

ence howled with laughter. The show became its living being, which is the true magic and gift of theatre. Everyone forgot themselves, their pasts, presents and futures. They simply flew for a time. After it was all over, the boys rode that wave of happiness and pride and amazement through our farewell and I hope long afterwards. They had become heroes. This made saying goodbye all the easier for everyone.

I learned a great deal during that residency about recognizing strengths, building on them, and taking mini-steps over and over without getting discouraged about progress. I learned a hard lesson about health, about the importance of protecting it by recognizing limits and nurturing oneself. I was very proud of where the boys landed, proud of the writing I had done for them and with them, and very pleased with my own work written during that time. Writing about it now helps me recall just what a seminal experience it was for me as an artist and teacher. As difficult as it was, I will treasure always the memory of sitting in the dark to watch them, at last, in the light.

Biography

Loren Crawford is a playwright, performer, filmmaker and educator based in Chicago. Her stage plays include *Prelude: The Life and Work of Katherine Mansfield*, *Missing Memaw*, *Dye Frye & Wicked John and the Devil* published by New Plays, Inc., *Mama: A play for Voices*, *The People Could Fly* premiering at The Vittum Theater February 2004 and *The Unembarrassed Mind* with Stephan Mazurek premiering at the Storefront Theater in June 2004. She recently performed *Missing Memaw* at this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival and at the Breadline Theater in Chicago.

ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM WITH DRAMA

by Carmine Tabone

The Youth Violence Crisis

Behind the sensational front page news stories we read about youth crime, there exists an underpinning of troubling national and local statistics. Flannery documents that youth homicide and assault rates have increased four-fold during the past thirty-five years (20). Gun related violence takes the life of a child every three hours in the USA and everyday 160,000 children miss school for fear of attack or intimidation by other students (Grossman and DeGaetano 17). In Jersey City, where I direct a nonprofit organization using the arts to focus on improving literacy and teaching values, the youth crime rate is twice the state average. According to a national survey, 41.7% of the Jersey City youth questioned had been in a physical fight during the preceding twelve months and 22.5% admitted carrying a weapon (gun, knife, or club) in the past 30 days (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance 1997).

Since 1974, my organization has been developing programs, activities, and strategies to improve children's social skills and confront violence in its earliest stages. This paper will center on a workshop that addresses bullying through the use of the children's book, *Rotten Ralph* and share some of the stories my group has found to be effective with children to develop positive values.

It All Starts With Bullying

One of the first indicators of future violent behavior among young people is bullying. Bullying is seen as unprovoked abuse by one or more children to inflict physical pain or cause psychological distress to another child on repeated occasions. Such children are unaware of or do not care about the effects of their behavior on others (Olweus 27-31).

Common sense and possibly first hand experiences tell us that being the victim of bullying is a humiliating and damaging ordeal. From an educational point of view, teasing and bullying are harmful and create a classroom climate of fear that affects a child's ability to learn and a teacher's ability to teach (Child Health

Alert 3-4).

Early childhood is a period of great intellectual, physical, and emotional growth during which educational drama artists can play a critical role in the positive socialization of children. Interactive drama strategies can provide students with social perspective and emotional experiences that foster empathy, trust, and compassion for others: the very qualities that bullies lack.

Rotten Ralph

The following lesson plan is based on a children's picture book, *Rotten Ralph*, and was designed for kindergarten to second graders in school-based settings. The workshop puts children in the role of those who are willing to help the characters from the story work through a number of difficulties, including bullying. The story also lends itself to explore feelings of abandonment, questions of trust, and the importance of forgiveness.

Sarah's Dilemma

I begin by showing the children some pictures from the first few pages of the book which show Ralph, Sarah's cat, treating her terribly. The children see the following: Ralph holding one of Sarah's dolls with its head broken off; Ralph making fun of Sarah as she practices ballet; Ralph sawing off a tree branch that holds Sarah on a swing; finally, Sarah sitting with two friends at a table with a plate of cookies that have had one bite taken out of each of them.

