

Drama – A Rehearsal For Life!

By Julie McDonald – Director of The Drama Studio

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A Head teacher friend of mine once said that one of two activities is almost certain to engage and capture the imagination of children. Football is one, the other is Drama. For outgoing children Drama is an extension of their personalities. Shy children very often surprise us making superb actors and bringing depth to characterisation. Children with behavioural difficulties can find real achievement and teachers see a different side to them.

Drama is interactive and fun. There is something for everyone and everyone has something to give. While undoubtedly some individuals may excel in the drama class, there is a wonderful understated equality to Drama. It's contexts and processes are mirrors of our life experiences shaped into works of art. It is quite simply a joy to observe children watching each other enact dramatic scenes. The spellbound concentration on their faces is fascinating to see as they connect with each other's experiences, delighting in the creativity of their peer's presentation.

As children interact verbally and socially many may be unaware of just how much they are learning from each other. They pick up new vocabulary, different points of view, learning to co-operate, to take the lead and to be supportive. Young minds enjoy learning challenges. Add to this creativity and originality

and you have exactly what Drama provides. A grounded self-confidence emerges as children are at ease with themselves in groups and in public.

Drama teaching goes way beyond traditional associations of "theatre" or "the school play."

All of this has implications for the education of today's young. The power of a Drama approach to learning is still to be widely recognised in our schools today. Many curriculum areas can be very effectively taught through Drama teaching techniques. We are far more likely to remember and understand things by "actively doing". I was saddened to learn of a local school where all the general purpose areas had been turned into computer bays.

I hope that in the years to come educational establishments will realise that young people in their formative years miss out on so much as passive classroom recipients of knowledge. They need to be active learners, motivated, challenged, listened to, bringing their own experiences into the arena. In this way students will become absolutely involved in their own learning and more responsible as people.

Until then Drama classes across the country will continue to attract growing numbers of young people eager to get involved in an activity which offers depth as well as breadth to a quality learning experience.