



**92NY Theater
for Young
Audiences**

Presented by The Diamond Family

Messy MILLIE

Curriculum Guide

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The fun doesn't have to stop at the theater. Keep the fun going and continue the experience of *Messy Millie* at home or in the classroom!

This curriculum guide is designed in connection with 92NY Theater for Young Audiences production of *Messy Millie*. The activities are not only meant to engage children artistically, but allow them to engage in social-emotional learning (SEL) activities as well. While these activities are targeted for classroom teaching, they can easily be modified and used at home as well.

The hidden benefits of this curriculum guide include:

- Gross motor development
- Self-regulation
- Social awareness
- Self-awareness
- Behavior management
- Fostering creativity and spontaneity
- High focus and low focus activities

What is social-emotional learning?

Social-emotional learning is a fundamental piece to a student's overall human and academic development, therefore just as important as the academic subjects being taught in your classroom. The famous CASEL 5 has identified five areas of competence for social emotional learning to include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

The arts help foster and develop these five competencies and are a great way to introduce these social emotional learning competencies. All students will develop and progress in these respective areas at different paces and in different ways. Visit their [website](#) for more information on the CASEL framework and their connection to the [New York Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks](#).



My Name Is...

Millie's friends and family call her "Messy Millie" and she works towards becoming "Magnificent Millie". What name would you give to yourself? Give students a name card tent to write and/or draw their Creative Name.

Encourage students to make it positive and fun. You can also challenge them to make their name alliterative. Some ideas are: Adorable Annie, Benevolent Ben, Dancing Dennis, etc.

Once everyone has written their Creative Name on their name tent, instruct students to introduce their Creative Name with movement to the whole class one at a time.

For example, "Dancing Dennis" might roll his arms while saying his name. *Note: this portion can be done in small groups as well.



Coping & Breathing & Minding Oh My!

Millie has trouble with impulse control and executive functioning, and she is not alone. Executive functioning skills (organization, problem-solving, memorization, planning, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility) are mental skills we use on a daily basis. These skills develop at different rates - not necessarily in a linear progression - and the adults in children's lives can help guide them through this developmental process.

Brain Breaks

Brain Breaks are wonderful short games or activities to give students a moment to destress, be silly, do something different, and refocus. If you have a long class period, insert a brain break or two. Think of it as the kid version of the proverbial "coffee break."

Physical Brain Breaks

"Messy Brain" a la Trick Your Brain: A classic favorite – pat your head with one hand and rub your tummy with the other. After a few seconds, switch hands. You may find you are better at one side than the other. Another option is to make fists with your hands and put them slightly in front of your face. Put the pinky finger up on one hand and the index finger up on the other, then switch! Be sure to inform students that the whole class may go at different paces and that is okay.

It is important to remember that no two children are the same, and will progress at different paces. Some students may gravitate towards one activity over the other, and we encourage you to try each activity with your students to provide them with the various possible tools open to them.

Simon Says: A classic activity that is not only fun, but tests their focus and listening skills. As the facilitator you will guide them through a series of action prompts. If you say "Simon says clap two times" the class will clap two times. If you do not say "Simon says..." before the action prompt, they do not have to do it. No one is ever "out." If a student(s) misses, they have to shout "Yay learning!" with a fun jazz hand wave.

Brain Breaks (cont)

Meditative & Sensory Brain Breaks

Deep Breathing Exercises: There are numerous breathing activities out there to choose from, but here are a few of our favorites!

Rainbow Breathing: This can be done as a whole class or independently (see below).

Square or Box Breathing: This is a simple and fun breathing exercise. Be sure to repeat the process a minimum of 5 times (see below).

For students who focus more when there is a physical and visual component, mark out a square on their desk with tape. Add 4 notches on each side with a marker to help them with pacing. Students can trace the square with their finger as they do square breathing.

