



Drama Australia

The National Association for
Drama Education [Inc.]

Position Paper on Working Conditions for Teaching and Learning in Drama

Good working conditions for students and teachers of drama raise the quality and status of learning. Such working conditions signal to parents, students, teachers and members of the community that drama is valued in the curriculum.

Drama Australia encourages schools and their communities to support high quality drama education in schools. In particular, Drama Australia urges the Australian community to publicly acknowledge the work and commitment of drama students and staff, thereby affirming the role and value of drama in schools.

Drama Australia advocates that

- **Drama is taught and learnt as an arts form discipline**

In addition,

- **drama is used effectively to complement work across the curriculum**
- **drama is used as extra/ co-curricular activities in schools**

Drama Australia advocates that

- **explicit and comprehensive statements about drama in the curriculum be made and implemented for all young Australians K-12**
- **the following minimum working conditions for teaching and learning be explicitly recognised by schools, systems, sectors and the community.**

Drama in Early Childhood Learning

Drama Australia advocates that

- Opportunities are provided in early childhood classes for structured dramatic play where students take on roles and work with relevant dramatic action.

Drama in Primary Schools

Drama Australia advocates that

- Drama in primary classes be taught as an arts-form discipline by classroom teachers who are trained, knowledgeable and confident to deliver drama programs
- Drama is also an integral part of cross curriculum learning and co-curricular programs
- Drama teaching and learning programs be developed and maintained according to current drama education philosophy and practice
- Where schools are resourced to provide specialist drama teachers and artists-in-residence, classroom teachers are encouraged to work collaboratively alongside these teaching artists as part of a school based professional development program. This co-operative/collaborative learning approach will enhance teacher expertise and foster integration of learning for students.

Drama in Secondary Schools

Drama Australia advocates that

- Drama in secondary schools be taught as an arts-form discipline by teachers who are trained, knowledgeable and confident and have pre-service training in drama education
- Drama teaching and learning programs need to be developed and maintained according to current drama education philosophy and practice
- Education systems, Curriculum Councils, Boards of Study and individual schools in the various states and territories have explicitly stated curriculum and, where appropriate, syllabus requirements for drama
- Staffing levels for drama in secondary schools recognise the nature and demands of drama in the curriculum
- Schools provide access to artists in residence and additional specialist teachers where appropriate to support the work of drama teachers in schools
- Drama in the post-compulsory/tertiary entrance years be accorded appropriate status, resources and skilled teachers necessary for students to achieve high academic standing and recognition

Extra Curricular Drama

Drama Australia advocates that

- Before undertaking extra/co-curricular drama activities, discussions and negotiations should consider
 - *purpose of the activity*
 - *who the participants will be*
 - *audience*
 - *timing and workload - in particular the students' and teachers' curriculum workloads*
 - *human, financial and material resources*
 - *selection of appropriate form, content and style of activity*
 - *duty of care responsibilities [reflecting policy requirements for adult to student ratios]*
 - *time tabling of rehearsals and performances in consultation with all staff members, particularly drama staff members to avoid conflicting demands*
- There is recognition and support for participating students, staff and other participants.



*In supporting drama education in schools
Drama Australia advocates*

Access to Professional Development

- Schools and communities recognise that participation in quality professional development activities will contribute to enhanced teaching and learning in drama
- Schools will encourage and support teachers belonging to drama professional associations in their state or territory - and through such membership to belong to Drama Australia and IDEA, the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association
- Schools will provide resources for membership, registration, accommodation, travel and teacher release time if appropriate.

Class Sizes

- In recognition of the practical orientation of drama, the emphasis on group work and the need for active teacher supervision, schools limit classes in drama to no more than 25 students.

Length of Lessons

- Schools timetable lessons of at least 50 minutes duration in recognition of the need for flexible delivery of practical learning including time for warm-ups, the need to facilitate group work, to facilitate time management for the needs of individual students and to maximise potential access to professional artists.

Programs of Drama

- In recognition of the need for sustained developmental learning in drama, schools plan coherent and organised programs that make active connections between units and phases of schooling. One-off or disconnected drama experiences fall below acceptable standards for effective contemporary drama learning.

Access to Performances

- In recognition that students learn from experiencing drama performances, schools plan so students see a range of performances and performers [“live” and recorded] in school and in theatres.

