The ACCEPT Project: Social Justice Art and Education

Jackalynn Marie Snow

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The ACCEPT Project: Social Justice Art and Education

Chairperson: Jillian Campana

Co-Chairperson: Karen Kaufmann

The ACCEPT Project is an entity that I created out of a need to use art, and specifically theatre, in a meaningful manner beyond entertainment. I found myself inspired by artists who were using their craft to induce social change, so I sought to do likewise. The ACCEPT Project stands for Acting/Art Creates, Challenges, and Enlarges Pro-Human Truths. The information that follows documents my journey to discover a means to the ends of art for social justice and the results which came from that action. As an educator, I have included ways to utilize this concept in a classroom setting, and I am continuing my work on the educational implementation of The ACCEPT Project.
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The Inception

Quality educators impact people, society, and the world. In 2012, I began to examine my own impact. I began to question my methods and motives. What are the most important things students should learn? What is the purpose of theatre? How can I open student’s eyes to the world around them? From these questions, I began to develop the ACCEPT Project. It becomes easy for teachers to settle into the daily tasks of lessons, assignments, paperwork, and grading and grow apathetic toward the more encompassing goals of education. I set out not only to transform my own motivations and methodologies, but to create an educational experience and an artistic movement that would genuinely impact students and the world.

I am completing my graduate studies in the Creative Pulse program at the University of Montana. During a course in the summer of 2012, I was introduced to a TED Talk featuring artist JR (One Year of Turning the World Inside Out) who had a vision to change the world. This artist invited people from all over the world to create social statements by erecting public art displays of portrait photography. He would manufacture enormous prints for display for anyone who submitted them to him, returning them to be hung in their community. The portraits created powerful statements. Members of warring factions smiled side by side on a dividing wall in the Middle East. Laughing Native American faces proudly beamed beneath a sign saying, “We are still here.” Simple black and white images of real human faces spoke out to passersby. JR’s impacting project inspired me to create art for social justice.

1 "One Year of Turning the World Inside Out." Video file, 06:31. TED: Ideas Worth
Theatre is an art form I have practiced since I was eleven years old. Theatre class, both as a student and a teacher, has always impressed me as being a place where people of an unusually wide assortment of backgrounds and social groups come together to form an unlikely, but loving and vibrant community. I have come to question what the world would be like if it took a few lessons from Theatre class. What if people stepped out of their comfortable blindness and their stereotypes and got to know people for who they actually are? What a beautiful community we could create. Thus, The ACCEPT Project, a vehicle to realize this vision, was born.

The ACCEPT Project stands for Acting/Art Changes, Challenges, and Enlarges Pro-Human Truths. The goal of The ACCEPT Project is to increase awareness and to promote acceptance of all types of unique individual by utilizing art and acting to dispel common stereotypes and create empathy for humanity. The ACCEPT Project strives to stop bullying behaviors and promote human understanding through the avenue of art. In order to share these purposes and spread this message, those who wish to be involved with The ACCEPT Project enjoy the liberty of creating art or performance in any style as long as the intent and impact fit The ACCEPT Project goals.

Theatre is an art that has been used since its inception to create social awareness, to tell important stories, and to influence the hearts and minds of audiences world-wide. It is no new idea, nor is it a creative stretch, to utilize theatre performance for an educational and socially important purpose. In Champions of Change: The Impact of Arts on Learning, it is emphasized that “theatre creates empathy and tolerance for others.”

Many people and organizations have researched and supported this claim. In

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2 Catterall, James S., Richard Chapleau, and John Iwanga. "Involvement in the Arts and Human Development: General Involvement and Intensive Involvement in
addition to *The Imagination Project* at The University of California Los Angeles, Augusto Boal’s work with the Theatre of the Oppressed\(^3\), and Eric Booth’s *A Recipe for Artful Learning*\(^4\) are strongly support this claim. Boal, for instance, states that empathy is “the most dangerous weapon in [theatre’s] entire arsenal” (113, 1979)\(^3\) The ground I have tread is one well worn by many amazing teachers and artists, and I consider the ACCEPT project one more footprint along the path.

During the summer of 2012, I formulated an idea that would combine my experience with Theatre Arts with my desire to create meaningful art that would promote social change. Along with my experience and my motivating goals, I had available to me a group of talented young adults: my Theatre Class, Thespian Troupe, and Drama Club students. I shared my vision, along with the JR TED talk and another inspiring TED Talk *Dance to Change the World* by Mallika Sarabhai\(^5\) using performance art to spur awareness and equality, with my high school students.

Considering that my work would be predominantly with teenagers, I opted for a social issue that would affect their lives: acceptance. As a high school teacher, I observe a myriad of social rites on a daily basis aimed at gaining social acceptance. That longing


for peer approval drives many kids’ lives. The clothes they wear, the purchases they make, the way they talk—all can be steered by a desire for acceptance.

I thought back to my own high school days. My Drama classes served as a safe haven for every type of person. Social groups overlapped and blended into a beautiful tapestry that would never have been created without our shared bond made by an art form and our common goal to create performance art. In other classes, I did not feel the same level of social overlap or freedom to be myself, whoever that may be. In this environment, it was my hope that true acceptance could be shared and promoted.

The Project

The commencement of The ACCEPT project started with sharing my vision. Most of my high school students were inspired to work alongside me to launch the project. The first step I took along with my drama students involved introspection. How could we affect others’ views and lives if we ourselves had not first been affected? We began an exploration of our cultures and perspectives. Through focusing on understanding our own cultures and prejudices, I hoped to approach the project with a unified cast that had learned to accept themselves and one another before spreading the message to others (See Appendix A).

Some of the exercises utilized to develop self-awareness and understanding as a part of the initial phase of the project included:
• Interactive Circle game: I developed a list of statements applicable to culture. Students stood in a circle. If the statement were true about him or her, the student would walk across the circle. Statements included: I am an only child, I celebrate Christmas, my heritage includes Asian ancestry, both of my parents work full time, etc… After all of the statements had been read, students were allowed to come up with cultural statements of their own, then we discussed discoveries, feelings, and implications that arose through the activity.

