a pre-established relationship.
3. Give them two minutes to interact. The person who enters does not tell the person on the bench their relationship; rather, the person on the bench figures out the relationship based on how the person entering interacts towards them.
4. Give them a ten second time limit, at which point the person on the bench must figure out a realistic way to leave the scene.



**Evaluation:**

When giving the directions, I forget to emphasize that the person on the park bench should not say who they are. I also forget to mention how the person on the bench should be receptive to any relationship thrown their way. After both of these points are clarified, each scene runs smoothly.

If the relationship is not fully guessed, I ask the audience what the actors could have done to make the relationship clearer. For example, a student's choice to play an older sister gets confused with being a mother. We talk about the subtle differences that separate a "motherly sister" from a mother.

Among the relationships that they establish is an abusive ex-boyfriend, a crush, long-lost childhood friends, two members of different gangs, classmates, and a bully.

**11:55-12:00 Closing and Preparation for Next Rehearsal**

I ask them to eavesdrop on a conversation and write down verbatim what is said (totaling half a page to a page). I say that they can record any conversation that they want, as long as they are not personally involved in that conversation.

**Final notes on the first rehearsal**

All in all, I am thrilled with the start of rehearsals. Seven students were able to show up. They genuinely wanted to be there and learn. As we were leaving one student said, "This was definitely worth getting up early on a Saturday for." For me, it does not get better than that.

**Prior to second rehearsal: January 11, 2005**

I found out on Tuesday that Saturday rehearsals will no longer be allowed. Wednesday is the next best day for people, so I spent Tuesday afternoon trying to find students to tell them about this change. Once again, I find myself nervous that many students will not be able to show up for rehearsal.

For rehearsal, I plan to repeat exercises because I am expecting five new students and want them to learn the skills. I am not sure how the students who have already done the exercises will react.

**Rehearsal Number Two: Wednesday, January 12, 2004 (2PM-4PM)**

**2-2:15: Snacks and introduction**

**2:15-2:20: The Blob**

**Goals:** (1) to loosen up, and (2) to work together as a group

**Instructions:**

1. Designate a space with boundaries. The space should be large enough so that students can move freely around.
2. Designate one person as “the blob.” That person tries to tag the other participants.
3. When a person gets tagged, they become part of the blob, and work together until everyone is tagged.

**Evaluation:**

This is a successful game with high energy. The students find creative ways to both avoid and tag other students. The game goes by quickly and there is potential for

injury. A large space works better for this game. Also, to avoid offending anyone, I use the word “it” instead of “blob.”

**2:20-2:25 minutes: Group stop**

**Goals:** (1) to build ensemble, and (2) to work together

**Instructions:**

1. Everyone moves around in a circle.
2. Without being instructed, one person stops.
3. When the group notices that someone stops, they also stop.
4. The goal is for it to look like everyone is stopping at the same time.

**Evaluation:**

The students are receptive to this game. After the first few attempts they start to master the game. They concentrate, stay focused and listen to each other.

**2:25-2:35: Digits (see prior description, page 2)**

**Evaluation:**

This does not go as well as the first time. When I say we are going to play this game, the students who have already played this game are quick to tell the new students about the difficulty factor. This leads to some confusion, making the new students think that the game is impossible. As first, the game proves to be difficult and some students blame others when they “mess up.”

**2:35-2:45 Zip-Zap-Zop (see prior description, page 2)**

**Evaluation:**

The group picks up on the rules quickly, but does not seem to take to the game. The energy is low. I have them play for elimination, (which makes the energy higher) but it grows obvious that they are bored with the game. For this reason, I will not use it in future rehearsals.

**2:45:3:00 Spiola exercise (see prior description, page 3)**

**Evaluation:**

The downfall of the exercise once again stems from the fact that the first group has already done this exercise. Those students have trouble keeping a straight face (I have to constantly use side coaching to get them back on track). They are excited about the outcome, so when we start the discussion, they keep answering the questions I am directing at the students on stage.

**3:00-3:05 Conflict Discussion**

**Goals:** (1) evaluate ideas from the new students, and (2) to review

**Evaluation:**

We review what was said last time, and add a few conflicts to the list. Among the added conflicts are rumors, gang/street violence, and conflicts over someone having more money than another person.

**3:05-3:10 Break**

### **3:10-3:30 Park Bench (see prior description, page 6)**

#### **Evaluation:**

This exercise starts off well. The students who played it last time are excited to play it again, and the new students are anxious to try the game. However, after a while, the game becomes more about being funny and the point of concentration gets lost. For example, Josue goes on stage and pretends he is on Jerry Springer instead of on a park bench. Therefore, instead of showing a relationship, he tells the person who he is (turns out he was sleeping with his friend's mother). I have to intervene and re-discuss the goals of the game. They get back on track somewhat, but there is still a vibe to be funny.

### **3:30-3:50 Freeze tag**

**Goals:** (1) to build ensemble, (2) to work together, (3) to improvise scenes, and (5) to utilize imagination

#### **Instructions:**

1. Have two people start an improvised scene. Instruct them to make a lot of body movements during the scene.
2. Someone from the audience yells, "freeze" and goes to replace one of the actors
3. They must get into the exact position that the actor they are replacing was in at the time the action stopped.
4. The actor starts an entirely different scene until someone yells, "freeze."

#### **Evaluation:**

This game is a lot of fun; the students love every minute of it. However, I feel that the focus can easily get lost. Sometimes the scenes go on too long because nobody

in the audience yells freeze. Also, many times the students forget to start a new scene when they get on stage. I believe this occurs because students in the audience will get a funny idea to add to the current scene. They will then yell freeze and act out their humorous idea, instead of starting a new scene.

I am at fault for not being clear enough in the directions and not stopping the actions as soon as they get out of hand. I am concerned with them having a good time and because of that, I let their actions go on too long.

### **3:55-400: Wrap-up**

I remind the Saturday students about the homework assignment (due next meeting), and tell the new students about recording a conversation.

### **Final notes on the second rehearsal**

There is definitely a high energy level from the group. I like that, but find myself having to focus their energies more than last rehearsal.

**Prior to the third rehearsal: January 18, 2005**

My goal is to get back on track. I decide to be quicker to redirect the students if things get off point. I am also interested in beginning the process of writing the presentation. However, I am a little tentative about starting that process before their skills are in place.

