VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# Engaging ELs in Theatre

## *Make* learning visible

* Establish content and connected language targets to support students in describing a variety of theatre roles, comparing examples of theatrical literature, explaining their personal responses towards theatrical works, evaluating theatrical performances, etc.
* Draw attention to patterns and relationships in dramatic performances
* Refer to student-generated word walls to support language development and understanding of elements of theatre production and management
* Complement word walls and anchor charts with visuals, e.g., on a poster that lists elements of drama with visual cues for memory and language connection such as speech bubbles for dialogue, or different images of settings to connect with scenes

## Support the language of theatre

All students can learn! High expectations, asset-based thinking, and growth mindsets are key to student success!

* Provide multiple opportunities for students to communicate about their and peers’ theatre performances and products
* Explicitly teach the language of theatre arts beyond a focus on vocabulary to support conceptual understanding
* Provide sentence starters to support *Theatre Arts Standards of Learning* (SOL) and communication of ideas and reactions:
	+ Evaluate works by self and others:
	My/Your/the performance can be improved by \_\_\_\_\_.
	When acting, I/you/the actor can improve technique by \_\_\_\_\_.
	+ Classify theatrical performances or works in a variety of ways: I can tell this play was written by \_\_\_\_ because it \_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_ (title of work) is/uses \_\_\_\_\_ (style, form, means).
	+ Compare and contrast aspects of musical works:
	These two theatre performances are (similar/different) because \_\_\_\_\_.
	The element that makes this theatrical performance (unique/different) is \_\_\_\_.
	+ Articulate personal response to theatre:
	This theatrical performance made me feel \_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
	I can relate to (character) because \_\_\_\_\_.
	+ Understand historical and cultural influences:
	\_\_\_\_ was a popular form in theatre performances during (time period) because \_\_\_\_.
	\_\_\_\_ performance/playwright may have been impacted/influenced by \_\_\_\_.
	+ Inquire about theatre:
	I wonder why the playwright chose \_\_\_\_?
	What technical tool may help to \_\_\_ in the best way?

## Connect learning to students’ backgrounds and skills

* Make connections between theatre as a mode of expression and students’ lives
* Highlight contributions and innovations from a variety of cultures
* Facilitate opportunities for responses and design choices to be explained in student’s home language
* Model respectful analysis of a variety of perspectives

## Use cooperative learning structures and strategies

* Structure opportunities for students to collaborate and communicate ideas when evaluating theatrical works
* Use flexible and fluid grouping of students
* Ask students to “Notice” and “Wonder/Inquire” about theatrical performances and products together
* Teach “talk moves” so students can engage in academic conversations about theatre, e.g., I would like to build on your idea. I have a different idea to share. Can you please clarify what you just said?

## Reduce cognitive load and allow processing time

* Break texts and scripts into smaller sections and use bullet points versus complex paragraphs
* Read lines aloud for students to repeat and practice. Model appropriate inflection and intonation for performance lines.
* Provide visuals and videos to complement written texts
* Show and explain model and sample products that meet product or performance expectations
* Provide adequate thinking and processing time, and flexible time frames for completing tasks

*High expectations, asset-based thinking, and a growth mindset are key to student success!*

*Virginia Department of Education 2020*