I ask the children how they think Sarah feels about Ralph's treatment of her. They typically respond by saying that she is both angry and sad. I ask if they would be willing to help Sarah work on getting the cat to treat her better. When they agree, I then explain that I will be using a broken doll to indicate that I am playing Sarah. The following dialogue is typical of what happens. Holding the head and body of a doll I begin:

- Sarah: Have you heard about my rotten cat Ralph?
- Children: Yes.
- Sarah: Do you know how I feel right now because of what Ralph has done?
- Children: Angry. Sad.
- Sarah: That's right. I am angry and sad and I just do not know what to do about that Ralph. Do you have any idea how I could get Ralph to treat me better?

- Child: You should take that cat and lock him in the closet.
- Sarah: Lock him in a closet? I don't think I could do that. He might get hungry or really scared. I wouldn't want my mommy to lock me in a closet. You know I'm not always perfect. Are you?
- Child: You should beat the cat; that way he understands.
- Sarah: When Ralph first broke my doll that is exactly what I thought about doing. But I am not that kind of girl and just because you think about doing something, doesn't mean you have to really do it. Anyway, I know I don't like to get hit. Do you? No, I wouldn't want to hit my cat.
- Child: You should just get rid of that cat.
- Sarah: Get rid of Ralph? But Ralph is my cat and I love Ralph. You wouldn't want your mommy to get rid of you when you did something wrong, would you?

Inevitably, some of the children bring up the fact that maybe Sarah is not spending enough time with the cat. Maybe the cat isn't getting the right food. Maybe the cat needs some toys of his own so he won't break Sarah's. When these responses come too early in the dialogue, I delay considering them until the children come up with the negative ideas which are important to explore. Addressing the violent solutions allows me, as the teacher and adult, to share ideas on how to deal with the negative impulses which many children have during difficult and frustrating situations. My responses teach that there are boundaries of behavior we need to have, even when people treat us badly. Also, just as the class is thinking through these options, I explain that we all need go through that kind of process either alone or with help when dealing with difficult people and situations.

The scenario of Sarah's Dilemma could be followed up by having the class write and draw in-role as Sarah. They could express how she is feeling about Ralph and how she might want to handle him at this point. Reviewing these drawings and writings gives the teacher the opportunity to assess what the children have learned from this drama.

Ralph the Bully

Next, I show a picture of Ralph trying to catch birds

that are bathing and eating in Sarah's backyard. Obviously, Ralph is bullying the birds. I ask the children if they know any bullies and if they know how to handle them. Of course, they always do. I explain that one of the birds is going to come out and ask for ideas on how to handle this bully. I use a bird puppet in the following dialogue:

- Bird: I just don't know what to do. That bully Ralph is always trying to catch and hurt me.
- Child: You should just get a big net and drop it over Ralph's head.
- Bird: I'm afraid of getting too close to Ralph. You know if you try to hurt bullies, then they'll really come after you.
- Child: You should just run away.
- Bird: But I live around here. Where else would I go?
- Child: Maybe you can just get a big rock and drop it on Ralph's head and kill him.
- Bird: To tell you the truth, I feel like doing that. But I really couldn't, because then I would start being like Ralph, cruel.
- Child: Why don't you get a big mean vicious dog or eagle to bite Ralph?
- Bird: I'm afraid that then I would have to deal with two bullies.
- Child: Just get all the birds together and attack Ralph.
- Bird: If I do that, Ralph will go get more cats. Then we will have to get more birds. And before you know it, my neighborhood will be overrun with gangs of cats and birds. No, I don't think I want to do that.
- Child: Maybe you can talk to Ralph and tell him that you do not like him treating you like this.
- Bird: I might try that. But, what if I tried and then he hit me? Sometimes you can't really talk to bullies.
- Child: Maybe you can talk to Sarah's mother?
- Bird: So, if I can't handle it myself or don't know what to do, I should find an adult to help me? That's a good idea.

This dialogue is typical of how young children respond to this scenario. Through this dialogue, I am

able to brainstorm with the children how to handle a persistent bullying problem. The solution is one not always obvious to a child, namely reaching out for adult intervention, if negotiating with the bully is not possible. This is also an important facet of the problem for the children's teacher to be aware.