**Rehearsal Number Three: Wednesday, January 19, 2PM-4:00PM**

**2:00-2:15 Snacks and scheduling students' classroom availability**

**2:15-2:25 Heavy**

**Goals:** (1) to express themselves without words, and (2) to warm-up

**Instructions:**

1. Have students move around the room.
2. Instruct them to pick up various imaginary objects from the ground. Start light and move to heavier objects.
3. Have them react to the object. For example, I had them throw a ball and then react as it hit a car window setting off an alarm.

**Evaluation:**

I like the creativity and willingness of everyone in the group to keep the energy level high.

**2:25-2:30 Categories**

**Goals:** (1) to think on their feet and (2) to handle pressure of being put on the spot

**Instructions:**

1. Have everyone sit in a circle.
2. One person comes up with a category (for example States).
3. The group begins a beat with their hands, and everyone goes around the circle naming a state every fourth beat.
4. If a person does not say a state in time to the beat (or repeats a state that someone else stated previously) they are out of the game.

**Evaluation:**

This game turns out to be surprisingly competitive. There is a lot of disagreement about the categories picked, and whether or not a person is out. I intervene trying to get them to utilize their conflict resolution skills. Finally, I just end the game (to everyone's relief).

**2:30-2:35 Fabric**

**Goals:** (1) to think on their feet, and (2) to build up imagination/creativity

**Instructions:**

1. Have everyone stand in a circle. Pass around a piece of fabric (I passed around a scarf).
2. Each person must find a new way to use the fabric.

**Evaluation:**

I did not plan to use this exercise, but because the last game is unsuccessful, I try this exercise as a substitute. The ideas they come up with are innovative. If I do this exercise again, I will incorporate more objects.



**2:35-3:00: Freeze tag (see prior description, page 11)**

**Evaluation:**

This time around, I am clearer in my instructions. This helps, but a new problem arises when the scenes start going on too long. The students watching grow restless, and the people in the scenes stumble around. In order to fix the problem of scenes going on too long, I need to know why people are not yelling freeze.

“I don’t want to freeze unless I have a really good idea,” Dalia says. Others quickly agree. This leads to a good discussion on creating characters instead of focusing on plot. They seem ready to start again if they know they will not get stuck on stage past the scenes life.

“Can you set a time limit for us?” John asks. I agree to give them a thirty-second time frame, at which point someone will have to jump in and replace a student.

We resume the game and after a few rounds it is no longer necessary to give them a thirty-second time. Students take the initiative, the scenes moved faster, and the relationships and dialogue grow interesting. This is a highly successful game after we have our discussion.

**3:00-3:10 Break**

**3:10-3:20 Eavesdropping Homework Assignment**

**Goals:** (1) preparation for writing scenes

**Instructions:**

1. Eavesdrop on a conversation.
2. Write down what is said verbatim.

**Evaluation:**

I think there will be more conversations recorded of strangers, but everyone records conversations of either family or friends; i.e. one person does not complete the assignment, and one person records the conversation “in her head.”

The most interesting part of the discussion is when I ask them why they think I had them record a conversation. They believe the point is to give them a sense of what conflicts people discuss, and how people deal with those conflicts in everyday life.

I add on that I also want them to get a feel for writing dialogue. We discuss that when you are writing dialogue it is essential to write how people actually speak.

**3:20-3:35 Statues (refer to prior description, page 14 of lit review)**

**Evaluation:**

This is an entertaining exercise. The original image created by Nikita, Anthony and Mel is a group mug shot. In the discussion afterwards, they tell us that they felt their statue was obvious, and that everyone would “get it.” They are surprised when different interpretations occur over this image. It points out that in theatre there are no obvious answers.

**3:35-3:55: Role-Play**

**Goals:** (1) to begin script writing, and (2) to build imagination

**Instructions:**

1. Break everyone into small groups and give each group a specific conflict.
2. Give students ten minutes to develop a role-play designed around their conflict.
3. Perform the role-play for each other.
4. Discuss the process and result.

**Evaluation:**

They work hard on this exercise and are supportive of each other's performances (giving thunderous applause after each group performed). They are growing strong at giving productive feedback.

Spolin discourages giving "acting" tips, but I feel some tips are necessary. During one scene, a student has her back turned towards the audience during the entire scene. Not blocking a scene makes sense because it can make a scene look awkward and staged. However, if the audience cannot see the action, they will become disengaged. I show everyone how to cheat their bodies outward so that they would look as if they were facing each other, but allow for the audience to see each actor.

**3:55-4:00 Wrap-up**

**Final notes on the third rehearsal**

Having the mediators know each other helps me because there is already an ensemble in place from their previous training. Yet, because the students are so comfortable, at times they tend to bicker like siblings. However, everyone genuinely cares for each other and it is a supportive environment.

**Prior to fourth rehearsal: January 25, 2005**

I am excited to concentrate on the presentation, but the change in weather is becoming an issue. I am hoping that after tomorrow's rehearsal I will feel more at ease and thrilled with the progress, instead of nervous from not knowing what if school will be cancelled.

**Prior to fourth rehearsal, February 2, 2005**

Time is now a big factor. We missed two rehearsals because of the weather (January 26<sup>th</sup> and January 28<sup>th</sup>). We will meet tomorrow, even though it is a half-day. I am excited to get back into the swing of things. We have been stagnant too long.

**Rehearsal Four: Wednesday, February 2, 2005, 12:45PM-3:00PM**

**12:30-12:45: Snacks and socializing**

**12:45-1:15: Logistical Discussion**

I chart out the remaining rehearsals and performance times for the month of February on a large poster board. Looking at the poster board makes the reality of the date sink in for the students, but they remain confident that they will be set for the first of the performances on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

**1:05- 1:50: Brainstorming performance**

I have everyone move his or her chairs into a small circle (so the conversation will feel more intimate). I then ask them what they want to get across to their audience.

The group starts off answering this question by being vocal about what they do not want. They have all experienced classroom presentations before, and want to offer something unique to their usual experience.

“Students like it if you speak ghetto,” Shaneka says. “You know, be real when you’re talking.”

“And smile,” Mel says. “Whenever people come in to do presentations, they’re so serious and the people never smile. It’s like, what’s so serious about what you’re going to do that you can’t smile?”

They also state that they do not like it when presenters are too obvious, or exaggerate a situation for effect. In past performances they have seen, they feel that scenes became unrealistic due to this exaggeration.

“It’s like they’re doing it just to make their point, so it never looks like the way things actually go down,” Josue says.

Kelly then asks me if the health teachers are going to notify their classes ahead of time that we will be coming into their class. I tell her that it has never occurred to me to ask. She says that she thinks more students will attend class if they know we are coming and also that student’s do not like being surprised by a presentation. Other students agree.

