

Selected Sources Related to Improvisation in Teaching

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Articles About Improv in the Classroom

Lobman, C.L. (2006). **Improvisation: An analytic tool for examining teacher-child interactions in the early childhood classroom.** *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21 (4), 455–470.

This case study focuses on teacher-child interactions in an early childhood classroom. The researcher used qualitative methods to collect and analyze data. The author uses principles of improvisation to describe responsive and less-than-responsive teacher-student interactions. Lobman concludes that the improvisation lens is an effective tool for analyzing classroom interactions and responsive teaching. Lobman’s research and perspective translate well to teacher-student interaction in other environments, including higher education.

Sawyer, R. K. (2004). **Creative teaching: Collaborative discussion as disciplined improvisation.** *Educational Researcher*, 33(2), 12–20.

Sawyer critiques the “teaching as performance” metaphor and discusses the common practice he calls scripted teaching. He argues that a better metaphor is “teaching as improvisational performance,” since it emphasizes teacher responsiveness and creativity. This modified metaphor is particularly appropriate in characterizing collaborative discussion in the classroom. Sawyer describes creative teaching as *disciplined improvisation*, and analyzes some structural frameworks that facilitate it. He incorporates examples from both teaching and improvisational theater. He suggests using improvisational theater techniques as part of teacher training.

Sawyer, R. K. (2004). **Improvised Lessons: Collaborative discussion in the constructivist classroom.** *Teaching Education*, 15(2), 189-201.

In this article, Sawyer makes a case for the compatibility of social constructivist theory with improvisational theater. In his analysis, Sawyer compares constructivist teaching with staged improvisational theater. He draws from work with improvisational actors to suggest techniques to train teachers as discussion leaders who use collaborative improvisation to facilitate students’ social construction of their own knowledge. He suggests that teachers learn and use theatrical improvisation skills in the classroom. Sawyer outlines the improvisation process and explains its principles using examples.

Books About Improvisational Theater and Techniques

Halpern, C., Close, D., & Johnson, K. (1994). **Truth in comedy: The manual of improvisation**. Colorado Springs, CO: Meriwether Publishing.

This book is a guide to performing improvisation, particularly long-form improv comedy. It also is useful as a general handbook of basic improv principles, and includes many entertaining examples from well-known improvisers.

Johnstone, K. (1987). **Impro: Improvisation and the theatre**. New York: Routledge.

This is somewhat of a “classic” book on improvisational theater, written by a well-known authority. Though this is a book about improv, Johnstone shows great concern for creative thinking and teaching. He uses a lot of anecdotal material as illustrations.

Spolin, V. (1999). **Improvisation for the theater: A handbook of teaching and directing techniques** (3rd ed.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Viola Spolin has been called the “grandmother of improv.” Though written for teachers and directors, this classic book is useful to all actors and others interested in improv and other performance.

Improvisation Websites

Improv Encyclopedia <http://www.improvencyclopedia.org/>

This is an extensive list of improv resources, including techniques, terminology, games and exercises.

learnimprov.com <http://www.learnimprov.com/>

This is a repository of improvisational comedy resources. Includes improv structures and frameworks.

The Spolin Center <http://www.spolin.com/>

This is the Website of the Spolin Center, named for Viola Spolin, one of the originators of improvisational theater. The site has a wealth of information about improv and links to other sites.

YESand.com <http://www.yesand.com/>

This popular Website serves and supports the broad improv community. It includes regular features that provide news, advice, and a forum for improvisers to stay connected, share experiences, and pose questions.