

“Before, During, After”
North Coast Arts Integration Project
Guidelines for Attending a Live Performance

We are very excited to be able to offer NCAIP teachers and their students an audience experience featuring high-profile performing artists in a professional theatre setting. Attending a live dance, music or theatre performance provides students with an opportunity to develop and practice skills including focus, self-control and concentration. Framing the performance with “before” and “after” activities and discussion will help teach students how to be supportive, respectful and reflective audience members.

The audience is a very important and integral part of a live performance. Being a good audience member requires that students sit quietly and act appreciatively as well as appropriately. Students need to understand that when they are attentive during a performance they will benefit and understand better what is being presented, and that appropriate behavior in a live theatre setting supports the performer.

Most importantly we want you and your students to enjoy the experience so we have created these guidelines for attending a live performance.

Before (and During) the Show

Points to discuss –

Shhh! A live performance is not television, a movie, a video game or a computer. Real people are on the stage. This means no talking (unless asked to do so by the performers), or chewing gum.

React. Laugh, smile, applaud and cry as appropriate. Some performances may involve audience participation so students should be prepared to behave as directed by the artists on stage.

Lights. When the lights in the theatre start to fade this means the show is about to begin. You should be sitting quietly in your seat before the theatre is totally dark. If you are in the theatre lobby and you see that lights are flashing, this means return to your seat immediately.

Seating. It is respectful to keep your feet on the floor and sit quietly. It is not respectful to kick other seats or put your feet on them.

Cell phone. Turn it off; “vibrate” doesn’t count. Better yet, don’t bring it. A cell phone’s screen is really bright in a dark theatre. Never let your screen come on.

Snacks. Food and drinks are not allowed in the theatre.

Applaud. You should clap at:

- The end of a single event of the show, such as a dance, or song
- Right before intermission
- The end of the entire performance

Restroom. Use the restroom before the show or during intermission. If it’s an emergency, quietly excuse yourself and leave the theatre.

Program. A program is a booklet that lists the performers as well as the other artists involved in creating the show. If a program is provided, read it!

Following are suggestions for how to develop appropriate and respectful audience behaviors in students.

Teach empathy and respect through role-play

Ask for several student volunteers to play the part of the performers, and work with them to find something to perform - a poem to recite, rhythm instruments to play, or a song that they like off the radio. Ask them to go outside the room, while you talk with the class. Tell the class that they are going to be part of an experiment. When the performers come in, their job is to not pay attention. They should not get silly, but they can talk to one another, move their bodies in their seats, and not make eye contact.

Have the volunteers come in and perform. After a few minutes, stop and ask the performers to share how it felt to not have people paying attention. Then discuss what being a good audience looks like (for young students, a Yes/No chart is helpful), referring to a rubric or set of school rules as appropriate. Then practice as a class by having the same volunteers leave the room and come in to a respectful audience. When done, have the performers reflect on how it was a different experience, and have students share what they noticed this time about the performance that they didn't the first time. Point out specific behaviors that various students displayed.

Rehearse audience behavior often, and explicitly point out positive examples. Starting a weekly tradition where you host an open mic for even 15 minutes of student performing and audience practice, doing show and tell, or partnering with a fellow teacher to put on performances/share the latest from the classroom while practicing audience behaviors will all build skills and stamina.

Develop a rubric for being an expert audience

As a class develop a routine for getting student attention and signaling audience behavior, as well as a rubric that connects to your school's code of conduct. Example:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Bodies	Few bodies are under control and sitting tall Few students give supportive applause at the end of the performance	Most bodies are under control and sitting tall Some students give supportive applause at the end of the performance	All bodies are under control and sitting tall All students give supportive applause at end of performance
Voices	Many students are talking	Some students are talking	No students are talking
Attention	It takes 10 or more seconds to come to attention Focus and attention is not sustained during performance	It takes 5 – 10 seconds to come to attention Focus and attention somewhat sustained during performance	Students takes less than 5 seconds to come to attention Focus and attention is well sustained during performance

After the Show

Following are suggestions for reflection, follow-up and integrated activities.

1. In discussing a performance, it is often more productive to ask the question “What did you see?” or “What do you remember most strongly?” or “What do you think it meant and what makes you say that?” rather than, “Did you like the performance?” The first three questions lead to observation and interpretation of the performance, encouraging recall of details, while the fourth question encourages more judgmental responses. Discussion of which aspects of a performance remain in one’s memory often reveals the themes at the center of a work.
2. Have students describe a memorable moment from the performance in various ways such as verbally, in writing, by drawing, or through movement. Ask students if the performance differed from what they expected. What kind of feeling or mood did your students have during the performance? Did it make them happy? Discuss other kinds of dance, theatre or music. Has music, theatre or dance ever evoked any other emotions in your students? Before the performance, make sure to inform students that you will be completing this exercise so they can pay close attention to important details.
3. If there are aspects of the performance that students did not understand discuss it or prompt them to do research and share what they learned with the class.
4. Have students discuss whether music, theatre or dance plays a significant role in their families? Does anyone act, sing or dance? Encourage students to ask older family members or friends about the performances of their youth and its impact on their society’s culture. How do these experiences compare to the performance students just saw?
5. Have students write a short essay with examples from their research about how music, theatre and dance impact society and change over time.

Document sources:

Calpulli Mexican Dance Company
Kennedy Center for the Arts
Music Theatre International
North Coast Arts Integration Project
Turnaround:Arts