“If you know there is going to be a presentation in your class, it makes you more likely to go to class?” I ask.

“Much more likely,” Dalia says. “If we know something’s going to happen in class, we’ll go. But, if we think that we’re just going to do nothing, we’re not going to show.”

In terms of the performance, their main goal is to give each freshman a better understanding of mediation. Shaneka thinks we should start off with a general question for discussion. However, they do not want to go around the room and make everyone answer; rather, they wanted to throw it out for general discussion.

“Okay, but what if you ask a question, and nobody answers it,” I ask. “How could you deal with that?” They are silent for a while, and then Josue says that if nobody answers, he will turn to his partner and ask him/her. He thinks that might break the ice, and get others talking about the questions.

Shaneka also suggests doing an opening activity before the questions, (an icebreaker) to get people comfortable and more willing to talk. A couple of suggestions are bounced around, but nothing that anyone thinks will work. I tell them to think about it this week, and we will revisit this question at the next rehearsal.

We then bounce around potential opening questions. The first question that everyone initially likes is, “Have you ever been in a fight?” However, after some discussion, they decide that the question is too personal.

“I wouldn’t admit I’d been in a fight,” Josue says.

“Yeah,” replies Mel. “I’d be like, is this some sort of trick? Are the police going to run in here and arrest us, or something?”

However, they like the question, so I recommend developing a more general version of the question. The final decision is, “Do you think there is a lot of conflict at Madison?” They feel this is a good opening because it will get at the same type of information without making the students feel as if they are divulging their own personal stories.

After the opening question, they feel discussing mediation is a good next step. However, incorporating humor is important to them, and so they want to act out an entertaining scenario. Sophie (a mediator who cannot make the rehearsals) has come up with an idea involving a student standing in front of the class and in a very banal and dry manner explaining what mediation entails. Then, another student interrupts explaining mediation in a more down to earth manner. Everyone likes her idea.

“Yeah, yeah,” Mel says, jumping up and imitating the person breaking into the boring speech. “No, dawg, you got it all wrong. Let me break it down for your satisfaction.”

I also mention my desire to get some information from the classrooms with a survey. I hear groans around the circle.

“Michelle, don’t do that. They’ll hate it” Dalia says. I ask them if they have any ideas that will provide the same information.

“We could ask them questions and they could hold up YES/NO cards to answer” Mel suggests. I tell them that it is a good idea, and I will think about it for next time.

We then shift our discussion to the role-plays. They decide to concentrate on writing one role-play that everyone can perform. I tell them that is fine, but then the role-play will have to be non-gender specific. We also discuss ending the role-plays in a non-productive manner, so that the class can determine better solutions to the problem. They brainstorm deconstructive endings besides getting into a physical fight, such as picking up a cell phone to call your crew, threats, or leaving the school ground to fight. I also mention Urban Improv’s technique of having students come up and replace actors on stage.

“No,” Josue says. “I think it would work better to divide them into groups, and have the group come up with a new ending to the same role-play. You know, that way, everyone’s involved.” Everyone agrees, and they decide that each of them will be a group leader for one of the groups.

When discussing the content of the role-play, he said/she said is shouted out in chorus. Specifically, they want to deal with a boyfriend/girlfriend issue (with jealousy and looks incorporated into the scene). It is important to them that the conflict reflects a typical mediation they see, so that it will have relevance for the rest of the presentation.

They also are clear that they do not want the role-play to include acting out an actual mediation because they feel it will be boring for the freshman to watch. They also feel it will have the opposite effect and turn students off to mediation. They believe that if they walk the classes through mediation, the students will think that they are promoting mediation too hard, and get turned off to the process. We discuss using theatre time to speed up the process, but they decide that after the role-play, they want to step out of character and discuss what they would do if that case was brought to mediation.

John suggests saying something to the effect of, “This role-play is based on typical situations that get brought to mediation. If this situation was brought to us in mediation, this is what we would do.” He goes on to explain the process and the role of mediation.

**Evaluation:**

Brainstorming proves to be extremely useful and enlightening for me. In fact, I probably benefit from this discussion the most. It is nice to see their level of enthusiasm rise as they talk about the performance.



### **1:50-2:15: Free-writing Exercise**

#### **Instructions:**

1. Tell them to write about he said/she said issues for ten minutes without ever lifting their pens from the page.
2. Have them reconvene and read his or her work.

#### **Evaluation:**

“That was mad fun,” Shaneka says as we are moving back into a circle.

When I ask for volunteers to read, almost everyone raises their hands without hesitation. Everyone is proud of what they have written, and want to read his or her work.

#### **Here are excerpts from some of their writings:**

“He said/she said causes so much drama over stupid things. They leed into fights that your going to get in trouble for just to find out you both look stupid after you find out what your actually fighting for. Then to top it off there’s a 50/50 chance that yall are going to be friend sooner or later...he say/she say usually starts from people who don’t like each other and want to turn everyone against them to. Unfortunately there is a lot of it going around Madison.”

Deanna, 11<sup>th</sup> grade

“I think that race has a lot to do with fighting. I remember last year when I was a freshman that’s why people were fighting mostly girls on she’s Hispanic and a hoe she didn’t look at me right. Things like that.”

Dalia, 10<sup>th</sup> grade

“Someone said that my best friend said I was a bitch so I confronted her and she looked me up and down like she wanted to fight. Then I said that she was just jealous that I was graduating with the class and she wasn’t so she told me that I better stay out of her way or she would fuck me up. I told her if she wanted to bang she knows where to find me!!”

Mel, 11<sup>th</sup> grade

## **2:15-2:55: Role Play Development**

### **Instruction:**

1. Break them into groups of two.
2. Work with their partner for twenty minutes to develop a scene dealing with he said/she said issues.
3. Perform the role-plays for each other.

### **Evaluation:**

The most important lesson learned from this exercise is proper pacing for a scene. Everyone can feel when a scene goes on too long.

## **2:55-3:00: Wrap-up**

### **Final notes on the fourth rehearsal**

This is the best rehearsal that I have experienced. I think this rehearsal stands out to me because I feel I offered them something that they do not normally get: an opportunity for self-expression.

For example, there is a friend of one of the mediators that is there (I tell her she could stay). I set her up on a computer to do work while we start rehearsal. I notice a few minutes in that she has turned away from the computer and is listening in. A minute later, she joins our group, and participates for the rest of rehearsal. After the free-writing exercise she tells me that she had never written so much in her entire life, and is beaming from ear to ear.

