



Backlight on Tour – Lesson Plan

Intended for grades: Middle School- High School (Grades 5-12)

Length of Performance: Backlight-On Tour Production length: 45 mins. With introductory remarks and conclusion, total run time is about 1 hour.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Backlight Productions is a place where people with disabilities can be seen and heard, challenged, and encouraged. At Backlight, individuals take the spotlights that they usually shine on themselves and, instead, shine them on those who usually are disregarded or left unnoticed. At Backlight, a person with special needs can actually achieve their dream of acting in a live-show while performing for an audience that is there to support and encourage them the whole way. It is a place where a great production doesn't have to be a "perfect" production and a great performer might not be who the world typically puts front and center.

In Theatre, a backlight is a light used to shine on a performer from behind to keep him/her from blending into the background; it is also used to signify innocence and purity. At Backlight Productions our aim is to keep people with disabilities from getting lost in the background in the performing arts world. We want to use the performing arts to not just entertain the public but to influence lives for the better. Our students want to be uplifted, challenged, seen, heard, and understood and we have found that onstage is a beautiful place to see this done.

Backlight On-Tour is a theatre troupe comprised of eight actors with special needs who perform an original script that focuses on the power of kindness and the importance of getting to know someone who may at first seem, "different" than you. The On-Tour Show effectively alludes to the beloved video game, Super Mario Bros. as a way of delivering this compelling message. Once the show has concluded, students will be introduced to the acting company and in a talk-back forum, have the opportunity to learn more about these inspiring individuals and in doing so, discover similarities that connect us all.

OBJECTIVES

- Enlighten students on practical ways to show kindness in our school system and everyday life
- Inspire students to build relationships with individuals from various backgrounds, learning departments, hobbies, etc.
- Reduce occurrences of bullying and harassment by educating students on the power of empathy
- Allow student volunteers a chance to assist and help support theatre artists with special needs
- Allow individuals from the student body to exhibit kindness by being active and encouraging audience members

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Backlight supports each school's compliance with Tennessee state laws T.C.A. § 49-6-1007(a) (Character Education), T.C.A. § 49-6-1007 through 1019 (Safety and Civility) and T.C.A. § 49-6-4503 (Bullying and Harassment).

Social Studies (reinforcing the traits of good citizens in a diverse and accepting community)

1.18 Define citizenship, and recognize traits of good citizens, such as respecting the rights of others, voting, following laws, etc.

GC.27 Identify and explain legislation and legal precedents that established rights for the underserved, including Title IX and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

CI.03 Analyze how cultural characteristics (e.g., language, religion, ethnicity, gender roles) link, divide, and/or define regions.

Fine Arts (using theater arts to send a message of kindness to counter prejudice and bullying)

6.T.R2.B Identify multiple cultural perspectives that may influence a theatrical work.

Foundation Cn2 - Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical text.

6.T.Cn1.A Explain how the actions and motivations of characters in a theatrical work may impact a community or culture's understanding.

8.T.Cn1.A Examine a community issue through a theatrical work.

HS3.T.Cn1.A Examine a community issue through multiple perspectives in a theatrical work.

HS2.T.Cn1.B Incorporate multiple perspectives and diverse community ideas in a theatrical work.

DELIVERY INSTRUCTION

I. Pre-Show Instructions

Once a Backlight On-Tour performance is scheduled, a Backlight Associate will contact the Head of School as well as the head of the Drama Department and ask these individuals to select six students from the student body to serve as Backlight Volunteers for our Actors. (Note: These students do not need to come solely from the Drama Department, we encourage students from various backgrounds, interests, etc. See below for volunteer specifications.) These individuals will each be assigned to a specific actor(s) whom they will accompany on stage and assist (when needed) over the course of the show.