• Reflective writing: Students kept journals responding to cultural questions and reflecting on daily activities. Questions included: What causes me to think poorly of someone? Do I have prejudices? When have I felt bullied or negatively singled out? Does my personality change around different groups of people? What is unique about me? What do I wish that people understood better about others?

• Personal Monologues: To better understand ourselves and our own cultures, the students and I wrote personal monologues portraying actual events in our own lives that we felt contributed to our current perspectives. The monologues were performed for the class and/or the club and troupe.

• Discussion: We talked about issues that presented themselves as we explored our cultures and took time for self-reflection.

This initial phase of the project created a deeper bond and crucial understandings among most members of the group. Many students felt connected at a deeper level, more self-aware, and more open to other cultures and beliefs. This was also the point, however, where a few students disengaged and separated themselves from the project.
Some of these students felt uncomfortable with being vulnerable and open about their own lives in front of classmates. The issue with one or two students seemed to be that they held beliefs that certain ways of life are morally wrong, which created discord with the intent of the project. If that student could not honestly accept other people because of a disapproval or disagreement with them or their lifestyle, it would not work for him to participate in a project with which he did not agree. A third type of detachment occurred when there were students who did not have an interest in creating art for social justice; they would prefer to perform a simple, scripted comedy. I was, somewhat naively, surprised that not every student was eager to change the world. I found myself to be saddened that not all students were able to fully accept their classmates. I understood, however, that not every student would be on-board with the production, since there is no production I have ever produced that has been unanimously loved. Overall, fortunately, the majority of students were eager and excited to move on to the next phase of the project and create meaningful works. Most of them were on fire with the passion to change the world by wiping out bullying, crushing racism, and illuminating misunderstanding with the light of the art of acceptance. It was wonderful to see their enthusiasm and observe as they began to make the project their own. I naively wished that every single student would feel this passion and driving desire. It did bring me to a grounded realization that some people are content with things the way that they are, and they have no desire to stir the pot. At this point, I allowed these students to make their own choices about their involvement in the project, and I held out hope that the fire carried by the impassioned students would spread.
The next step toward creating a public performance involved playwriting. My intent for The ACCEPT Project was that it would be a documentary style performance artistically portraying true events. Gary Fisher Dawson, author of *Defining Documentary Theatre* defines this style of performance as “a dramatic representation of societal forces using a close reexamination of events, individuals, or situations.” Powerful performances in documentary theatre that we utilized as guiding examples included *The Laramie Project*, *Fires in the Mirror*, and *The Making of the Puzzle Club*. Our first pieces of writing, many of which were revised and honed to become part of our live, public performance, were the first person, non-fiction monologues created in the first phase of our work. One student, Dmitri, wrote his response to the reactions he endured when friends learned of his choice to join the army. Another student, Amanda, wrote about the day she was introduced to her adoptive parents, with a goal of dispelling misunderstandings about adoption. Two girls wrote about their struggles with self-confidence and difficulties accepting their looks; those monologues were combined to create a duet. Students’ personal struggles with acceptance and lessons they’d learned became scripts ripe for workshopping and revision.

Research was the next step along the path to performance. Students dug into resources such as newspapers and databases searching for responses to the following

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question: What can true events teach me and the world about acceptance? Several scripts were generated from student research. One student combined her passion to address teen suicide rates and decrease incidences influenced by bullying with her own personal story and her research on bullying and its effect on suicide rates. Her goal was to develop an informative group scene featuring true stories and statistics. Several students researched religions other than their own; others researched unfamiliar lifestyles or traditions. Much of the students’ findings played a part in determining the subjects of their next exploration.

Our third source of script material was taken directly from the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Course in the summer of 2012 in the Creative Pulse Graduate Program at the University of Montana taught by Jillian Campana Ph.D. (Professor and Head of the Acting and Directing Programs at the University of Montana). I directed students to interview a person with a cultural difference about their life and write a scene or monologue using the key content and exact words from the interview. The cultural difference could be one of religion, philosophical ideals, gender, race, generation, or anything else that could promote one human developing new understanding about another. When I completed the assignment as a graduate student, I interviewed a former student expecting to write a monologue about being Asian in America. Instead, I found that the story that Elizabeth told was about community and exclusivity in Mormonism and specific gender roles in her family. The process was enlightening to me, personally, and the result proved empowering to my young, Asian, Mormon interviewee. While I enjoyed the honor of learning from this remarkable young lady, she found the process affirming as she gave a voice to her own story, which branched in a new direction than
that of her family. She also recognized her value and worth and discovered an enlarged and clarified sense of self through the doing the interview, seeing the finalized monologue script, and the further discussion which ensued.

What had been a fairly easy process for me turned out to present difficulty for some of the students. Not all of the students involved in the project participated in this step. When I asked the students to explain the cause of their struggles, they said that they could not find an interview subject who possessed the cultural difference they had researched or hoped to learn about, or they were uncomfortable asking someone personal questions about themselves. Those who did complete the interview garnered beautiful results. One student wrote a monologue based on her interview detailing one Muslim teen’s choice to wear her hijab. There are very few Muslim people in the City of Billings and the state of Montana, so this story was enlightening to many who knew a hijab only to be “that head thing women have to wear.” The first person account of one girl’s personal connection and autonomous choice was eye-opening. Another student developed a talk show style scene candidly discussing questions many wonder about homosexuality. Gender identities outside of straight male and female identities are generally ignored or misunderstood in the culture of Skyview High School and the Billings community. A Gay/Straight Alliance group was established in the school, which created more openness and a place for students to talk, but many students were too embarrassed or too “cool” to ask questions about gender identity or homosexuality. The documentary scene established a safe and entertaining format through which the information could be shared.
Following the introspection, the research, and the script writing, it was time to
dive in to revision and rehearsal. My young project pioneers and I began the process of
workshopping the written pieces. At this point, we began to sift out scripts that had been
useful to individuals as a part of the learning process from scripts which we believed fit
the purpose of The ACCEPT Project and would be impacting to a public audience. The
first cut in the selection process for what would eventually become our public
performance entailed simply asking the students which pieces they had written that they
would like to be performed. The casting process grew organically out of the group.
Some of the students wished to perform their own personal monologues. It was a,
perhaps therapeutic, way to voice stories of importance and to speak their personal truth.
For those who wanted to direct their written script, but not act in it, actors were selected
from our original group and from other members of the Skyview High School student
body who had heard about the project and wished to be a part of it.

