

PLAYBILL

AUGUST WILSON THEATRE

SAVE THE *Drama* FOR THE STAGE!

Early days in the
classroom as a drama
teacher.



INTRODUCTION:

“Those who can, do; those who can't, teach.” - George Bernard Shaw.

This all-too-familiar, pompous adage is ascribed to the renowned Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. Two months ago, I would have wholeheartedly agreed with Shaw. Who in their right mind would want to be a teacher? All of the lesson planning, student outbursts, and mountains of paperwork, all for one's efforts to be summed up in a sarcastic remark. Thank you, but no. That was before I was offered a position as a drama teaching assistant at the 'Hazel Wand Theatre School' in Omagh. A performing arts school for children from 3 to 19, and I immediately learned that Shaw was entirely incorrect.

Description

Action Plan

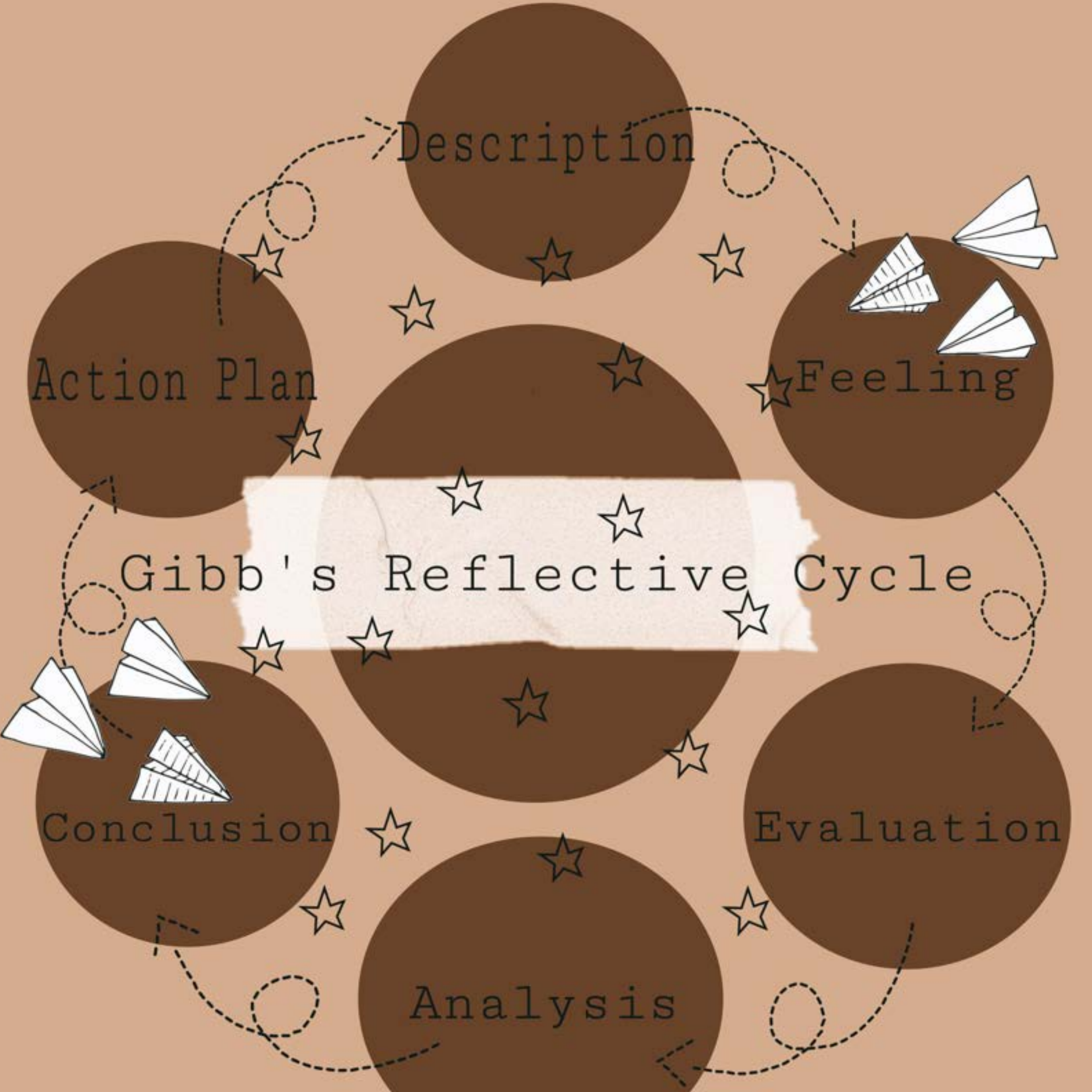
Feeling

Gibb's Reflective Cycle

Conclusion


Evaluation

Analysis




GIBB'S REFLECTIVE CYCLE

Using Gibb's approach of reflection, this post will focus on my first experience teaching a class at "Hazel Wand Theatre School." The six parts of Gibb's cyclical model are: description, emotions, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. This style of reflection has allowed me to analyse my teaching position in great depth and with great specificity. This has allowed me to recognise my teaching strengths and weaknesses, as well as how I may build upon them moving forward.




Description

On my first day, I was introduced to the faculty who advised me that the best way to learn about teaching was to be "thrown into the deep end"; thus, I was directed to "follow along" with the head instructor throughout the first lesson. The head of music for the school led the class of twenty, four-year-olds while I and two other assistants participated in its facilitation. After welcoming the children into the class I instructed the children to sit and started "circle time." Which consisted of asking each child to introduce themselves and speak about their week. Next, myself and my colleagues taught the children about autumn through the form of a nursery rhyme. The children were then given scarves and taught to dance around the room to "Firework" by Katy Perry, moving the way they thought a firework would dance through the sky. The class ended by passing out papers depicting a tree trunk, in which the pupils were tasked with affixing multicoloured tissue paper as if they were leaves onto the tree.



Emotions

