

# **HOW CAN A SPEECH & DRAMA CLASS BENEFIT MY CHILD?**



**Specialised  
Educational  
Services**  
UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

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Specialised Educational Services

## **Are speech and drama classes all about playing games and acting?**

Contrary to popular parents' perception, a speech and drama class is more than just role-playing and acting. It nurtures imagination and creativity in a way that it cannot be learned but through experience. Speech and drama classes like the one offered in DAS can be that powerful tool to help children, especially those with learning differences. Let us explore some of the ways a speech & drama class can help your child.

### **BUILDS SELF-ESTEEM**

When students with dyslexia enter school, they enter a world where their abilities and strengths are different from those around them. What may be easy to their peers, can be very difficult or impossible for them. Thus, when they recognise these differences, this may affect their self-esteem. Self-esteem indicates the degree to which one experiences oneself as worthy and capable, while low self-esteem results in feelings of unworthiness, inadequacies, and deficiencies (Rosenberg, Schooler & Schoenbach, 1995). At times, a child with dyslexia may be anxious or be afraid of speaking up in front of adults, or even their peers. Speech and drama classes provide a safe environment for children to try out and experience what it feels to speak and act as someone else. Through drama games and activities, children are given the chance to express themselves and have an equal opportunity to present. From here, they discover their strengths and talents. And when they feel confident and capable, children with positive self-esteem are more likely to feel motivated to learn and try their best.

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## DEVELOPS PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Speech and drama classes give children a chance to be responsible decision makers. Many children with dyslexia, often get bullied in schools due to their difficulties. Speech & Drama Arts (SDA) classes in DAS encourage collaboration among students. This can be seen through the many discussions and role playing sessions done in our classes. Through a spectrum of life situations, students get to rehearse roles and characters. They are encouraged to question, respond and present solutions. Students will have opportunities to make choices during the problem-solving process and this will boost their confidence in dealing with conflicts.

## DEVELOPS CREATIVITY

Young children spend a great deal of their time in a natural and spontaneous role-playing alone or with others. When they get to school, the opportunity to role-play gets limited as the demand for academic related achievements increases. A drama class helps children to stay spontaneous, creative and imaginative.

In SDA classes, students contribute to the storytelling process through the various drama activities. They are encouraged to use their imagination and come up with creative solutions for make-believe scenarios. Students are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone in every lesson as thinking out of the box helps children to have many perspectives and solutions for the stories presented in class. In addition, being in role and able to experience what it's like to be in control will make the children feel empowered.



## DEVELOPS EMPATHY

Empathy is the act of feeling into another's affective experience (Strayer & Eisenberg, 1978,). Empathy therefore involves a two-part process. The first part is the cognitive awareness of the internal state of another person. The second part is the emotional response toward the other person (Hoffman, 1987). Developing empathy is a crucial area for a global world. Through carefully facilitated activities such as role-play and dramatization, students are given the opportunity to better understand their own emotions and to understand and feel other people's positions. By exploring conflicts and challenging characters, students are aware of the differing viewpoints and give them the opportunity to respond in role to unfamiliar situations.



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## CONFIDENT COMMUNICATOR

Communication takes place in verbal, nonverbal and physical forms. And in a drama class, a lot of communication is done through role-playing, rehearsing of lines and participating in showcases. Such activities help students to practice speaking properly – overall, improve articulation and develop presentation skills. When children are confident communicators, they are able to say what they feel, express what they want and able to make and keep relationships with peers and people around them. So, can a child who is shy join a drama class? It is recommended to enrol a child who is shy into a drama class as the nurturing environment provides children with the security they need to overcome the initial fears of speaking and interacting with peers.

## DEVELOPS SELF-AWARENESS

In a nutshell, self-awareness is the ability to accurately recognize your own emotions, thoughts and actions. For example, a child who is having butterflies in his stomach before presenting in front of a class would easily associated that feeling to having a stomach ache. If that child is able to identify 'the butterflies' as feelings of nervousness, he would be able to figure out what he need to do before presenting. In this case, maybe ten deep breaths would do the trick to calm his nerves.

The opportunity of exploring different emotions through drama games, stories and role-plays in speech and drama classes sets a safe environment for the development of self-awareness in children. When children have strong self-awareness skill, they would be able to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, do a self-reflection on their behaviour and actions and recognise other people's needs and feelings. This is an essential skill that prepares them in dealing with challenges in school and life later on.