**Prior to fifth rehearsal: February 4, 2005**

I am excited for this rehearsal. I am hoping that the momentum from the last rehearsal continues.

**Rehearsal Five: Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005, 10:00PM-12:15PM**

**10:00-10:15: Breakfast and socializing**

**10:15-10:30: Re-cap of last rehearsal**

I review all the parts of the presentation. As we review, they fill in some of the presentational gaps that are left over from last rehearsal.

**10:30-11:15 Mediation skit**

We discuss the general format of the mediation skit. The group decides that they want me to act as a person who describes mediation in a mundane manner.

“Michelle, you’ll be so much better at being boring than any of us,” Mel says. Everyone agrees. In order to practice, I suggest improvising the scene. We decide that I will take the tape and write out a potential scene for them to follow. However, I tell them not to worry about memorizing the scene; rather, I suggest they use the scene as a guideline.

“Obviously, if you’re talking about mediation, there are points that need to be made. However, I am flexible about how you make those points,” I tell them. “Everyone has their own style, and I want you to take advantage of that.”

As we start the skit, the students waste no time giving me instructions. “Don’t forget to be boring. You know, just be yourself,” John jokingly says.

I take a few of the improvisations and some of the process discussions from the tape to illustrate how the skit evolves throughout the rehearsal [see Appendix B].

**Evaluation (of the entire exercise):**

This is a positive exercise, and there is definite excitement in the air. Having their goal appear more tangible makes everyone happy and excited.

**11:15-12:15 Scene development**

We brainstorm ideas for role-plays. They now want to concentrate on three role-plays (one for two girls, one for two guys, and one for a guy and a girl). The easiest scenarios for them to come up with are the same sex ones. The guy and girl scene proves to be more difficult. I decide to break them off into groups to improvise scenes. I think that this might give them a better idea of what will or will not work.

**Evaluation:**

This process proves to be effective. Improvising scenes generate ideas for them that they are having difficulty producing through discussion.

**Final notes on the fifth rehearsal**

Everything is coming together. My concentration is now on scheduling presentations. There are a few classrooms that students have not signed up for, and I am trying to get them filled.

**Prior to sixth rehearsal: February 8, 2005**

I am still spending a majority of my prep time scheduling students into classroom dates. Ideally, I want students to consistently work together because then they can solidify their role-plays together. However, that is impossible to do because of individual scheduling needs.

**Rehearsal Number Six: Wednesday, February 9<sup>th</sup>**

**2:00-2:15: Snacks and socializing**

**2:15-2:30: Re-cap of Saturday's rehearsal**

I make a new poster board with the revised agenda. I also decide that I need to do a survey to get accurate information. I ask the mediators if they think candy would make students more apt to complete a survey. They say that candy will help.

**2:30-2:40: Build a Machine (see prior description, page 8 lit review)**

**Evaluation:**

I want to give them a large group activity before separating them into small groups. We play two rounds of the game because it goes by rather fast. After the first round, they discuss making it more challenging, and are more inventive during the second round.

**2:40-3:05 Role-plays**

**Instructions:**

1. I break them up into the groups that they will be presenting with during Monday and Tuesday's presentations and give them twenty-five minutes to develop a role-play.

**Evaluation:**

They really got into this exercise knowing that these role-plays will be performed for an audience in less than a week.

**3:05-4:15 Run through**

**Instructions:**

1. Each group performs the presentation from start to finish.
2. After each performance we discuss what we liked, and make necessary changes to the presentation. Occasionally, we stop during each section to give feedback.

**Evaluation:**

This helps everyone get a sense of timing and structure. For example, they originally decide that after a quick introduction they will launch into the warm-up game, and then perform the mediation skit. However, as we are doing a run through, John suggests using the mediation skit as the introduction, and then moving into the warm-up game.

They practice pulling me off the stage when I am interrupted. This works out well because it gives me an exit, and allows them to fully take over for the rest of the presentation.

We also spend time on the discussion part of their presentation. As each group performs, the rest of the students role-play a freshman class, so that everyone will be prepared for all situations.

**4:10-4:15: Wrap-up**

I give students CP forms to get signed by their teachers (so that they will have an excused absence for their classroom times).

**Final notes on the sixth rehearsal**

I am impressed with the confidence that the students have in themselves. They feel completely ready and are excited to go into the classrooms. There is a buzz in the air that happens when a project is ready.

I cannot wait to see what happens in the classrooms. It is in the students' hands and I am not nervous about the outcome because I am so pleased with the process.

**Prior to seventh and eighth rehearsals: February 11, 2005**

This is our last opportunity to work together before Monday's classroom presentations. This is a good time to go through the performance and answer any last questions. I am also trying to think about any topics that need reinforcement.

**Rehearsals Number Seven (groups performing Monday) and Eight (groups performing Tuesday): Friday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, and Monday, February 14<sup>th</sup>**

**2:00-2:15: Snacks and socializing**

**2:15-2:25: Mirror game (see prior description, page 8, lit review)**

**Evaluation:**

The movements start out basic, but quickly turn adventurous in nature. They work to challenge each other.

**2:25-3:25: Run-through of presentation**

This is a place for everyone to gain confidence and feel comfortable with the material.



**Rehearsal Number Nine: Wednesday, February 16, 2005**

**2:15-3:00: Review of presentations**

Over snacks, we sit in a circle and talk about the presentations so far. By Wednesday, everyone has done at least one presentation. They are excited to both talk and hear about each other's experiences.

We make a few minor changes by officially adding another role-play to the agenda. They also decide to allow the groups to develop their own role-plays if they want. This replaces the original idea of concentrating on developing an alternative ending to the mediator's role-plays.

All in all, everyone is energized by the presentations and cannot wait to go back in more classrooms. Many want "tougher" audiences, so that they will have new challenges.

**3:00-3:15: New partners**

I give everyone the list of presentations for the last two days of performances. Each group briefly meets to decide which role-plays they will use and to assign parts.

**3:15-3:30: New CP forms**

I write out new CP forms for the students to get signed, and make sure everyone is aware of which blocks they are performing.

## Results

This project is not intended to be a research project, but it does offer some initial findings that may be useful for future research on using theatre as a means of education. The results are based on the presentation themselves and the surveys that the students filled out.

### The Presentations

The mediators went into eleven freshman health classrooms; three on Monday, February 14, two on Tuesday, February 15, two on Friday, February 18, and four on Monday, February, 29. The schedules were determined based on student schedules. Out of ten mediators, one mediator went into two classrooms, three mediators went into three classrooms, two mediators went into four classrooms, three mediators went into six classrooms, and one mediator went into seven classrooms.