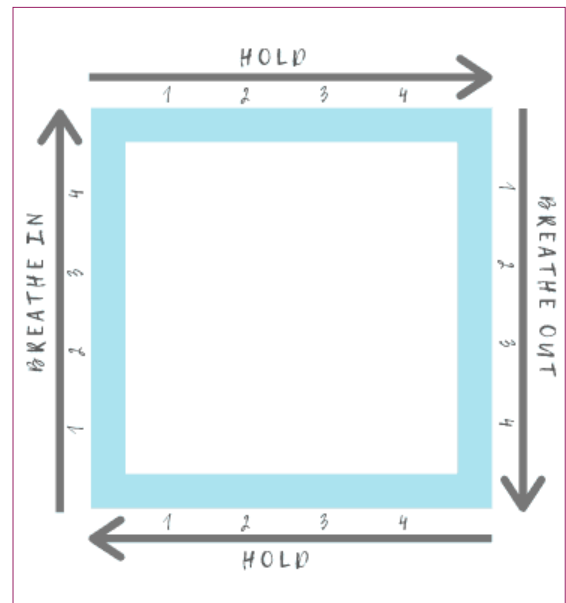
Candle and Flower Breathing: [Visit this link](#) for an enjoyable breathing exercise that kids can follow. Pull it up on the board in front of the whole class so everyone can do it together! The exercise guides them to breathe in like they are smelling the flower and breathe out like they are blowing out the candle.

Feelings Scavenger Hunt: This is a delightful activity for students mid-elementary and up. Print out enough [Feelings Scavenger Hunt](#) for the whole class ahead of time. Allow students to walk around the classroom to answer the prompts in the boxes.

Sensory Play: Allowing children to immerse themselves in various sensory play can aid in relaxing the mind and body. It does not require much preparation or planning other than providing the materials and setting aside time throughout the day for students to play with the various sensory items. Some popular items include, but are not limited to: playdough, squishy balls, bubble wrap, or sensory bottles filled with small toys, glitter, beads and more!



Rainbow breathing



Square/Box breathing

Brain Breaks (cont)

Skill-Building Brain Breaks

Dancing

Dance Action Songs - Pre-K to 1st Grade

Action songs are a quick way to get students moving while developing listening and focus skills.

Here are some of our favorites:

[Stand Up, Sit Down](#)

[The Goldfish](#)

[Dance Around and Jump Around](#)

[Listen and Move](#)

Dance ABCs - Grades 2nd and Up

This is a fun way to incorporate movement with literacy. Split the class into small groups. Give each group a word (word length dependent on the number of students in the group). Instruct the students to spell the word using their bodies. Each student will be one letter in the word. For example: The given word is JUMP. Student 1 will pose like the letter J, student 2 will pose like the letter U, student 3 will pose like the letter M, and student 4 will pose like the letter P.

Give each group 2-3 minutes to practice. Then have each group come up and present to the rest of the class. Challenge the class to guess what word the group is spelling with their bodies.

Visual Art Projects

The simple act of coloring can help calm students' minds and bodies. The only preparation you need to do ahead of time is print coloring sheets and gather coloring materials (i.e. crayons, markers, or colored pencils). Check out these [FREE coloring sheets](#) from Crayola! As they say, limitation breeds creativity – challenge students to only color with two colors!

Drama Games

Mirror Game

This is a fun game that helps students with body awareness, focus, and teamwork. [Visit this link](#) for instructions on how to play the Mirror Game. For an extra fun addition, you can add music!

Charades

This classic game is a great way to give students a brain break while also connecting it to an academic subject. The only materials needed are slips of paper, a hat, and a timer.

Preparation: On small slips of paper write out character names from a book your class is currently reading, or historical events/figures that your class is learning about, or simple tasks that students would recognize. Put the slips of paper in a hat, bucket, or bin.

Step 1: Split the class into 2 teams. To make it non-hierarchical, make fun team names i.e. Team Millie and Team Fairy Godmother Angel Guide.

Step 2: One student from Team Millie will choose a slip of paper from the hat. They will get one minute to act out the word on the slip of paper. Meanwhile, their teammates will attempt to guess what the word was on the slip of paper. Each correct answer is a point for that team. *Depending on the grade level, you may need to help students get started.

Step 3: One student from Team Fairy Godmother Angel Guide will choose a slip of paper from the hat. They will get one minute to act out the word on the slip of paper. Meanwhile, their teammates will attempt to guess what the word was on the slip of paper. Each correct answer is a point for that team. *Depending on the grade level, you may need to help students get started.

Step 4: The game continues in this manner until each student has gone at least once.

A need-to-know book

What do you need to know for tomorrow? Or what do you need to do tonight? Organization and time management can be difficult for young ones, and even adults. Like Millie's sister Melinda, writing down reminders or creating a to-do list can be helpful. Creating a "Need-to-Know" Book can be beneficial for students independently, for the

whole class, or even for teachers to learn more about the students in their classrooms. Check out the following activity to learn more about ways you can make a "Need-to-Know" book with your students.