We tested scripts in their original form, then we began a process of editing,
changing, and revising, treading carefully in order to keep the truth and the main
objective of each piece intact. At this point of development in the process, I did not plan
for the show to be a certain length or contain a certain number of pieces. It was
completely open for organic development. It could be three scenes in ten minutes for all
I knew. I simply determined that whatever pieces fit the purpose of the show and
possessed the appropriate quality would be included. See the entire completed script of
The ACCEPT Project Launch Performance in Appendix B.

The revision procedure carried its own set of challenges. We wished for the
original words and language of the participants to remain intact, yet it was important that
stories be told clearly and theatrically. Rehearsals shared in this dilemma. I found it more
difficult to direct students critically when they were representing themselves or another
real person rather than portraying a fictional character. In retrospect, some of the pieces
probably should have been further refined. The writing and acting could have been more
clear with superfluous details omitted from scripts and more direct action incorporated
into the acting, yet much progress was made, and the process proved valuable. Each run-
through of a scene brought new meaning, and when they started to become memorized
words rather than purposeful stories, we refocused on the crucial moments and the
encompassing message of each piece. During rehearsals, some pieces were omitted while
others were added. We ordered the scenes, and the group developed a framework of skits
and songs to tie the entire show together as a single, unified piece. With all said and
done, we created a full-length theatrical production for the launching of The ACCEPT
Project

Once we had a show in process and performance dates set; the next stage involved
procuring an audience. The publicity posters that we created became one of my favorite
aspects of the project; they captured the essence and purpose of the project in a
beautifully personal visual art format. Harkening back to the original inspiration for the
ACCEPT Project, we shot close up portraits of students in a similar style to those used in
JR’s TED Talk1. Each student who was photographed wrote a list of “I am” statements
reflecting things that are unique or important about him or herself. (See Appendix C)
The posters were attention-catching, and many found them to be powerful and
aesthetically beautiful.
I was interviewed by a local news station for a televised piece sharing the process and goals of our production. The reporter was intrigued by the idea of a play with a purpose, and she asked questions about our process and our goals. The news station covered our production in a highly positive light. We also created a Facebook page for the project, listed as: acceptproject 2012 (See Appendix D). In addition, we utilized several traditional forms of publicity including school announcements, invitations, local events websites, and a newspaper article in the Enjoy section of the Billings Gazette.

Getting The ACCEPT Project in the public eye served several purposes. It increased the excitement level of the students involved and helped them to realize the potential for impact and social change that we were creating. The notoriety added to the pride they felt in their creative work. The faculty and administration at Skyview High School tend to ignore or be apathetic toward theatre performances; the public awareness created a greater awareness and interest among the school staff (See Appendix E). Reaching beyond the hallways of the high school brought in more audience members of greater diversity, which increased the possibilities of accomplishing our larger goals. In addition, it helped me personally to feel that I was doing something “real” and emerging as a leader in my community.
The Performances

The ACCEPT Project launch performance premiered on Friday, November 16 at 7:30 pm at Skyview High School Theatre in Billings, Montana. A second show was performed on the evening of Saturday, November 17. Nearly 400 audience members from the school and community attended each showing; the ACCEPT Project was the best-attended non-musical theatre production in Skyview’s recent history. The show included eighteen original pieces; one scene adapted from the book *ADHD in HD: Brains Gone Wild* by Jonathan Chesner\(^\text{10}\) and several songs and transitional movement pieces (See Appendix E).

Following our initial evening performances, a teacher who had attended the show provided vocal support for bringing the show into the instructional day for the students. She insisted that more students should be exposed to the ACCEPT Project. With her support, administrative approval was granted for four forty-minute shows to be performed during the school day. We narrowed our full-length production, which lasted two hours and fifteen minutes, to a forty-minute version featuring the most impacting and well-developed pieces. Teachers had the option of bringing their students to the performance during their class period. Hundreds of students at Skyview High School were given the opportunity to view a short version of the project, engage in a talk-back session, and sign an anti-bullying pledge (See Appendix G).

In an effort to spread the ACCEPT Project idea to theatre groups throughout Montana, we created one more revised version of The ACCEPT Project to be performed at the Montana Thespian Festival at the University of Montana in February of 2013. We

revised, rehearsed, and strengthened the pieces in the forty-minute version of the show, and we replaced two of the pieces with a new scene. My students enjoyed the great honor of performing The ACCEPT Project to a wonderfully receptive group of Thespians from the state of Montana. We received accolades from the adjudicators of the festival in the form of the Best Student Written Production award and the Best Ensemble Scene award. Additionally, students from troupes around the state offered positive feedback and expressed interest in contributing to the project.

**The Impact**

Silently he sat on the hard wooden seat, hands folded, eyes averted, shoulders slumped, hoping not to be noticed. He tried to be invisible under the harsh fluorescent lights, to melt into the sounds of students interacting carelessly around him. He had a story hidden deep down within him, and maybe if he could share it, he could stop being afraid. Maybe he could stop being alone. Cruz was a quiet, troubled student. Those who knew of him prior to his Junior year at Skyview in 2012 said that they had never heard him talk. Cruz did not have friends, he had a complicated and difficult home life, and he struggled every day in school. His only interactions with other students were in the form of bullying, as they called him a “border jumper” or a “beano” because of his Mexican heritage, and whispered in snide tones that he should “go back where he came from.”