The average classroom size was seventeen students, with the largest classroom size at twenty-four students and the smallest at seven students.

The mediators did an excellent job relating to the students and speaking on their level. Most of the presentations proved to be engaging for both the students and peer mediators. Nine out of the eleven shows went well in terms of classroom participation and enthusiasm from the students. During one presentation, a freshman boy who started off in the back of a large classroom not interested in the presentation moved up to the front row during the discussion so he “would not miss anything.” He remained active for the rest of the presentation.

When the audience was tough, the mediators rose to the challenge. Two of the classrooms contained “tougher” students. They were less enthusiastic and did not want to

participate. The mediators worked hard to engage these classes, which worked on one of the two classes.

The last class was a special education class that contained ten students. It was suggested to me by the teacher not to go to that class because of the difficulty factor and because she would be absent during the presentation. I asked the students presenting how they felt about it; they wanted the challenge.

Three students walked out of the class before the presentation began. The remaining seven were a combination of resistant and shy. I helped the mediators reformulate the presentation to work better for the group. We found that small groups and one-on-one conversation worked well. None of the students did a role-play, but they did discuss alternative solutions to conflicts other than resorting to violence. A mediator represented each group to discuss their solutions to the rest of the class. I was pleasantly surprised when I read their evaluations and saw that they had listened and had interesting comments.

### The Surveys

I wanted to give students surveys as a teaching tool for myself. My goals were to see if they learned about mediation, if they would consider using mediation if they had a conflict, and if they were interested in becoming mediators. This last question was more to measure excitement with the mediation process rather than to recruit; however, five students wrote out their information on the surveys so that I could find them later to apply for a position.

One hundred and ninety questionnaires were anonymously completed from the classroom presentations. When the students completed a survey, they were given candy.

Ninety-nine percent of the classroom students completed a questionnaire, with only one student deciding not to fill out a survey. Results are calculated for both total results and gender specific results [see below and Appendixes E, F and G].

For the conflict portion of the questionnaire, the conflicts described spanned a range of topics. This written question had a ninety-two percent response rate. The most frequent conflicts from the female respondents were about “he said/she said” issues, followed closely by boyfriend/girlfriend disputes. Other conflicts addressed are “dirty” looks, jealousy and drawing conclusions based on appearances. In addition to these conflicts, male responders wrote about less interpersonal conflict and interestingly wrote about more social issues, such as attempted murder or murder itself, race relations and gang activity. The mediation portion of the survey more directly assessed if the goal of teaching the process of mediation through performance was obtained.

|   | Total Students |     |       | Females |       |       | Males |       |       |
|---|----------------|-----|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|   | Yes            | No  | Maybe | Yes     | No    | Maybe | Yes   | No    | Maybe |
| Do you think mediation could have helped?             | 83%            | 14% | 4%    | 83.5%   | 11%   | 5.5%  | 81.6% | 18.4% | ---   |
| Do mediators tell students who is right who is wrong? | 18%            | 82% | ---   | 9%      | 91%   | ---   | 26.5% | 73.5% | ---   |
| Would you like to be peer mediator?                   | 41%            | 53% | 6%    | 58.7%   | 33.7% | 7.6%  | 22.4% | 71.4% | 6.1%  |

## Evaluation

The results indicate that a majority of both males and females feel that mediation is helpful in conflicts. Also, the majority of students answered the question pertaining to mediator impartiality correctly by saying that a mediator does not take sides. Females retained information better than the males, scoring in the ninetieth percentile, while the males scored in the seventieth percentile. In terms of wanting to become a mediator, after the performance, more females are interested than males. As a total, the split is close to fifty-fifty. Some of the reasons written for not wanting to be a mediator involve being nervous about going into classrooms and not thinking that they would be successful mediators.

The survey results presented here do not definitively indicate whether the goal of teaching students about mediation was met. In order to do this, there must be a control group of students who have not watched the performance. Their responses can then be compared to the post performance responses. Another issue with the interpretation of these results stems from whether or not the second question, 'Do you think mediation could have helped in the situations described above?' can appear leading when given to students directly after watching a presentation about the benefits of peer mediation.

The true test of success will be measured in the future. Will more freshman students refer themselves to mediation than before watching the presentations? Will more students accurately understand what mediation is before going into the process? Since the mediation presentations, I have had four freshman self-referrals in a six week time frame. This is in comparison to one self-referral over a six month time frame. On

average, more freshman students can accurately describe mediation to me when I am conducting an intake. However, there are still many who do not understand mediation. Our presentations reached one-hundred and ninety-one students. There are a calculated four hundred and forty-six freshman students on the roster. Some of these students are in alternative programs, and some have been transferred. However, this illustrates how class-cutting can be a barrier to reaching students. Often times, it is the students who are most in need of the resources who are not there to benefit.

### My Evaluation

The end project did not resemble my original vision, but that was expected. In a way, the lack of time was the largest factor in the end result. To put on an entire play, (my original goal) I would have needed to get started much sooner. I feel that this experience was my initiation into the process of using theatre in the classroom and I feel it was a good first step. If I were to undertake a project like this next year, I would be ready to expand it with a more formal production in front of larger audiences.

I went into this project with the goal of wanting the students to develop the presentation. Keeping true to that goal proved to be more difficult than I imagined. For example, I felt as if I led them in directions when I spoke about Urban Improv's structure. Would they have decided to break into groups and redo the scenes if I had not planted certain ideas? I do not know. However, as the project moved forward, I grew more comfortable with giving the students creative control. When their decisions differed from what I would have done, I not only accepted those decisions, but embraced them because I was glad they were taking the initiative and turning this into their presentation.

### Mediators' Evaluation

The students enjoyed going into the classrooms as experts in their field. After the first presentations, all of the students ran to the schedule to see if they could go into more classrooms than they originally signed up for. The main sentiment was that the presentations were even more fun than they thought they would be during rehearsals.

The majority of students found that breaking the class into small groups and having them develop their own role-plays was the most rewarding part. It was a chance for them to see the students actively look for ways to handle conflict in a more productive manner. The mediators were also impressed by how many of the students were interested in becoming peer mediators after the presentations. To them, it solidified the impact that they made on the classes.

The most challenging aspect for them was the discussion segment about conflict. They were nervous about students either not saying anything, or not taking the discussion seriously. They said that because each classroom held a different dynamic, they were always nervous about the discussion.

