Benefits of Improvisation

From Spontaneous Education LLC (Sponted.com), an organization dedicated to enhancing education through play.

Improvisation is an act of spontaneous creation – a character, story, scene, song, or a joke, derived individually or collaboratively from a single spark of inspiration. The beauty of improv is that there are no limits and no wrong answers. Improv is built on a wonderfully simple and powerful concept: "Yes, and." The 'Yes' refers to acceptance – when a player offers an idea, it must be accepted by all other players. The 'And' refers to enhancement – other players must not only accept each new idea, but must add something to it as well, and by doing so further build. For example:

Player A says, "This is the biggest grocery store I've ever seen."

Player B says, "I'm sure they'll have everything we need for the Superbowl party."

Player B has acknowledged that they are in a grocery store (Yes) and added that they are there to shop for items for a Superbowl Party (And). This is the kind of teamwork that the Yes And principle encourages.

"Yes And" means that anything is possible - that every idea is, by necessity, accepted as a wonderful gift and built upon to further the improvisation. Participants work together, incorporating one another's ideas and offering their own suggestions as they play together. This process of spontaneous creation through improvisation offers tremendous benefits for the Head (mind), Hands (body), and Heart (spirit).

As players work together to build new worlds, characters, and ideas, they always end up building something else too. Something far more important: Themselves. The spontaneous, collaborative, supportive nature of improv inevitably results in improved confidence, creativity, camaraderie, leadership skills, and social and emotional skills including empathy, body language awareness, personal interaction, and so much more. Improv is also wonderful for schools because everybody can enjoy it and benefit greatly from it, and players of all ages and abilities can happily play together. Improv encourages all players to find their voice in a group setting. High energy players who struggle to stay on topic can learn to harness their energy and improve their focus, while quiet, more reluctant players can gain confidence through improv and SpontEd activities. Players with special needs, disabilities and other challenges can also benefit greatly from improv. Every improvisation game and activity used in Spontaneous Education programs shares these fundamental characteristics:

**Educational** – Despite their spontaneous nature, all activities help players build and retain knowledge, and also correlate to state standards and Common Core Standards for Education in all content areas.

**Collaborative** – Teamwork is required on all activities, ranging from partner play to large group play.

**Creative** – All activities encourage students to discover and explore new ideas and possibilities.
**Challenging** – All activities encourage creative problem solving & spontaneity – think outside the box!

**Fun** – Every activity leads to lots of laughs, and safe, structured, silliness!

**Active** – All programs are physically engaging and designed to ensure players feel physically safe and comfortable at all times.

**Positive** – There are no wrong answers. All ideas are embraced and celebrated. This is play in its purest form.

**Easy to use** – Activities require few or no additional materials and little prep time. There are no specific space or time requirements. Use them anywhere, anytime, for as much or little time as you feel comfortable.

**Flexible** – Every activity can be adapted to any age level and any specific focus. Players of all ages can play together, including groups with varying ability levels. Every activity can be modified or changed by leaders (teachers) or the players themselves to better suit their needs.

**Tip of the Iceberg** – Leaders and Players should feel free and encouraged to invent new games and activities. Remember to always support and celebrate any new ideas!

Best of all, it turns out that the principle of Yes And also applies wonderfully to everyday life. In a school setting, for example, it could mean a teacher yes-anding the suggestions and concerns of his students, a principal yes-anding a teacher’s idea for a new after school program, and so much more!

Teachers can benefit greatly by using improvisation in the classroom. Improvements in student behavior and focus are common outcomes, as well as lower stress levels and better rapport between students and their teachers. Students and teachers feel more comfortable taking risks in an environment where play is encouraged, and playful risk taking is crucial to personal development. With just a small amount of repetition, most groups of students will be able to engage in many of these activities on their own, without an adult leading them, and still enjoy all of the same benefits listed above. Allowing students even a few minutes to self-direct these activities can free more time for teachers to complete administrative tasks, last minute prep, and more, all while the students are still learning, growing, and developing a host of valuable skills.

Improvis is an easy, fun, effective way to help all people learn and grow, and unlock their full creative potential. In a school setting, it also allows teachers unbiased, authentic glimpses at the unique intangible qualities of their students – thought processes, emotions, play preferences, social development and more. In short improv is fun, fantastic food for the mind, body, and soul that is a wonderful asset to every classroom. Please explore our website (SpontEd.com) and discover how our programs can make a difference in your classroom!