Cruz is the success of The ACCEPT Project. If he were the only person impacted by the project, I would still complete the undertaking again, and his transformation proves the value of social justice art and documentary theatre. Somehow a counselor at
Skyview High School convinced Cruz, possibly the quietest student at the school, to enroll in a theatre course. Cruz felt acceptance from his peers in theatre; he found friends; and he found his voice. Cruz, the student who was known only for being silent in his classes, stood under the glaring spotlight and told his own true story. He talked about the bullying and how it had impacted him. He spoke of standing up for himself. He admitted his love for Mexican dancing, a skill that had made him feel shame that now gave him strength. Getting on that stage and telling his story transformed Cruz. He was the first to volunteer to record his monologue for our YouTube channel. He created videos and slideshows advocating for the ACCEPT Project and social justice theatre. He went from being a voiceless victim to being a hero out to rescue others from similar plights. Cruz became the face of The ACCEPT Project for me, and my reason to continue. The project is his as much as it is mine, and it belongs to every student who contributed as well as every audience member who responded. Responses were varied, but some were notable.

A community member emailed me following our first evening performance. She said that she had brought a friend to the performance, and her friend cried when they were leaving the theatre. When she asked what had moved her about the performance, the friend admitted that she had not spoken to her sister in years because her sister had told the family that she was gay. Seeing the scene wherein gay and lesbian students had shared their experiences, struggles, and hopes for the future, the woman determined that she would call her sister and repair the relationship that had been broken.

A similar report came unexpectedly when I was dining at a local restaurant. A server recognized me as the director of The ACCEPT Project and told me that her parents
had shunned her sister since her admission of homosexuality years prior, but had reconciled with her as a result of the local ACCEPT Project performances. I had not anticipated that The ACCEPT Project would inspire reconciliation of estranged family members. I had hoped that it would inform and cause people to consider new perspectives, but these tangible positive actions that were occurring amazed me and reaffirmed my confidence that the project was, and is, worthwhile.

The school day performances catering to captive high school audiences garnered mixed responses. A group of boys yelling, “Fag!” to a gay student in the hallway following a performance revealed that not everyone was willing to accept the message, and also that the message is justifiably needed in schools, and Skyview High School in particular. Another student, following that same performance, shared that he realized for the first time that using the word “fag” is the same as using the word “nigger,” and that he would eliminate the word from his speech.

Many students came backstage following the class performances. They complimented us on the show, but more importantly, they connected to the content. Several students wished to speak to a specific performer because they felt that their stories or situations were the same; following the performance, they no longer felt alone. Other students came to tell their own stories. They felt released or freed by the honest performances they had seen on stage, and they were ready to speak their own truth. They asked for ways to be involved, and they shared their feelings and experiences. Other students who did not relate to the experiences portrayed in the performances felt that they gained a new level of understanding. Students said that they gained new awareness, and that they would stand up for their peers in future situations. Hundreds of students chose
to sign an anti-bullying pledge stating that they would treat others with kindness and report abuse or injustice.

Several students wrote reviews in response to the ACCEPT Project performances. These are some excerpts of their written responses:

"The play really opened my eyes and made me realize what really happens and how it affects people. I thought it was great how they opened up on stage."

"I thought all the personal stories about what they had been through, like bullying and people not accepting who you are, were really informative about what has been happening, and the people telling the stories were really descriptive so you can get a good picture about what is going on. Of course, the things that have happened to these boys and girls is heartbreaking, but it helped get the message across to not judge and to learn to accept people."

"When I saw all the posters up in the hall, I thought it was a joke; as I sat there during the play, my opinion changed. My opinion changed on the way I look at life, it taught me not to judge by what they look like or what they are wearing. To me, ACCEPT Project blew my mind. I would encourage every student at high school to attend."

"The play was amazing- it made me realize how words and actions affect others."

"There is nothing that I did not like in the performance. The cast did an outstanding job when telling their and other's personal experiences. It seems to me that the show represented truly how people face bullying both in and outside of school. The play gave you both an understanding and laughter throughout. I am proud for the actors who were so brave to stand and speak individually."

"I like the emotional feel of it and how honest they all were with the crowd. I thought the part where the girl interviewed the two girls was wonderful! How honest those girls were with total strangers was crazy! The play taught me to be myself and don't hold anything back, to accept myself for every little flaw. And to understand how words can hurt people, and how those words can hurt their self-esteem and make them feel worthless. The play really inspired me."
When I began work on The ACCEPT Project, my parameters for its success were that it would positively affect at least one person’s life—that would be enough to make it worth it. The transformation of Cruz was enough to make this project a success, the additional impact is enough to take the project further and carry it on to the future. The cast and crew of The ACCEPT Project launch performances were among the most deeply impacted. The learned about themselves, and they broadened their perspectives. Several students took the ACCEPT project and made it their own.

A student in her senior year, Jasmine, wrote and directed a scene called “Judgment by Clothes” which won the “Best Ensemble Scene” award at the Montana Thespian Festival. She shared important facets of her own story as an actor in another scene. She said that being a part of The ACCEPT Project helped her to come out as a lesbian, and helped her to be proud of whom she truly is. Uplifted by her involvement with The ACCEPT Project, she wrote about it in a college scholarship essay and earned the award. Jasmine put a great deal of work into The ACCEPT Project. She grew as a leader, grew in courage, and gained recognition. She plans to continue contributing to the ACCEPT Project and working for social justice through art.

Alex learned the transforming power of art. He relates, “I liked seeing the impact a performance could have on people. I liked knowing that I could make a difference. It made me feel like I could do more.” I noticed a marked difference in Alex through and beyond his participation in the project. He stopped pretending to be something he wasn’t. He became a leader and began speaking out against injustice in other classes and other situations. He made goals for himself with primary hope of impacting lives throughout
the world. The ACCEPT Project played a part in his realization that he could do these things.

Lindsay is a student who cares deeply about others. She works extensively with special needs students and advocates for people who may be overlooked, or even shunned, by society. Even though Lindsay prides herself in focusing on the inside of a person and being non-judgmental, she admits that her perspective had been limited in some areas, and she had some unrealized prejudices prior to working on the project. Lindsay confronted her stereotypes head-on by researching topics of which her knowledge was limited and asking blunt and honest questions of people who she previously misunderstood. She wrote a scene that managed to confront stereotypes with humor and honest vulnerability. She then took The ACCEPT Project beyond the stage and created a presentation for FCCLA (Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America) at the state and national levels. Lindsay allowed the ACCEPT Project themes and lessons to impact her, and then spread what she had learned to a diverse audience. Cruz, Jasmine, Alex, and Lindsay are just a few of the students who made The ACCEPT Project what it is and spread its impact. It is our hope that the impact will continue to spread.