A "Need-to-Know" Book

Kindergarten to 3rd Grade

Materials

Colored paper, crayons/markers/colored pencils, stickers, staples, pencils

Preparation

Stack three pieces of colored paper together and fold in half like a hot dog. Staple the pages together along the crease. Make one for each student. For age groups that are just learning to write: Come up with 3-5 class rules. Make these simple! For example: Raise My Hand, Hands to Myself, Use kind words, etc. Write these rules in pencil on the second page of each student to trace in Step 2.

Activity Steps

Step 1: Have students design the front and back cover of their "Need-to-Know" Book. The design should be their own creation, but if they have trouble, you can guide them to draw themselves, a favorite toy, a favorite place, etc.

Step 2: Go over the class rules with the whole class. On the second page of their "Need-to-Know" Book, have students trace the class rules with a marker. For those age groups comfortable with writing simple phrases, come up with 3-5 class rules as a whole class. For example: Raise My Hand, Hands to Myself, Use kind words, etc. Have students write out the class rules on page 2 of their "Need-to-Know" Book.

Step 3: On the third page, have students draw a picture of 2-3 items they need to remember to bring to school every day. Items could be a backpack, a lunch box, a jacket, homework etc.

Step 4: On the fourth page, have students draw a picture of 2-3 items they need to remember to bring home every day. Items could be homework, a book, a backpack, etc.

Step 5: On the fifth page, have students draw a picture and/or write something they would like their teachers to know about them. This can be as simple as "I love cheerios" or "My favorite color is..." or "I don't like loud noises" etc.

A “Need-to-Know” Book

4th - 7th Grades

Materials

Student Chromebooks, or computer access

Preparation

Create an account on [Book Creator](#). It's free!
Be sure to look over the website to learn all the various ways students can create books to better assist them during the activity

Activity Steps

Step 1: Have students log in to [Book Creator](#). Introduce the website to them and help them navigate the various tools they can use in this activity.

Step 2: Instruct students to create a “Need-to-Know” Book on Book Creator. Pages to include in their books:

- Cover page - Be sure to include the author!
- Class rules page (Developed together as a whole class)
- I Want page (What do they want to achieve in class/school this year?)
- But... page (What stands in their way of achieving their goal?)
- Can page (What can they do to achieve their goal this year?)
- All About Me page (What do they want their teacher(s) to know about them? What do they want their peers to know about them?)
- Back Cover page

Step 3: In pairs, have students share their books with one another. Once they have shared with partners, have two pairs group together to create a small group and share with one another.

Millie's Magical World

Millie has a wonderful gift of taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary. Why wait for the bus on an ordinary bench when you could wait for the bus while captaining a pirate ship? Rather than fully suppressing that creativity, take some time in your classroom to have structured dramatic play. You will find that dramatic play will stimulate your students in such a way that activates their intelligence, creativity, spontaneity and intuition; all of which can enhance their academic outcomes. There are many dramatic games out there, but these are a few of our favorites.

What Are You Doing?

Grades 3rd and Up

This game challenges students to physically do one action while saying another. It challenges their creativity, spontaneity, and focus, and the best part – no winners or losers. *Something to consider ahead of time: Depending on your class, this game may be more successful in smaller groups (low focus) rather than in front of the whole class (high focus).

Procedure

One student (Student A) comes up in front of the class and starts doing an activity (brushing their teeth, swimming, playing basketball, etc).

Another student (Student B) comes up and asks "What are you doing?"

While Student A continues to brush their teeth for example, and they say "Washing the dishes" (anything except what they are actually doing).

Student B will immediately start "washing the dishes" and Student A will take a seat.

Another student (Student C) will come up and ask Student B "What are you doing?" And so on.

The process continues until each student in the class has had a chance to go. If a student freezes or stops they should take a seat and try again after everyone else has gone.

Writing Extension

After the game, instruct students to write a reflection on the game: What did they find challenging about the game? What did they enjoy about the game? What do they think they could do differently?

"This is a..."

Grades 1st and Up

This game will challenge students to use their imagination and think creatively. You can choose to do this game as a whole class or in small groups.

Procedure

Give one student an object (for example, a pen). Explain that this is *not* a pen. It is a hairbrush or a microphone or logs to make a campfire, etc. The first student will then emphasize that this is *not*, for example, a hairbrush. It is a lipstick, or a water bottle, or a pan to cook food in, etc. And so on.

The process continues until each student in the class or group has had a chance to go.

For an extra challenge, start the game with an imaginary object rather than a physical one.

Writing Extension

After the game, instruct students to write a reflection on the game: What did they find challenging about the game? What did they enjoy about the game? What do they think they could do differently?

