



Creative Content

Bindya Chauhan

Finding your main character energy

How Drama supports learner agency, resilience and belonging in the classroom

Drama offers students something rare in education: a space not only to practise skills, but to explore what a human being is and can become. Through rehearsal, collaboration and creative enquiry, drama shapes young people's behaviour, identity, voice and empathy in ways that influence how they learn.

Drama helps students rehearse what it means to be the protagonist of their own learning: to step forward, make choices and recognise that their actions influence outcomes.

Stanislavski's reminder that "*There are no small parts, only small actors*" captures how Drama positions the learner. Progress depends less on where students begin and more on the agency they bring to the work. When they see themselves as active contributors rather than passive observers, their relationship with learning transforms.

This article explores how everyday Drama practice can nurture **ownership, confidence,** and **resilience** while fostering a sense of belonging within the **ensemble**.

1. Developing learner agency through rehearsal

Rehearsals and practical work naturally give responsibility to students. When they shape a moment, solve a practical problem, or adjust an idea after feedback, they experience that improvement comes through doing, not waiting. This is the core.

Making time for students to pause, question their choices, and reflect on meaning strengthens this process. As they recognise the impact of their decisions, they begin to view learning as something they actively shape. This sense of agency often transfers beyond Drama, supporting engagement in written, analytical and independent work.

2. Building confidence through structured participation

Drama offers regular, low-stakes chances for students to take part. They discuss ideas, test practical choices, and share early versions of scenes, roles and moments. These experiences strengthen oracy, as students must explain what they mean and listen with care.

Confidence grows when taking part feels normal rather than a performance. Encouraging early thinking and small attempts helps students trust their voice. When students see that effort is valued, they are more likely to step forward in unfamiliar situations across the curriculum.

3. Modelling resilience through the rehearsal process

Rehearsal rarely works perfectly the first time. Students try something, notice what does and does not work, and have another go. This cycle of doing, adjusting, and trying again builds resilience in a very real way – they experience it firsthand, without needing the word explained.

When we treat mistakes as information and encourage small, achievable shifts, students see that progress comes through steady effort. They carry this understanding into revision, redrafting, and any task that needs patience.

4. Deepening curiosity through character and enquiry

Drama invites students to explore why people behave as they do and how meaning is communicated. Asking why a choice works, how an audience might respond, or what alternatives could be tried nurtures enquiry and interpretive thinking.

This curiosity fosters intellectual flexibility. Students become more willing to question, infer, and explore multiple perspectives – habits that strengthen thinking in English, Humanities and across the arts.

5. Strengthening voice, belonging, and ensemble

A Drama classroom thrives when every contribution matters. Establishing simple ensemble routines such as active listening, supporting others' ideas and acknowledging contributions helps build a real sense of belonging.

Many students find their voice in Drama before they find it elsewhere. Structured talk, shared reflection, and collaborative problem-solving allow students to rehearse what belonging feels like. They experience being heard, being needed, and being part of a learning community.

6. Teaching courage through manageable risk

Drama supports the development of courage through small, regular risks: reading aloud, offering a staging idea, or stepping briefly into a role. These low-stakes attempts help students rehearse the act of being brave.

When students feel that risk-taking is supported and that early ideas are welcomed, they become more willing to step forward in uncertain situations. This culture of exploratory learning benefits every subject

7. Making transferable learning visible

The skills rehearsed daily in Drama – such as communication, empathy, collaboration, adaptability, and problem solving – build a wider learning toolkit. When we make these links explicit, students begin to recognise the relevance of their dramatic work to learning beyond the studio.

Highlighting moments of teamwork, reflective practice, or critical thinking as they naturally arise in rehearsal helps students see that Drama is not separate from their academic development. It is a subject that strengthens the habits they rely on across school and in life.

A final reflection

Drama gives students room to think, create, and work with others. When we place them at the centre of their learning and encourage them to trust their voice, they begin to understand the influence they have on their own progress.

“Main character energy” is not about standing in a spotlight. It is about helping students realise they can step forward, make choices, and shape their learning with confidence. Drama lets them rehearse the kind of learner – and the kind of person – they are becoming.

Bindya Chauhan is a global drama and theatre educator who currently works at Dubai College in Dubai.

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