Beyond the Launch

Our initial ACCEPT Project performances were created with the intention of spurring a larger, more widespread, continuing project. My students and I looked for ways to spread inspiration to utilize Art/Acting to Change, Challenge and Enlarge Pro-Human Truths. We first worked to expand our internet presence. We added to our
Facebook page under the name of ACCEPT Project 2102. We uploaded video clips and offered weekly challenges in the spirit of the ACCEPT Project. For instance, followers of the Facebook page were encouraged to write a poem, create an artwork, or reach out to a new person.

In the spirit of creating understanding of diverse people, I asked the exchange students at our school to participate in video interviews discussing their culture. They were asked to share what they wish others knew about their country, their culture, and them as unique people. I interviewed students from China, Germany, Argentina, and Slovakia. The interviews were recorded and posted on the Facebook page and the YouTube channel. They were also shared with high school teachers for use in their classrooms.

My students wanted to do something special with the anti-bullying pledges that had been signed by students, and I hoped to get them to contribute a visual art piece to the project. From those two goals came a multi-media art piece composed of signed pledges painted with watercolors and then decorated with self-portraits drawn by different students in ink. The art piece was then displayed at the school.

Desiring a more convenient and professional format through which interested groups and individuals could connect with The ACCEPT Project, I developed a website. The site can be found at http://acceptproject.weebly.com (See Appendix H). The site includes the goals and intentions of The ACCEPT Project, performance photos and videos, suggestions for involvement in the project, and a contact page which links to the ACCEPT Project email.
At the inception of the project, it had been my hope and the hope of the students involved, that we would inspire groups and individuals to embrace the projects and create original works for The ACCEPT Project in communities throughout the nation and the world. The Project has not spread as effectively as we had envisioned; however, some individuals have contributed poetry, personal monologues, and artwork through the Facebook page and personal connections to cast members.

**Continuing the ACCEPT Project**

After launching The ACCEPT Project and witnessing its effects throughout the year, I began exploring ways to continue the project. Rather than create another full-length production for the community, this year I have focused on using forum theatre for social justice and incorporating ACCEPT Project ideals into lessons for classroom teachers.

Forum theatre is a style of performance which uses audience involvement to experience multiple character perspectives and situational outcomes. The power of social transformation possible through Forum Theatre is detailed in the book *Theatre of the Oppressed* by its creator Augusto Boal. I experienced the process that I used to create Forum Theatre with my students in the Theatre in Education Course at the University of Montana instructed by Jillian Campana Ph.D. (Professor and Head of Acting and Directing Programs at the University of Montana). First, a simple scene is devised. In the case of The ACCEPT Project, real life situations addressing social justice issues are used. The short scene is performed for an audience. Audience members then have the
opportunity to step into the scene as any character and improvise a different choice altering the scene. For example, one of the scenes performed by my students this year was intended for an early childhood audience of pre-K through Second Grade students. A simple scenario was enacted wherein one several children were playing on their own. Another child proceeded to ask each child if she could join him or her in play, but each time the inquiring child was rejected. Children in the audience were then invited to play the part of any child in the scene, providing them an opportunity to experience the perspective of another person, and to see the power inherent in a single choice. Audience members were able to witness and be a part of multiple outcomes of the same scene. Some children stepped in and happily invited the inquiring child to play rather than rejecting her. Some could see the reason that a child did not want to share (i.e.: she may knock down the block castle) and offered an alternative suggestion (i.e.: “When I am done with this, will you come paint with me?”). The audience members or students can physically experience and alter a situation, which makes it a more powerful and engaging tool than simple discussion for addressing social issues.

My Theatre Class students had hoped to bring forum theatre into several area elementary and middle schools during the school year, but unforeseen barriers to travel during the school day prevented this from happening. We were able to perform a scene during a public performance in January, and I filmed students performing various scenes for examples for teachers to utilize in planning forum theatre lessons in for their own classrooms. I also used Forum Theatre in my English I courses. I was happy to discover that Forum Theatre worked effectively with students lacking a Theatre Arts background.
All students participated, and they found enacting the scenarios both engaging and eye-opening.

I provided teacher training related to the ACCEPT Project on two occasions during this school year. In October of 2013, I taught a workshop on Improvisation for Life and Learning to Montana teacher at the Montana Educators Association Conference in Belgrade, Montana. I taught the workshop twice, presenting to a total of twenty-four teachers. Teachers in attendance ranged from Kindergarten teachers to University level, and years of experience and subject areas were just as varied. Instruction in forum theatre uses was presented, and ACCEPT Project information was distributed to teachers in attendance. My presentation included a variety of ways that theatre techniques can be incorporated into classrooms at any level or subject, but the teachers showed the most excitement about the use of forum theatre. Several students remained after the workshop to discuss these ideas further, and two teachers were especially eager to have my students come and work with the younger students in their classrooms.

In May of 2014, I led the English department at Skyview High School in Billings in an experiential tutorial on using forum theatre in the classroom. Several of these teachers are known for using more traditional methods in the classroom and do not regularly incorporate arts, especially theatre. As an auspicious surprise, these teachers found Forum Theatre intriguing and requested lesson plans for use in their classrooms. As a result, I am currently working on developing ACCEPT Project based lesson plans for teachers. I have used The ACCEPT Project in my own English Language Arts classroom throughout the 2013-2014 school year. With my World Literature courses, I did a visual arts unit focusing on self-expression and cultural acceptance. My English I
students performed forum theatre based on social injustice, and they developed their own visual arts contributions to The ACCEPT Project.