A majority of the students have approached me individually asking if we can continue working after the presentations are completed. Many want to go into more classrooms to show off their work. They are interested in expanding this project, and have asked about the possibility of putting on a larger production to be performed for a larger audience.

“I loved doing this,” Thynisha said. “Now, I want to do even more.”

**Appendix A: Classroom presentation**

1. Introduction: Mediation Skit
2. Digits/Counting Game
3. Discussion Questions:
  - a. Do you think that there is a lot of conflict that goes on at Madison Park?  
Why?
  - b. Do you think students handle conflict well at Madison? Why?
  - c. Do you think administrators handle conflict well? Why?
4. Perform role-plays.
5. Instead of role-playing an actual mediation, discuss how they would handle the characters in the role-play and conflict if that case was brought to mediation.
6. Break into groups. Mediators lead each group in developing their own role-play about a conflict that ends in a positive manner.
7. Have students fill out the surveys.



## **Appendix B: Mediation skit**

**MICHELLE:** Mediation is a way for disputes to be resolved in a timely fashion. If you have a problem, then we will help you figure out a way for the problem to be resolved in a constructive, rather than a deconstructive manner.

**MEL:** Cut! Fffff, check it! Let me break it down for your satisfaction. Mediation is the type of thing that gets your all conflicts resolved. You know what I'm saying? You know how you get into a fight and you're arguing with somebody? Well, we give you all a chance to fix you're issues. You know, none of this drama, none of this getting suspended, expelled, or kicked out over stupid things. Instead, we sit down with you and help you all come to a resolution. Mediation, (content sigh) that's what it is.

### **Process:**

John brings up how her beginning sounds like a rap.

"You should just keep going with that," he advises.

"Yeah, that's how my brain is working today," she replies. I tell her that if she wants to write a rap, that works for me.

They also think that I am sufficiently boring.

"You were mad corny," Mel says. "Everyone's going to be like, get off the stage!"

We discuss the points that are missing, such as confidentiality, neutrality and the need for a transition when I am interrupted.

"It should be something like, 'does anyone even understand what she's talking about?'" Jaque suggests. "And then be like, mediation is not even like that."

"You should make it sound a lot more difficult than it actually is," John says.

“Yeah, you should make it sound like it’s mad hard. Like you have to fill out fifty forms just to get your case heard,” Mel says.

**Mediation Skit:**

**MICHELLE:** Mediation is a process that we like to view as a constructive way to handle conflict that could otherwise transition down a very destructive path. Basically, the way that mediation works is it’s an opportunity for you guys to have a chance to work out any of the issues that you have...

**JAQUE:** Wait a second. Does anybody even know what she’s saying? No, no, no, mediation is not even like that. Mediation gives you guys a chance to work out your problems, your conflicts, anything that’s going on. You talk about it and find a way to resolve it. All that stuff she said, you probably don’t even know what she said. But anyway, you’ll each be able to talk about your side of the story and find out ways to resolve it.

**Process:**

“Don’t forget about putting confidentiality in there somewhere,” John says. “So that they know that it ain’t goin’ go outside the room.” He also notes that my explanation is not difficult enough. “You should get a thesaurus, and get some huge words,” John suggests.

“Oh, and look offended when you get interrupted,” Dalia suggests.

**Mediation skit:**

**MICHELLE:** We like to look at mediation as an opportunity to turn a deleterious situation into a constructive outcome. A lot of times, when we're dealing with mediation, we're taking what started off as an innocuous exchange, and really took a wrong turn.

**JOSUE:** Cut!

**MICHELLE:** Josue?

**JOSUE:** You did enough. Mediation is basically a way you guys resolve your problems. Nothing like what she's saying. You know, you guys have problems, you come to us and we just talk about it; it's a way for you guys to resolve it. You know, we have this thing called confidentiality; whatever you say, it stays in the room. None of your friends are going to hear about it. That's mediation.

**Process:**

“What our transition into the role-plays?” Josue asks, noting that all the skits end abruptly.

“Maybe we can just say that now we are going to show you a case that gets brought to us in mediation a lot,” Jaque suggests. The idea is well received. Also, in terms of the length, they decide that succinct is better than a lengthy rendition of mediation.

“You know, it's important to just get to the point and make sure they really understand what mediation is,” Josue says.

**Mediation skit:**

**MICHELLE:** A lot of times conflict has a derogatory connotation, but it does not have to result in such an ending. That's where mediation comes in. Mediation is a process, where you guys can sit down and...

**DALIA:** Okay, okay. No more. This is boring me to death. I don't know what you're trying to do, but I don't think they understood you. So, let me just break it down for them. Mediation is just, um...(laughs...gets reassurance from group) Okay, mediation is something that we sit down, we talk about your conflict, and we help you find a solution for yourself. Also, nobody has to know what your problem is, so we all keep it to ourselves with something we call confidentiality. And, you know, you're not going to become best of friends after, but you know, we don't want no violence going down at school. And, um, (breaks) I don't know what else to say! Oh yeah, now we're going to act out a typical mediation for you.

## Appendix C: The Role-Plays

### The Look

*A guy leans against a locker in a hallway and talks to his friend. A girl walks by them on her way to class. He looks her up and down and says, "Mmmm Hmmm." He continues talking to his friend and makes comments about the girl. She notices this exchange and approaches him.*

GIRL: Did you just say something about me?

BOY: No.

GIRL: I heard you say so.

BOY: You didn't hear nothin'.

GIRL: Yes, I did.

BOY: Oh, man. I'm not talking about you.

GIRL: Well, what you be starin' at me like that for?

BOY: I ain't starin' at you.

GIRL: You sure? Cause you seem to be starin' pretty hard.

BOY: God, You're conceited. You ain't nothing. Get out of my face.

GIRL: Who you callin' conceited?

BOY: You know, the world don't revolve around you. Get out of here. Fetch. Scoot.

GIRL: I'll *get* wherever I want. You said something inappropriate to me. You ain't gonna be disrespecting me like that.

BOY: Oh, god, I told you, go away.

GIRL: Whatcha gonna do about it (*She pokes him in the chest.*)

BOY: Yo, don't put your hands on me.

GIRL: I'll put my hands wherever I want.

BOY: No, you won't.

GIRL: Yes, I will. I ain't backing up. Yo, I don't need to be backing up.

(*Confrontational*) What's up?

BOY (*To his friend.*): What a hoe.

GIRL: Who you calling a hoe? I ain't nobody's hoe.

BOY: I'm talking about you.

GIRL: I know you ain't saying that.

