



PORTLAND METRO PERFORMING ARTS

WWW.PDXMETROARTS.ORG

503-408-0604

Help Your Child Get The Most Out Of Their Theatre Lessons

1. Starting at the Right Age

Enrolling in an age appropriate class is the key element. If a child is put into formal performance situations too soon they may feel overwhelmed, frustrated and want to quit. The last thing anyone wants is to turn a child off to theatre just because they had an unpleasant experience which could have been prevented. Waiting until the right age will allow them to progress much faster.

PMPA age recommendations

Age 4-Kindergarten—Fairy Tale Theatre, Preschool Creative Drama

Young children use make-believe, fantasy and storytelling to interpret the world around them. It also helps them define their individual relationship to that world by learning in a setting, independent from their parents. Creative drama guides the children through activities and games in a way that stimulates their imaginations. A natural sense of playfulness eases the children into working with their peers and forming social bonds. They will experience theatre in a setting that will build confidence in their own abilities.

School Grades 1-3—Creative Drama

By first grade a child is physically, conceptually and socially ready for a focused class with more technical demands. Their attention span and patience with the process of learning generally comes with the beginning of first grade. Improvisation, story enactment, imagination journeys, theatre games, music folklore and dramatic play are presented in an environment where there are no 'wrong' answers. Through their experiences, students develop their imaginations and their confidence.

School Grades 4-6—Kids Play, Reliving Radio Theatre, Performance Skills

By fourth grade a child has developed skills as a reader and is ready to move on to scripted theatre experiences. Our classes also encourage hands-on exploration of all aspects of theatre, whether onstage, offstage or backstage.

School Grades 6-8—Showtime!, Reliving Radio Theatre, Technical Theatre, Performance Skills

An exploration of all aspects of the theatre experience through improvisation, playwriting, character development and movement that culminates in creation of performance pieces. Elements of technical theatre, production management and public relations are integrated with sound basic theatre skills.

School Grades HS-Adult—Reliving Radio Theatre, Technical Theatre, Performance Skills

At this age it is time to take the theatre skills you have and put them into action.

2. Have Fun

Theatre should be something that you enjoy for a lifetime. Relax! Your child will not benefit from being pushed into situations that are not age appropriate or beyond their level. Try not to put unrealistic expectations on yourself or your children to progress too quickly. Everyone learns at a different pace and the key is to be able to enjoy the journey.

3. Arrive Ready to Go

A little pre-planning the day before class can make it a more pleasant and productive experience for everyone, especially your child. This is particularly important for students who come to class directly from school.

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Arrive on Time—While we realize it is not always possible to accurately predict the flow of traffic, develop a plan that will allow an extra 15-20 minutes prior to the start of class for just such days. When children arrive late or without enough time to properly get ready, it not only creates stress for your child but disrupts class for everyone.

Visit the Bathroom—Make sure that, before every class, your child visits the bathroom, gets their drink of water or whatever else would cause them to leave class. This is especially helpful for the little ones. It is hard to concentrate on class when children have other things on their mind.

Be Free of Distractions—We only have a short time each week for class, so we need to make it count. It is a time where all attention needs to be on the instructor and the information being presented. Bringing toys or friends to class diverts the attention of every student in the class. Each year we have special times set aside for visitors.

4. Attend Visitor's Week

We encourage you to attend your child's class during our Visitor's Week. Parental praise is the most coveted award; there is no substitute for a pat on the back for a job well done. Hard as it may be, we ask that you respect that during the other weeks, your child is engaged in serious learning and deserves to be focused on their class-work. If a parent is in the classroom on a weekly basis, the child has two authority figures in the room. As parents we cannot help but respond with smiles of approval when our child does something wonderful and register disapproval for inappropriate behavior. A parent's very presence divides a child's attention and creates a distracting situation. Class time should be a special moment for each child. Independence means that they have something very special that only they can share with you and Visitor's week is the time to do it. You will be amazed at the degree of improvement that takes place from month to month.

5. Performances

Performances, are an essential part of dramatic training, but should not substitute for weekly class work. It is important that students learn basic theatrical essentials, to maximize their performance experience. PMPA has appropriate performance options for all levels of students that are integrated into all theatre classes. The Open House Concert, held each year in June, is an informal concert that provides all PMPA students with a positive un-pressured performance experience. It is also helpful to take your child to live performances or watch them together on TV as often as possible. Seeing professional theatre onstage provides encouragement for students to continue their own training. All PMPA students also receive discount tickets to a variety of performances throughout the year.

6. Proper Facilities

PMPA Center has a fully equipped theatre with 165 seats. Even our youngest students have the opportunity to perform in a real theatre setting. Our extensive costume department is available to supplement all production needs. Along with our teaching staff we have professional stage technicians to assist when needed. In short, we have everything any budding actor would need right here at PMPA Center.