**Taking ACCEPT into the Future**

Through my experiences with The ACCEPT Project thus far, I have begun to answer some of my initial questions. I believe that the most important things students should learn include how to be a good citizen of the world, how to feel empathy for fellow humans, how to care about real world issues and fight for social justice, and how to view the world from others’ perspectives. The purpose of theatre is broad and expansive, but some wonderful uses of theatre are creating empathy, revealing new perspectives and transforming truths, and experiencing situations from new perspectives. There are countless ways to open my students’ eyes to the world around them, and The ACCEPT Project can now be listed among them. Even better, my students can now create art and theatre through The ACCEPT Project, opening the eyes of those in the world around them.

I am a better educator after having created and worked within The ACCEPT Project. The experience helps me to remember the truly important lessons that my students should learn through everything I do. I have noticed that discussions about literature or play analysis with my students have gone to a deeper level; more real-world connections are being made in conversations with my student. Since my work with The ACCEPT Project sharpened my focus on meaningful learning goals, I have noticed students digging further beneath the surface, drawing closer to the roots of human issues. Something that, through all of this, has boiled to the surface of my mind and captured my
attention is cultural identity and cultural relevance in education and daily life. A common area of ignorance prevalent among the students I have been teaching is knowledge and understanding of cultures other than their own. I, personally, have always possessed a strong curiosity about foreign cultures and ways of life. The ACCEPT Project has become an avenue to explore and understand diverse people and cultures. As a part of the Social Justice Artmaking course during the 2013 summer of the Creative Pulse at the University of Montana taught by Jennifer Combe (Professor of Art at the University of Montana), I created a social justice art lesson which guides students through an exploration of their own culture and promotes open exploration of other cultures without pre-assigning judgments. The lesson, entitled “That’s Weird” (See Appendix I) utilizes both visual and performance art to teach ACCEPT Project principals and build community among students or groups. I hope to share The ACCEPT Project with teachers in a variety of disciplines by creating more lesson plans that educators may use and conducting more workshops or presentations, and I also hope that educators will craft new original lessons under the ACCEPT Project ideals.

It would be thrilling if more arts organizations and theatre groups chose to create ACCEPT Project works. The ACCEPT Project Facebook page and website are still active, and I plan to continue to build them. In addition, I continue to take advantage of encounters with artists, spreading my vision through personal conversations.

As for my own creations, I will be working at an international school in Indonesia beginning in August of 2014. My curiosity about world cultures, further heightened by the growth of perspective I saw occurring through The ACCEPT Project, motivated me to pursue my lifetime dream of living and working abroad. What better way to gain
understanding of a foreign culture than to become a part of it? I have never been to Asia or to a tropical climate. Living in a Muslim, Asian, island culture will put me in a completely unfamiliar place, enabling me to very practically put ACCEPT concepts into practice in my own life. I plan to continue The ACCEPT Project internationally. Not only am I looking forward to the learning and growing experience that this move will allow for my own family, I am also anticipating the amazing opportunities to implement The ACCEPT Project in diverse student groups with over a dozen cultures represented in a single classroom. I hope to collaborate with the faculty and staff at Surabaya International School in Indonesia, creating opportunities to use arts for human understanding in new ways. I would especially love to do some work in the medium of international dance. The possibilities are limitless. The ACCEPT Project has a world to impact.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Overview of Documentary Theatre
Documentary Theatre Project

Step 1: Introduce Documentary Theatre to students:

Definition: Documentary theatre is theatre that wholly or in part uses pre-existing documentary material (such as newspapers, government reports, interviews, etc.) as source material for the script, ideally without altering its wording.

Documentary theater can be used as a way to promote understanding and dialogue between people with differing points of views and deeply ingrained histories of conflict. It is used to get the entire picture of what has occurred in a specific event through the process of interviewing people involved. Its purpose is to adhere to the emotional aspect of a specific situation and portray all sides of an event. The value of theater lies in its ability to emphasize the differences between people and begin building bridges between those distinctions.

Documentary theater sits at the intersection of art and politics and can be seen as a catalyst for social change. Documentary theater, or theater of fact, is a genre that uses dramatic representation of societal forces through the use of pre-existing documentary material (i.e., newspapers, government reports, interviews, etc.) as source material for the script. It is common in this type of theater that each actor take on several roles and the script be written as verbatim theater or the playwright’s use of exact interviews in the script.

Documentary theater plays typically lacks a set and the actors change costumes and use body language in order to portray a multitude of characters on stage. The events are not acted out but told from the point of view of the person being interviewed. Documentary theater plays tend to not have a lot of background music, allowing the audience to focus on the words that were spoken by the interviewees. Also, no interview or news source is weighed as more important or more dramatic than another. The actors convey what they know is accurate and allow the audience to develop their own political points of view. Documentary theater is difficult to define in advance. It is a complicated, experimental and conceptual. In addition, the effects of documentary theater on society are wide-ranging and hard to measure.

Documentary theater is a movement that attempts to bring social issues to the stage by emphasizing factual information over aesthetic considerations. The creator or playwright is trying to start a dialogue with the audience by focusing on the psychological and interpersonal aspect of a particular event. Documentary drama tries to create itself as a second source or a commentary on an event or person.

Step 2: View examples of successful documentary theatre projects such as "Fires in the Mirror" and "The Laramie Project."
Discuss the process, the style, and the effectiveness of different example sources.

Brainstorms ways that we can incorporate elements from examples into our own work.

**Step 3: Share the vision and purpose of our project.**

We will be working as an entity that I am developing called ACCEPT. ACCEPT stands for Acting Changes Challenges and Enlarges Pro-human Truths.

View examples of art being performed to promote positive social change (JR and Malika Sarabhai TED Talks).

**Vision and Purpose**

The social change we will be working toward is widespread acceptance and understanding of those who are different than ourselves. Our campaign will be a pro-diversity and anti-bullying one. We will aim to encourage open-mindedness and perform other's true stories with the aim of putting ourselves and our audience in another's shoes. Our sources will be our own experiences, non-fiction writings, and interviews. Our performances will consist of connected short scenes and monologues within a larger performance piece, however, we may also use creative movement, tableau, poetry recitation, and other performance types. We will perform the entirety of the show at the Skyview Theatre. We will also perform shorter pieces at various public locations throughout the community, and we will digitally record performances and post them online to share with a larger, world-wide community. We will invite other theatre troupes to perform and post their own pro-acceptance performance pieces.