Many researchers believe that the topics of teasing and bullying remain part of the "hidden" or "evaded" curriculum. They have found that teachers do relatively little to stop bullying behavior, while children yearn for adults to intervene. Furthermore, when teachers fail to intervene in teasing and bullying, children perceive this as condoning the behavior (Sadker & Sadker 56).

Ralph Is in the Dumps

Finally, I move through the book showing how Ralph has been so disrespectful to Sarah's parents that they leave him at a circus where he had disrupted the show. There he is made to do a series of very tough jobs. After a few days he runs away and finds himself cowering behind some tin cans in a garbage dump occupied by a number of very tough alley cats.

I ask the children if they would be willing to talk to Ralph at this point. They do and so I take a position behind a chair as Rotten Ralph who is very sad, lonely and confused:

- Ralph: I just don't know what to do; I'm so afraid and hungry. This garbage dump is a terrible place.
- Children: Just go home Ralph.
- Ralph: I can't go home. I have been bad so many times that no one wants me any more.
- Children: Sarah still loves you. You just have to be sorry and act better.
- Ralph: I don't know. You think I should just go home and tell Sarah I'm sorry and that I am going to be very good? That should be easy enough. I am sorry, Sarah (rolling my eyes and making faces).
- Children: Not like that. You have to mean it.
- Ralph: OK, I am sorry and I promise to be nice. That is, until she goes to school and then I am going to play with her toys and break them all.
- Children: No! Don't do that, Ralph.
- Ralph: Why not? What is the big deal?
- Children: You have to be good, Ralph.

Ralph: I don't really know how to be good.
Would you show me?

Children demonstrate at this point how to walk into the house, talk sweetly to Sarah and promise to behave. I end the workshop by showing the final few pictures in the book. Sarah and Rotten Ralph are reunited on his way home. She gives Ralph a big hug and brings him home for dinner. All is forgiven and Ralph's behavior improves markedly, except for sometimes when Sarah's mother cooks lobster for dinner.

The Importance of Stories in Children's Lives

Children love stories and all the great traditions have stories that teach moral lessons: the Jataka Tales of the Buddha, the Thousand and One Nights of Arabia, the fables of Aesop, to name but a few. Shah notes that teaching tales have been used for moral as well as spiritual purposes from time immemorial (vii). We are so fortunate that at this point in human history we have access to the fables and fairy tales amassed from thousands of years of worldwide wisdom. As drama leaders, we have the opportunity to not only use stories, but to reinforce their powerful messages through dramatic activities that bring them to life and afford opportunities to reflect upon them in-depth.

The following list of books and stories are some of the many that my program has used successfully working with young people in Jersey City:

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- Lionni, L. *Swimmy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.
- McCarthy, T. "How the Beetle Got Her Colors." *Multicultural Fables and Fairy Tales*. New York: Scholastic, 1992.
- Pfister, M. *The Rainbow Fish*. New York: North-South Books, 1992.
- Sendak, M. *Where the Wild Things Are*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1984.
- Yashima, T. *Crow Boy*. New York: Viking, 1983.

Some are modern, others ancient, but in concert they deal with many important issues today's young people face: peer pressure, bullying, family boundaries, social isolation, and who to trust. Hopefully their wisdom can contribute in some small way to the development of the moral and social skills of the young people with whom you work.

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Biography

Carmine Tabone is the executive director of the Jersey City based Educational Arts Team and an adjunct in the Theatre Education Program at NYU. He has co-authored a number of articles, the most recent, "Martians Invade the Classroom: A Workshop in Language Learning," in *The Journal of the Imagination In Language Learning* Volume VII 2002/03. Tabone has served as 2nd vice-president of AATE and Regional Governor of CTAA.

ADOLESCENTS COPING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS: A PROCESS DRAMA FOR TEENS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

By Caitlein Ryan-Whitehead

Introduction

In the summer of 2000, I fell in love twice. I met and fell deeply in love with my husband that summer. I had just graduated with a BA focusing on directing. In my final month of my senior year by a chance teaching experience, I discovered that teaching was my true life's passion. One week after receiving my degree, I began coursework towards my teaching certification in Theatre Education at the University of Arizona. My very first class was titled "Methods of Creative Drama." In that class, I was introduced to process drama and I fell in love for the second time that summer.

As I fell in love with my husband, I fell in love with