**Strategies for INCLUDING youth with autism IN theatre productions**

**Created by Gretta Berghammer**

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**The Why:**

When I am doing a production with youth that WHY means providing opportunities to portray a character, contribute to telling the story of the “play” and collaborating with others using dialogue, action, sound, movement in the telling of that story to another

**THAT MEANS**: finding ways to include them in the production

**WHY/What is the VALUE/SUPPORT participation can provide**

□Pretend Play/PLAYING A CHARACTER

□Non-language based ways of communicating and sharing an idea/MOVEMENT and ACTION

□Practicing Transitions (scenes change)

□Repetition is important/Rehearsal

□Language pragmatics: using language in social situations through DIALOGUE

1. The ability to use language for different purposes (e.g. to greet, inform people about things, demand, command, request).

2. The ability to adapt language to meet the needs of the listener or situation (e.g. talking differently to a baby versus an adult, talking louder when there is lots of noise, being aware of the listener’s knowledge and giving more information or less when needed).

3. Following the often “unspoken” rules of conversation and storytelling (e.g. taking turns in conversations, looking at the speaker/character, standing at an appropriate distance from the speaker/STAGING using facial expressions and gestures/ACTING), speaking loud enough for the audience

□Opportunity contribute to a group experience

Helping one another

□Adapting to change

**STRATEGIES for Making Theatre WITH Youth with Autism:**

Large print scripts

Video modeling

The scene as it is to be played (filmed with youth actors or by adult staff)

The scene with the “youth” missing as a way of practicing lines (if using language)

Communicate an idea non-verbally

Peer support opportunities

Director/Support staff modeling

Design a “social story” for their parents/families

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Video tape what to expect:

Making an entrance

Back stage

Make up options

Costume options

Communication devices incorporated into the performance

Visual/picture prompts

Locator visual prompts on stage floor

“Puppeteer” model for on stage support

Role sharing casting practices

Small production space