**Step 4: Recognize and Explore our own cultures and stories**

Define Culture.

Have each student list cultures or groups of which he or she is a part. Have students share their cultures in small groups. Discuss how our cultures affect us. Discuss stereotypes that others have about our cultures. List areas we feel least knowledgeable about within our own cultures. Research our own culture.
Tell our own stories:
Discuss times in our own lives when we have felt rejected, misrepresented, or misunderstood.
Have each student write one true life story that has affected him or her significantly (first person perspective).
Have students share their stories in small groups.
Edit monologues into monologues that are three minutes or less.
Students perform monologues for whole group.

**Step 5: Recognize and Explore other cultures.**

Have students list cultures in the school, community, or in connection with their lives in some way that they may have contact with.

List stereotypes that people, including ourselves, have about these cultures.

Choose a culture about which you feel uncomfortable or uneducated and research the culture.
Especially look for true personal narratives from a person within a culture.

Discuss whether stereotypes were confirmed or disproved.

View recorded interviews featuring people of various cultures.

Explore cultures through creative movement, poetry, narrative, tableau, and improvisation.

**Step 6: Interviews**

Have students make a list of people that they feel fall outside of their cultures/are different from them in some way.

Choose two people from the list to interview.

Get permission from the people to interview them and use their words (they may remain anonymous). Set up a time and place to hold the interview.

Research the person's culture.

Develop a list of 10-12 interview questions for each person.

Practice interviewing by posing questions to other class members.
Hold and record interviews.
Transcribe interviews.

Discuss the outcome of interviews with classmates.

**Step 7: Monologue Writing**

Edit the interviews into shorter, manageable pieces that effectively represent the person interviewed and tell his or her story. Keep the person's exact word choices including vocalized pauses, and keep sentences whole and unaltered. Keep enough of the original interview intact for the meaning and content to be accurate and understood. Pieces may be rearranged.

**Step 8: Initial Classroom performances**

Students perform monologues for classmates.
Evaluate and reflect.

**Step 9: Playwriting/Creating the larger piece for public performance**

Discuss and evaluate performed pieces.
Look for common threads and themes.
Determine which pieces would be effective and appropriate in a longer, public piece. (performances of our own stories and other pieces that arose out of class activities may also be incorporated. Monologues that don't fit in our large piece may still be effective for shorter public performances. Pieces may be edited to fit the style and goals of the overall piece.)

Collaboratively develop a full-length performance piece and possible shorter performance pieces.

**Step 10: Play production**

Assign roles to students for preparation of the public performances. Roles may include:
Directors
Actors
Publicists
Historians
Videographers
Costumers
Properties Crew
Hair and Make-up
Etc...

Train students in roles and build the play.

**Step 11: Rehearse**

Work with students on acting techniques such as characterization, voice, movement, staging, etc... while working to maintain a close connection and true representation of the actual people being represented.

Revise or edit the script as needed.

As a cast, continually revisit the driving purpose of the project and evaluate whether or not that purpose is being achieved. Make changes as necessary.

Prepare cast members and/or others who may be brought in as a panel for post-show discussion and online communication.

**Step 12: Public Performance**

Perform the full-length piece live at Skyview High School for evening shows. Perform shortened pieces during classes (teachers elect to bring classes), at other schools as assemblies or individual class performances, and in other public places. (Ideas for public places: coffee shops, parks, mall, downtown, pre-show for other theatres, library, etc...) Record performances and post online (facebook, YouTube, Website).

**Step 13: Continue/Invite/Challenge**

Through personal contacts and the internet, invite others to participate in ACCEPT project and post their own performances. Encourage viewers to leave comments regarding if/how accept project has affected them.

Set up a system for approving posts/checking appropriateness before they are allowed to be added to our site.

**Step 14: Reflect/Evaluate**

Journal about the experience.
Determine if any of our own notions were changed or challenged.
Reflect on what has been learned about oneself.
Write and speak about what it was like to portray a real person.
Evaluate responses of audience members.
Determine whether and how the project was effective and/or worthwhile.
ACCEPT Documentary Theatre Project

Our Purpose: We will work toward social change by promoting widespread acceptance and understanding of those who are different from ourselves. Our campaign will be a pro-diversity and anti-bullying one. We will aim to encourage open-mindedness and perform other’s true stories with the aim of putting ourselves and our audience in another's shoes.

Sources: Our own experiences, non-fiction writings, and interviews.

Format: Our performances will consist of connected short scenes and monologues within a larger performance piece, however, we may also use creative movement, tableau, poetry recitation, and other performance types. We will perform the entirety of the show at the Skyview Theatre. We will also perform shorter pieces at various public locations throughout the community, and we will digitally record performances and post them online to share with a larger, world-wide community. We will invite other theatre troupes to perform and post their own pro-acceptance performance pieces.

Process:
Step 1: Introduce Documentary Theatre to students. Define Documentary Theatre and Ethnotheatre and research styles, processes, and uses.

Step 2: View examples of successful documentary theatre projects such as “Fires in the Mirror” and “The Laramie Project.”

Step 3: Share the vision and purpose of our project. ACCEPT=Acting Changes Challenges and Enlarges Pro-human Truths. See Purpose above.

Step 4: Recognize and Explore our own cultures and stories. Define culture, describe our own culture, and tell our own stories of rejection, misrepresentation, acceptance, and/or understanding.

Step 5: Recognize and Explore other cultures. List, discuss, and research cultures outside of our own, but in our proximity. Explore cultures through artistic mediums including movement, poetry, and improvisation.

Step 6: Interview a person who represents another culture.

Step 7: Write Monologues. Edit interviews into shorter pieces which accurately represent the person and tell his or her story.

Step 8: Classroom Performances.

Step 9: Playwrighting/Creating a full-length piece for public performance.

Step 10: Play Production Students will direct, act, publicize, record, costume, accumulate props, design hair and make-up, etc...