The ideal students for this assignment will:

- Feel comfortable engaging with actors on stage and audience members (Note: these students will never be "spotlighted" or alone on stage)
- Be able to follow along in a provided script to help prompt students by helping give an actor the first word or two of their line (if necessary)
- Be able to follow along in a provided script to assist Actors with staging and movement (if necessary)
- Be willing to participate in the action but also have an awareness to give focus and attention to other performers onstage
- Be energetic
- Have a positive attitude
- *Have a strong desire to practice empathy by helping others

On the day of performance, the students selected by the faculty and staff will be asked to meet 15- 30 mins. beforehand to go over responsibilities, be given copies of the script, answer questions, etc. During that time, students will also be introduced to the actor(s) whom they will assist during the production.

II. Backlight-On Tour Production

Student volunteers will participate in an interactive (for both volunteers and audience members) theatrical production followed by a talk-back where students will have the opportunity to meet and get to know a little bit about the Backlight On-Tour Actors. (Total run time: 1 hour)

III. Post-Show: Follow-up & Reflection Questions

After the On-Tour Production, the Head of School will be provided with a document containing various Reflection Questions. These questions are then distributed to the Instructors to use as possible discussion points in either their Homeroom Classroom or within designated small groups. The purpose of this follow-up is to provide an open dialogue where students and staff can converse about the importance of kindness and generate ways to practically apply this valuable message in our school, classrooms, homes, etc.

(See the Assessment/Evaluation Section for Sample Follow-up Questions)

MATERIALS

The following materials are all provided for by Backlight Productions:

- Student Volunteer Scripts (these scripts are specifically marked with each individual Actors unique blocking, dialogue notes, etc.)
- Backlight On-Tour Shirts (worn by Student Volunteers)
- All Set/Props/Costume pieces

Ideal performance space will have:

- Projector screen or the ability to display slideshow and projections from a computer
- Ability to play sound cues from a computer playlist
- *Note: Two of our Actors require wheelchair access.

(Backlight does not have to be performed strictly on stage or in a theatrical space, this production can also lend itself to a gymnasium or other venue as long the preceding elements are accounted for.)

Ideally, a Backlight Associate would be able to coordinate with either a school faculty member, administrator, or technician to “load in” the set (six blocks)/prop items, and run an audio/visual check prior to the production.

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

III. Post-Show: Follow-up & Reflection Questions

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Example Reflection Questions:

1. In the first scene, we learn that Marty is about to go to public school for the first time. Have you ever been, “the new kid on the block?” If so, what were your thoughts and concerns prior to that? How did that compare with your experience overall?
2. At school, before classes start in the morning, Marty makes the observation and says, “Man, everyone seems so miserable...” He then uses a high-five to engage with a fellow student. What are some practical ways we can show kindness to one another in school throughout the day, such as early morning, before classes even begin?
3. In the lunchroom, Froggy trips and drops her lunch tray in front of everyone. Have you ever had a moment happen at school where you felt embarrassed? (Note: students don’t have to share what it was if they don’t want to) If so, how did others respond to you? What would you have liked to have happened to you after that situation?
4. Lemmy sees Marty’s response to Froggy’s music and realizes that they have something in common: their love of music and dance. What are some things that have the power to connect us all, no matter how different we may appear? (Note: you can take this moment to talk about the Actors from Backlight On-Tour and what they shared after the show about their particular interests) What Actors do you share similar interests with?
5. Which character in the show do you most relate to? Why?
6. In the final scene, Penelope logs onto Facebook and sees a hurtful post. Have you ever felt negatively effected by something someone posted on the internet? How can we show kindness to one another online?

7. When the school football team loses the Championship game, all the characters decide to comfort Bruce, and Josh says, "In the end, the most important thing is not winning the game, but how you've affected others along the way." Complete this sentence: "Today (or this week, at lunch, in my homeroom class, etc.) I will show kindness by.... "
8. The theme of the show is: "Kindness is the ultimate super power. It is more powerful than fireballs, goes further than a rocket booster, and lasts longer than a superstar." Share a little bit about the power that kindness has had in your own life or a moment where you were directly impacted by the compassion of another individual. How do you think kindness can help us all reach new levels and overcome obstacles in life?

NOTES:

The Backlight On-Tour Show can be performed in addition to the Backlight Ensemble Workshop (1 hour instructor total), the Backlight In-Schools Workshop (consisting of two 1 hour sessions), or this production can be scheduled independently (show length: 1 hour total).