What is Your Superpower?

Creating a Class Play

Millie's class works together to create a class play titled "The Troll Bridge Toll Bridge" with magical fairies and a troll. Millie realizes that not all of her friends like to speak on stage, and suggests a play told through dance so that everyone can have a chance at a leading part. In this moment, Millie finds success in the act of creating something magical for all of her friends to be a part of, including herself. Messy Millie is semi-autobiographical and the real Messy Millie is now an acclaimed director, creating magical plays with all of her friends.

What are your students' superpowers? What untapped skills and talents do they have? Have some "messy" fun and help your students create a small class play like Ms. Wilkins and Ms. Darby do with their students. Here are some ideas to help get you started:

Show & Tell: Have students bring in something for Show & Tell to help spark ideas for a class play.

Classic Fairy Tales or Stories: Use stories your students are already familiar with and create a retelling of the story. You can even tie in a book the class is currently reading and use the play as a form of assessment.

Current Events: Bring in images and/or articles of current events to help spark ideas for a class play. For those in Grade 4 and up, you can connect the class play project with a history class topic. Your class has an idea, now what? Ultimately, there is no wrong answer since it is an original class creation. However, the open-endedness can feel daunting. You can make the class play a group project, where each group works on how they would like to tell one scene or moment of the story and presents it to a small audience (could be school leaders or fellow teachers or parents) all together. Or you can work together as a whole class. Here are some suggestions to help get you started:

What Do Your Students Like to Do?: Ask your students what they like to do and what they don't like to do. Do they enjoy dancing and movement, or does it frighten them? Do they like speaking in front of people or do they prefer not to? Do they like to create visual art projects? Utilizing your student's strengths (aka superpowers) can make your class play a huge success. You can create student roles that don't involve performing as well: a stage manager, a costume designer (can present their costume ideas to the class on paper or in a powerpoint), a DJ, a set designer (can present their set design ideas to the class on paper or in a powerpoint), etc.

Tableau: A tableau is when a group of people create a frozen image that represents a scene or moment in the story. You can use images to have students recreate with their bodies. You can have them recreate a moment in the story using tableau. Have students do a series of tableaux for multiple scenes or moments (for example: beginning, middle, and end) and have them go from one tableau to the next when instructed. You can add music to this or do it in silence.

What is Your Superpower? continued

Creating a Class Play

Flocking: Flocking is a variation of the Mirror activity described earlier. It is an easy way to incorporate movement and all of your students. If you have younger students, the adults in the room may need to lead the flock the entire time. If you have students who love being leaders, place them in the front for each side to lead the flock as it rotates around the room. If you have students who love public speaking, have them read a section of the story or poem chosen for the class play. [Visit this link](#) for a full instruction on how to “flock.”

One-Word Story: This is a classic drama game that involves a small group or whole class and is completely improvised (not planned). The goal is to create a comprehensible story, one word at a time. This activity can be a part of the class play or be used to help generate an idea for the class play. [Visit this link](#) for full instruction on how to play the game.

Gallery Walk: For those who love to do visual art projects, have students create artistic pieces that connect to a story. Have students display their finished pieces in areas around the room like an art gallery. Students can then walk around and admire their classmates' art.

To aid with organized chaos, split the class up into small groups or pairs, one group per art piece. Instruct students to discuss the art piece as a group or pair (What choices were made by the artist? What do you think the artist is trying to convey? What do they like or dislike? Do they notice any similarities or differences between other art pieces? What part of the story do you think the artist is telling?).

Give groups 1-2 minutes at each art piece. Inform students that when they hear music, they are to rotate one art piece to the right and discuss the next art piece. The process continues until everyone has observed and discussed each art piece.



Photos of Messy Millie by Jaqi Medlock



Photo of 92NY's Lyrics and Lyricists, Jr. by Richard Termine

More resources

- [The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)
- [New York Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks](#)
- [Patty Shukla Kids TV - Children's Songs](#)
- [The Laurie Berkner Band Kids Songs](#)
- [Octopretzel](#)
- [The Kids Cartoons](#)
- [Crayola Coloring](#)
- [Beat By Beat Drama Games for Kids](#)
- [Book Creator](#)

92NY Theater for Young Audiences (TYA)

Presented by The Diamond Family

Kid-sized musicals. Giant-sized heart. The magic of musical theater in classic and original productions created especially for young audiences and their families — introducing a new generation to the joy of the art form in an intimate setting with unforgettable performances.

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