BOY (*Laughing*): Whatever. (*She pokes him again. He moves up abruptly, and the conflict escalates. They get louder.*) Yo, put your hands on me again. Come on; put your hands on me again. (*He walks towards her, forcing her to walk backwards*

GIRL: I'm gonno go get my brother's on you.

BOY: Go ahead. Do it. Go get your brothers. (*This last exchange is repeated a few times as they talk over each other.*)

### Cambridge Street

*The scene starts with John and Kelly talking to each other alone on a street corner.*

JOHN: Yo, check it. It's going to be a bangin' black light party.

KELLY: Oh, yeah? I want to go.

JOHN: Yeah, you should come man. It's goin' be hot, it's goin' be bangin', you know what I mean?

KELLY: Cool.

JOHN: (*He gets a call on his cell phone.*) Oh, hold on one second. (*He walks into the background to answer a cell phone call.*)

KELLY: No problem.

ANTHONY: Hey, hey (*Anthony approaches Kelly quickly and aggressively.*) aren't you from Cambridge street?

Kelly: Yeah.

ANTHONY: Yo, I really don't like...

KELLY (*Interrupting*): Why are you looking at me like that?

ANTHONY: I really don't like you Cambridge street kids.

KELLY: Don't look at me like that.

ANTHONY (*Movin' in closer*) Yeah, what are you goin' do about it?

JOHN (*Intercepts Kelly and Anthony, pushing Anthony out of the way.*): Is there a problem, man?

ANTHONY: I was dealing with her.

JOHN: You got a problem with her; you got a problem with me.

ANTHONY: Listen, I was dealing with short and skinny, not tall and pudgy.

JOHN: Who you callin' tall and pudgy?

KELLY (*In background*) Stop! Cut it out. It's not worth it. (*The boy's arguing escalates into a physical fight.*)

### **Ain't Love Grand**

*Scene 1: The school hallway.*

SHANEKA: So, how's school, whatever?

MEL: Yo, you know, it's mad cool.

SHANEKA: We about to graduate.

MEL: Yeah, I know. We about to go to college, man. I am out of here! I've waited four years for that day. I'm so sick of this school.

SHANEKA: Me too.

MEL: Man, I've got to get out of here.

SHANEKA: I know what you mean. So, who you takin' to prom?

MEL: I'm takin' Jay.

JAY (*Enters into the scene and goes up to Mel, ignoring Shaneka.*): Hey, baby (*Gives her a flower.*): What's goin' on? What are you up to?

MEL: Oh, you know nothin'. Just chillin'.

JAY: That's cool.

SHANEKA (*Clearing her throat with visible irritation.*): Yo! You see me? I'm mad big, like how could you miss me?

JAY (*Nonchalantly*): Oh, yeah. How you doin', too? What's goin' on?

SHANEKA (*Deflated*): Yeah, I'm fine.

JAY (*Turning back to Mel.*): So, you ready to go?

MEL: Yeah, I'm ready.

JAY: Let's go then. (*They walk out arm and arm, ignoring Shaneka.*)

SHANEKA (*Addressing the audience.*): Oh, my god. I want that boy Jay. He is soooo fine. I want to date him, but he's goin' out with my friend. I don't know what to do.

Scene 2: School hallway, the next day



SHANEKA (*Talking to a friend.*): Yo, did you know that Mel was cheatin' on Jay?  
Yeah, I know. Ain't that messed up? That's mad rude. But, you know, she's goin' get what she deserves.

MEL (*Approaches Shaneka*): Excuse me! I heard that you're spreading rumors that I cheated on Jay.

SHANEKA: Come on. Why would I do that to my friend? That's mad corny.

MEL: Well, I think you're the type of person who would.

SHANEKA: Oh, so that's who you think I am?

MEL: Yeah, you know, I know you very well.

SHANEKA: Oh, really? Is that the case?

JAY: (*Enters and goes up to the girls.*) Yo, what's goin' on?

SHANEKA: You better check your girl.

JAY: What happened? (*To Mel*) Baby, what's goin' on?

MEL: Yo, you better tell her that she best be watchin' her back!

JAY (*Trying to intercept them.*): Whoa, whoa.

SHANEKA: Oh, so now you be puttin' threats on me?

MEL: What are you going to do about it!

SHANEKA: Hey, if you want to do this, let's do this now!

MEL: You know what? You know what? I'm going to call my people right now.

SHANEKA: Yo, you need to call your people! Ain't nothin' to do with them. You want to go, we'll go right now! (*Jay unsuccessfully tries to break them apart, as they start to fight.*)

### Partners

NIKITA: Hey Dalia, how's it going?

DALIA: Hey, what's up?

NIKITA: So, me and your beau Theo, you know how we're working on that project?

DALIA: Yeah, how's that goin'?

NIKITA: Yeah, you know it's goin' pretty good. Except, well, I got to talk to you about your beau, but you got to promise not to get mad.

DALIA: Tell me, but I can't promise.

NIKITA: Well, I need a new partner because, well...

DALIA: Why do you need a new partner?

NIKITA: Because he kissed me, and I didn't feel comfortable. (*Pause*) And he was telling me how much he liked me more than you. So, I told him to come and speak to you about all of this, but I guess he isn't man enough to do so. So, I figure I'll come to you and tell you about it.

DALIA: What? He kissed you?

NIKITA: Yeah.

DALIA: He kissed you! Right!

NIKITA: I'm just telling you how it is.

DALIA: Oh, you're telling me how it is? Give me a break. This is your fault. You're the hoe over here. I'm sure that you were the first one who made a move on him.

NIKITA: No, no, I really didn't. I'm the one over here trying to tell you what happened.

DALIA (*Speaking over her.*): Whatever, whatever. You're just trying to break us up.

NIKITA (*Standing up.*): Yo, I'm trying to do you a favor by letting you know that you better check your man!

DALIA (*Standing up, too.*): My man looooves me!

NIKITA: Well, all I'm saying is that if he loves you like you he does, then what's he doin' scamming on me!?

DALIA: That's it. When the bell rings, we're going to fix this. You better watch your back. (*She leaves the scene.*)

### **Basketball Diaries**

*Scene: Thynisha is at her locker when Jaque angrily approaches her. The girls are both on the basketball team together.*

JAQUE: Yo, you been talkin' trash about me?

THYNISHA: (*She turns around in a circle and points to herself, as if totally taken back by the accusation.*): You talkin' to me?

JAQUE: Yeah, I'm talkin' to you. Who do you think I'm talkin' to?

THYNISHA: What's your problem?

JAQUE: You're my problem. I heard you been spreadin' rumors about me.