My first ever class, how did I feel? Well, being "thrown in" stressed me out. When I have a goal and a plan, I'm most productive. Since I wasn't prepared, I was apprehensive about teaching a young class. As the students entered, I felt intimidated. Children can sense uncertainty, I learned the hard way, as when the head teacher introduced me to the children and they responded by staring blankly at me instead of responding enthusiastically, I was crushed but determined to win their respect. After 'circle time,' we taught an autumn nursery rhyme. The premise was simple: sing about getting ready for autumn and act out the gestures. I felt more confident and engaged with the children in this task comfortably. But, in the firework exercise, I felt humiliated since I cannot dance to save my life, and I was aware that these 4-year-olds were evaluating my dancing abilities. But, during the arts and crafts session in which the children designed their own tree, I felt a great deal more competent; I utilised this assignment to get to know my pupils. Aiding them with the design of their trees and complimenting their artistic efforts. This more one-on-one engagement made me feel much more relaxed and concluded the lesson on a positive note.




Evaluation

WHAT WENT WELL

I enjoyed how this experience helped me understand how to approach drama with young children. It inspired me to use games to teach young actors the fundamentals of theatre. It became clear to me that the children's participation in "Circle Time" helped them become comfortable with public speaking and express themselves clearly and eloquently, abilities that will benefit them long beyond the theatre. The "Firework" exercise helped the children develop their motor abilities and spatial awareness. For the nursery rhyme activity, I asked students to describe an autumn day using their five senses. Unknowingly, they were being introduced to sophisticated forms of drama theory used by theatre practitioners, such as Stanislavski's "The Magic If." "The Magic If." As Kelly writes in her book, "The Magic If, Stanislavski For Children," is an important technique for children to learn, "Once the student has mastered the use of his five senses, he can go on to interpret what he sees, feels, hears, tastes and smells to an audience." Although I adore working with kids, I've never considered teaching them. Because I thought their work was boring, simplistic, and dull. My first lesson taught me that teaching young kids is tough but an interesting and challenging task.

My involvement in the activities didn't go so well; I wanted to look naturally good at teaching to impress the children and my new colleagues. During the first lesson, I didn't realise I was supposed to listen carefully, be patient, and be eager to learn. Due to anxiety, I was stiff and hesitant in class, preventing me from participating fully in the lesson to the best of my ability. Only near the end of class could I relax, focus on the content, and establish a rapport with the children.

