



MANTLE OF THE EXPERT

Number of players: Any

Space: Any

Materials needed: None

Procedure:

The students become characters endowed with some kind of specialist knowledge that is relevant to a specific dramatic situation or problem. Roles might include: historians, social workers, advertising executives, playground designers, mountain climbers, etc. The dramatic situation or problem is usually task-oriented and these expert understandings or skills are required to perform the task. As a result, learners feel respected by having expert status and insights and an understanding of different occupations are explored. This kind of work can also open up a felt NEED for further research or background information.

Example 1: The teacher, in role as a museum director, wants to commission a short documentary film about the history of the Alamo. The students, in role as filmmakers, are asked to create this “film” through their own research and re-enactments of various events. [Several drama-based lessons follow this intro.]

Example 2: The teacher, in role as the Big Bad Wolf, has hired the students, in role as a team of lawyers, to defend him in court. Students must research legal procedures, create evidence, and present the case.

Example 3: When considering the needs of older adults in their community, the teacher [in role as the town mayor] asks her students, who are in the role of a group of architects, to research the community’s needs. After reporting back, the “architects” are then given the task of designing a suitable living environment for older adults.

Example 4: The teacher, in role as an anxious school board member, is concerned about the number of young drug-users in her community, and seeks the help of a group of advertisers [SIR]. The current anti-drug publicity is not working and the group is asked to design a campaign that does. [Obviously research would be needed to complete this in-role task.]

Possible side coaching:

“How might a group with this kind of expertise greet a client? How would the room be arranged? How would they sit or stand?”

Processing points:

- How did it feel to step into this expert’s shoes?
- What new insight did you gain about this kind of expert?
- What other issues/factors might impact experts in this field?

Possible learning areas:

Communication, empathy, creativity, research skills

AKA: Teacher in Role

Source: Dorothy Heathcote