THYNISHA: Rumors? Who'd you hear that from?

JAQUE: Some of the other girls on the basketball team told me.

THYNISHA: Why would I be puttin' your name in my mouth? You ain't nothin' to me.

(*Anthony hears the argument and starts happily listening in.*)

JAQUE: No, I think you're lying right about now. Everyone knows that you're jealous of me.

ANTHONY (*Talking to surrounding people.*): Ohhh, did you hear what she just said. (*To Thynisha*) Yo, you gonna let her get away with talkin' to you like that.

THYNISHA: I'm not jealous of you. What do you got that would make me jealous of you? What is your problem? You're all thinking you're so big and all, coming up into my face and all talking your stupid rumors.

JAQUE: Oh, so now you're callin' my girls' liars! Is that how it is!

THYNISHA: You are getting on my last nerve. You need to get out of my face right now.

JAQUE (*Yelling*): I'll get in your face if I want. You're so two-faced. You try to act all nice to me in practice, but then go running around behind my back spreading lies about me.

ANTHONY: Yo, she's callin' you two-faced!

THYNISHA (*Yelling*): That's it! I've had enough of you. Let's take this outside.

ANTHONY (*They head for the door, with Anthony gleefully following behind*): Yo, everyone, there's a fight!

**Appendix D: The Survey**

1. Circle your gender.

Male                  Female

2. Describe two conflicts that you know about, which occurred in a school you have attended (one sentence for each conflict).

3. Do you think a mediator could have helped in any of those situations?

Yes                  No

4. Do mediators tell students who go to mediation who is right and who is wrong?

Yes                  No

5. Would you like to be a peer mediator?

Yes                  No

## Appendix E: Survey results of females

|  | Do you think mediation could have helped in any of those situations (conflicts described above)? |     |       | Do mediators tell the students who go to mediation who is right and who is wrong? |    | Do you want to be a peer mediator? |    |       |
|--|--|-----|-------|---|----|------------------------------------|----|-------|
|  | YES  | NO  | MAYBE | YES   | NO | YES                                | NO | MAYBE |
| <b>Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 12</b>  | 9  | 1   | 2     | 1   | 11 | 3                                  | 9  | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 8</b>   | 7  | --- | 1     | ---   | 8  | 3                                  | 3  | 2     |
| <b>Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 6</b>   | 6  | --- | ---   | 1   | 5  | 5                                  | 1  | ---   |
| <b>Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 12</b> | 7  | 4   | 1     | 2   | 10 | 7                                  | 5  | ---   |
| <b>Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 12</b> | 12   | --- | ---   | ---   | 12 | 9                                  | 2  | 1     |
| <b>Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 8</b>   | 8  | --- | ---   | 1   | 7  | 3                                  | 4  | 1     |
| <b>Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 9</b>   | 7  | 2   | ---   | ---   | 9  | 7                                  | 2  | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 8</b>   | 5  | 2   | 1     | 2   | 6  | 1                                  | 4  | 3     |
| <b>Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 10</b>  | 9  | 7   | 3     | ---   | 10 | 5                                  | 5  | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 5</b>   | 4  | 1   | ---   | 1   | 4  | 4                                  | 1  | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> block</b><br><b>Females: 2</b>   | 2  | --- | ---   | ---   | 2  | 1                                  | 1  | ---   |

## Appendix F: Survey results of males

|   | Do you think mediation could have helped in any of those situations (conflicts described above)? |     | Does a mediator tell the students who is right and who is wrong? |    | Do you want to be a peer mediator? |    |       |
|---|--|-----|--|----|------------------------------------|----|-------|
|   | YES  | NO  | YES  | NO | YES                                | NO | MAYBE |
| <b>Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br>Males: 12  | 7  | 5   | 3  | 9  | 3                                  | 9  | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>Males: 4   | 4  | --- | 1  | 3  | 1                                  | 3  | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>Males, 6   | 4  | 2   | 1  | 5  | 1                                  | 5  | ---   |
| <b>Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>Males, 10 | 7  | 3   | 2  | 8  | 3                                  | 7  | ---   |
| <b>Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>Males, 8  | 7  | 1   | 4  | 4  | ---                                | 7  | 1     |
| <b>Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> block</b><br>Males, 10  | 8  | 2   | 2  | 8  | 5                                  | 5  | ---   |
| <b>Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br>Males, 12  | 11   | 1   | 2  | 10 | 2                                  | 9  | 1     |
| <b>Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> block</b><br>Males, 9   | 9  | --- | ---  | 9  | ---                                | 8  | 1     |
| <b>Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br>Males, 10  | 7  | 3   | 4  | 6  | 4                                  | 5  | 1     |
| <b>Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> block</b><br>Males, 12  | 11   | 1   | 6  | 6  | 3                                  | 9  | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>Males, 5   | 5  | --- | 1  | 4  | ---                                | 3  | 2     |

**Appendix G: Survey results of total students**

|   | Do you think mediation could have helped in any of those situations (conflicts described above)? |     |       | Do mediators tell the students who go to mediation who is right and who is wrong? |    | Do you want to be a peer mediator? |    |       |
|---|--|-----|-------|---|----|------------------------------------|----|-------|
|   | YES  | NO  | MAYBE | YES   | NO | YES                                | NO | MAYBE |
| <b>Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br>24 students  | 16   | 5   | 3     | 4   | 20 | 12                                 | 12 | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>12 students  | 11   | 1   | ---   | 1   | 11 | 4                                  | 6  | 2     |
| <b>Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>12 students  | 10   | 2   | ---   | 2   | 10 | 6                                  | 6  | ---   |
| <b>Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>22 students | 14   | 6   | 2     | 4   | 18 | 10                                 | 12 | ---   |
| <b>Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>20 students | 19   | 1   | ---   | 4   | 16 | 10                                 | 9  | 1     |
| <b>Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> block</b><br>18 students  | 16   | 2   | ---   | 3   | 15 | 8                                  | 9  | 1     |
| <b>Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br>21 students  | 18   | 3   | ---   | 2   | 19 | 9                                  | 11 | 1     |
| <b>Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> block</b><br>17 students  | 14   | 2   | 1     | 2   | 15 | 1                                  | 12 | 4     |
| <b>Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> block</b><br>20 students  | 17   | 3   | ---   | 4   | 16 | 10                                 | 10 | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> block</b><br>17 students  | 15   | 2   | ---   | 7   | 10 | 7                                  | 10 | ---   |
| <b>Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> block</b><br>7 students   | 7  | --- | ---   | 1   | 6  | 1                                  | 4  | 2     |



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