WHAT WENT WRONG



Analysis

I miscalculated the complexity of teaching; therefore, my first session didn't go as anticipated. I thought my theatre expertise would make teaching easier. But, as the educational writer, Goodrich states, "that experience is important to allow teachers to keep building on their skills, on top of the strong foundation of qualifications." I need to be more interested in active learning exercises and realise the significance of learning as you educate. As Christodoulou writes, "by carefully designing a learning environment, you should aim to stimulate the child's curiosity so that they will pick up whatever is important." If I want to exert authority over the students and encourage them to participate in theatre activities, I must be more energetic and active in the classroom. So, they can hone their acting abilities.



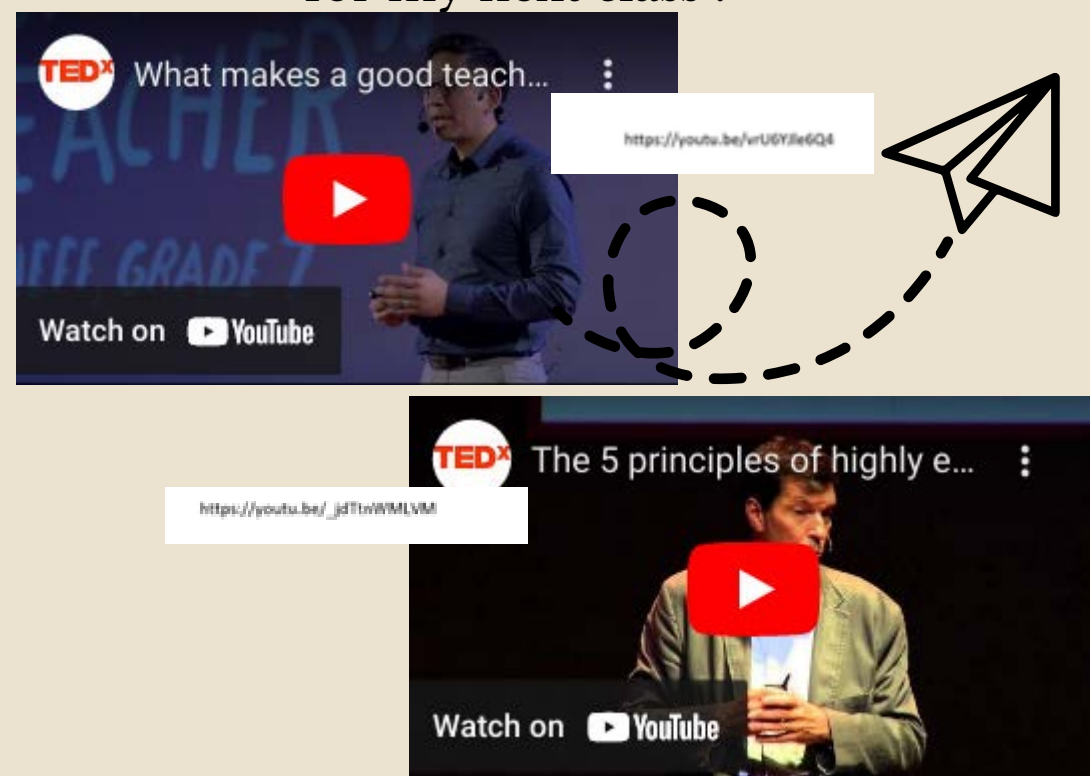
Conclusion

I must embrace trial and error if I want to progress as a teacher. Teaching is a new skill for me despite my expertise in theatre and literature. This is a skill that can only be gained via experience. Going forward, I want to improve my self-confidence by pouring myself into whatever I'm doing, whether it's dancing mindlessly to "Firework" or pretending to put on a hat melodramatically for a group of children. As it's the only way to earn the pupils' trust and lead them to embrace me as their new teacher.

Action Plan

I won't dread my next class since panic will make me rigid and tense which will hamper my teaching. I'll listen to the head teacher and facilitate class with confidence and establish a rapport with the students and my co-workers to create an open, inclusive environment where the children can feel comfortable in expressing themselves and exploring their talents in drama.

Videos that have given me inspiration for my next class :



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