

Brooke McCarthy  
Teaching Philosophy

### **Beyond the Playground**

My classroom is like a playground and my main philosophy is play. The playground environment encourages the students to be open to exploration much like little kids on a new jungle gym. The jungle gym represents the tools and exercises that I share with my students, and I encourage them to find new, fun, and interesting ways to play on or play with the jungle gym. My goal is to create a space where students can feel open to exploration. I encourage them to be creatively fearless, eagerly supportive, highly curious, and actively engaged.

I aim to bring the youthlike qualities of curiosity, exploration, and imagination as well as the fun aspect of play into my students' toolbelts. We are often bogged down 'real-world' responsibilities and realities as we grow up, so I start my class by encouraging my students to play and have fun in class just like they did during recess when they were kids.

In addition to the freedom to play, I also lead my students through exploration of self and others. Actors need to be aware of their external bodies and fellow playmates as well as their internal feelings and mental states to ensure safety and respect for themselves and each other both on the playground and in their heads. There might be a day where we are physically too tired to climb to make it across the monkey bars or a day where our fears and anxieties cause us to avoid risks and it is important to identify these concepts both on an individual basis and at the ensemble level.

One of my main goals is to build empathy and trust among my students to form a collaborative and supportive ensemble. I aim to demonstrate how our personal thoughts, feelings, and actions often have universal recognition and significance.

Additionally, I believe the art of acting is an ongoing process, so I aim to teach my students a variety of exercises, warmups, techniques, tools, games, and improvisations that they can bring to their own work as they develop, deepen, and refine their individual processes. For example, one student may walk away with a connection to exploring their monologues over music, while another may find that improvising important milestone events in a character's history may give them more insight into their work. This all starts with ensemble building and the fundamentals of Stanislavsky. I also cover physical acting techniques such as Lecoq, Laban, and Chekhov as well as Meisner and Linklater to be sure to reach students' various learning needs and acting demands.

I believe that growth comes from discomfort much like how strength is built after muscle fatigue in the gym. Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable has been a driving philosophy of mine that has allowed me to push myself into new artistic endeavors which has expanded my own artistry. After establishing a collaborative and supportive ensemble, I often introduce exercises to push my students outside of their norms.

I also believe it's important to teach students how to talk about art, so I employ the Liz Lerman response methodology to provide my students with a format to give and receive feedback and ask thoughtful questions to support, encourage, and help other students' art.

Additionally, as a teacher my goal is to continue learning from my students to become a better teacher. I regularly ask for feedback and adjust according to their needs and learning styles in my student-centered classroom.

Acting is an art form we practice every day in our lives whether we call ourselves actors or not. I believe the same is true for teaching. As a teacher, I encourage my students to explore the ways our daily lives can enhance our studies and our studies enhance our lives. My goal is for students to walk out of a class with the ability to practically apply classroom concepts and exercises to their life and their acting.

As an educator, my job is to provide the skills and tools necessary for an actor to create, imagine, trust, critique, and respect their art. By creating a safe environment to take risks and setting high standards to achieve goals, I combine the study of acting, voice, and movement as tools for skillful expression.

My ultimate goal is to free my students' creativity, curiosity, and empathy in their work, in class, and in life. Dare to find the silly in serious, the truth in absurdity, and the love in fear: let's go beyond the playground.