Classroom Drama Spaces

- Given the practical nature of drama, schools provide the following **minimum** working conditions
 - *clear space uncluttered by tables, desks, chairs, etc.; while drama can take place in classrooms that are cleared for the purpose, dedicated spaces enhance learning and reduce disruption to learning programs*
 - *sound isolation; drama can be noisy and can interrupt - and be interrupted by - others*
 - *indoor space with blackout facilities to ensure privacy and the capacity to use theatrical lighting effects if appropriate*
 - *ventilation [and, where appropriate, air conditioning]*
 - *sufficient height - allowing for students to move onto rostra with clearance for fans and lights*
 - *flat flooring with carpet or other covering suitable for movement, relaxation exercises and working in bare feet; if there is significant physical and movement work, the flooring should be “sprung” [concrete flooring even with carpet is not desirable]*
 - *white board/ blackboard*
 - *ICT access - computer and data access*
 - *video, lighting and sound equipment*
- Wherever possible, dedicated drama spaces are provided and there is recognition that, on occasions for practical reasons, the use of these spaces by students will necessitate leaving equipment *in situ*; while recognising the need to maximise the use of all spaces in schools, there is a need to respect the purpose and focus of dedicated drama spaces.

Resources for Drama

- Drama programs are resourced to support learning that is appropriate for the development of each child including collections of costumes, props, videos, CDs, scripts, access to Internet/ICT, etc.



Storage Space

- In recognition of the need for security, good time management and practicality, immediately accessible lockable storage space is provided for texts and smaller resources
- In recognition of the size and nature of large scale sets, props, costumes and equipment, conveniently located large, secure storage space is provided.

Workplace Health and Safety

- All schools ensure that they comply with state and territory requirements for Occupational and Workplace Health and Safety
- All schools - and drama teachers - undertake risk management strategies such as identifying potential hazards, assessing likelihood of injury or danger, devising procedures to control or minimise risk and evaluating those procedures
- All drama teachers recognise the potential for physical injury in drama work where students are engaged in high energy activities, performance and experimenting with and exploring movement and dramatic action requiring control and coordination; they consider the nature of floor surfaces, space available, number, gender, experience and enthusiasm of students
- All drama teachers recognise the need for appropriate vocal and physical warm-ups for students and demonstrate a capacity to adapt these learning activities to each student's physical and emotional readiness and development
- All drama teachers recognise the potential for emotional and psychological injury in drama
- All drama teachers know and understand the practical and theoretical issues involved in the use of specialist drama equipment such as lights, ladders, scaffolding, rostra, sound, video, etc. In particular, care is taken in the movement of large, heavy or awkward equipment
- All drama students are instructed in and competent in the use of specialist drama equipment.
- All schools provide appropriate equipment for drama including, where appropriate, separate circuits to avoid overloading, 3 Phase power, lighting, rigging, sound equipment, etc.
- All materials used - such as paints, solvents, make-up, etc. - are safe and appropriate
- All teachers and students of drama involved in the construction and painting of sets, props and costumes meet appropriate standards such as wearing protective clothing, working in a safe environment, storing materials and equipment safely.

Budgets

- All drama activities - curriculum and co-curricular - have an allocated budget; this budget should address the learning needs of students including consumables:
texts, copyright and performance fees, staging, rostra, lighting, curtains and cycloramas, costumes, CDs and CD players, television, VCRs, video cameras, tapes, ICT hardware and software, professional subscriptions, tickets to performances, artists-in-residence, in-school and in-theatre performances and workshops.

Production Work

- All production work undertaken - within the curriculum and in co-curricular activities - should consider
 - *each participating student's workload across all learning areas*
 - *each teacher's workload*
 - *timing within the school's calendar*
 - *time tabling*
 - *budget*
 - *copyright and performing rights; all teachers and schools need to operate within statutory and ethical guidelines governing copyright and intellectual property rights [photocopying of scripts, modifying scripts, use of music, payment of royalties, etc.]*

Enterprise Bargaining Agreements in many states and territories include additional financial incentives or trade-offs for teachers who are involved in extra or co-curricular activities. Relevant activities include: theatre excursions out of school time, school productions and musicals, curriculum productions out of school time, drama camps, events that publicise or showcase the school [such as performances in shopping centres], festivals and competitions. Trade-offs in lieu of financial rewards include release from other duties, preparation and marking time or time in lieu.

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