Step 11: Rehearse.
Step 12: Perform.
Public Skyview performance and performances in local, public spaces.

Step 13: Continue/Invite/Challenge.
Post performances online and invite others to participate in the ACCEPT project.

Step 14: Reflect/Evaluate.
Appendix B

Script
ACCEPT PROJECT

Something Needs to Change
by Victoria C. Cates

(A crowd of students gathers onstage as if walking through a hallway. Students who speak illuminate themselves with an electric lantern or candle. Madison, Ashley, Mckenzie, Victoria, and Keeawna sitting in the crowd spread out. One at a time stand up and speak. Spotlight on the one speaking.)

Student 1: Eric Mohat, 17.
Madison: 4,400 is the estimated number of deaths per year among young people.

(stay standing. Look at next person speaking.)

Student 2: Kenneth Weishyhn, 14.
Ashley: 14 percent of high school students have considered suicide.

(Stay standing. Look at next person speaking.)

Student 3: Joey Morales, 12.
Mckenzie: 7 percent of high school students have attempted suicide.

(Stay standing. Look at next person speaking.)

Student 4: Mitchell Wilson, 11.
Victoria: If you looked at a crowd of people would you be able to tell which ones they are?

Student 5: Ashlynn Conner, 10.
Keeawna: By this point I'm sure we're all thinking the same thing. (stay standing)

(Spotlight moves to Trevor center stage.)
Trevor: Something needs to change.

(Everyone makes his or her way backstage/offstage.)
Jade: (Comes out on stage. [right].) Far too many times on Facebook I've seen a picture of a kid who committed suicide as a result of being bullied. It'll say “Like” to end bullying.

(Trevor comes out center stage holding the “Like” poster board.)
Jade: So we “Like” it.

(Keeawna walks out and hits the “Like” poster board then Keeawna and Trevor walk backstage.)
Jade: It takes more than clicking a mouse to stop this growing problem. (Go backstage.)

(After Jade leaves put two stools on stage right. Mckenzie comes on stage right with guitar. Sings 1st verse of “Lovely” by Sarah Haze. Then lightly play as background music.)
Victoria: (Center stage) From 3rd grade through 7th grade I was bullied. I guess hitting puberty before everyone else was a bad thing. I was made fun of for my acne. I had terrible acne, and it covered my face, but I couldn’t understand why people hated me for that.

Every day during school I would hear “Zit-face!” or “Acne freak!”. There were other names, but I don’t feel like bringing those up again. One time in 6th grade our class was put into groups, and we were allowed to come up with names for them. A group of boys decided on a name. It was D.A.T.Z. spelled with a z. When they told me what it meant I acted as if I didn’t care. It stood for “Defense Against Tori’s Zits.” Creative, huh? The years continued. I had rocks thrown at me on my way home from school. In Junior High the only reason people sat next to me during lunch was because we had assigned seating. I had been thinking and figured the only way I would get away from it all was by taking my own life. If I disappeared forever no one would notice, and I would be out of misery. The thought of being out of misery was surreal. I didn’t know how or when I was going to do it, but I knew it would be soon. Shortly after that my parents told me that we were moving. I can still feel the look on my face. Never in my life have I been more excited than that day. Happiness and thankfulness swept over me, and I started to cry.

So we moved to Newark, Ohio. Life was amazing. I’m still trying to get out of that pain from those six years, but I don’t think it’ll ever leave. Maybe that’s a good thing. I realized that I am here for a reason. I am worth something.

(Victoria sings chorus and 2nd verse of “Lovely”)

Cruz’s Monologue:

When I was little, me and my Grandma would always Mexican dance. Dancing was everything to me when I was a little kid, until school started. Kids always made fun of how I dressed, and made fun of me because of the music I listened to. People would mock me, but then I didn’t know it was bullying. Until fourth grade. Things started getting worse. People would ignore me and not even talk to me. People would call me weird. Because of my race, people would always say, “Look at the border jumper,” or, “go back where you came from.” From Kindergarten until my Sophomore year, I was bullied. During that time, my anger would be out of control. I would stop talking to my family. I’d always stay by myself. I wouldn’t go around anybody, I didn’t want to do anything at all. My confidence was shattered, I had trouble talking to people until my mom told me that people are going to talk and say things that are going to hurt you. Don’t let it bother you, because they only pick on you because they are jealous. They want to be you, so now starting in my junior year, people would start talking to me. My confidence has gone up. I’m still a little shy. Things are way better than they were. I have friends I can hang out with, people I can talk to. My life is good now. My advice to anybody that who is being bullied: Even though it hurts and it is scary, you need to stand up for yourself. Fight through it, stand up against bullying and help other people. Stop bullying in school.
Bully Monologue

Riding the bus as a Junior sucks, but, ya know, whatever. I got a couple friends on there, and we have some fun making fun of kids. We aren't really being douche bags or anything. We're just being funny. Oh, like, these girls sit in front of us, and they're pretty cool, but one day the seat made this squeak sound, so of course--fart jokes. It's so funny to tease girls about farts. They turned so red. Maybe they did really fart. And sometimes we push each other around, just goofing off, and our bus driver is like, (in old man voice) "If I see any more violence in this world, I'm gonna kill someone!" It's awesome. That bus driver is so old. I'm surprised he can still drive. And there's this one Freshmen kid with a big head, I mean, this dude's head is fricken huge, so we just couldn't resist putting in a few jabs about it. Like, "Whoa, Rich, don't fall over, you're looking a little top heavy there!" or that one from that movie, (in a Scottish accent) "That kid's gotta huge head. Aww, now he's gonna go cry on 'is pillow. Good lord that's gotta be a HUGE pillow!" (Laughs) Stuff like that, ya know. We weren't really being mean. Right? I mean, that Richard kid knew we didn't hate him, right? Because, one day he wasn't on the bus. And this girl, she told us why. I guess he was riding home from the store with his mom and he said he had a bad headache. So, when they got home his mom told him to go lay down for a while, but then she heard him scream, and when she went to see what was wrong... he was dead. I guess he had a brain aneurism. Maybe that's why his head was so big. That kid was on the bus just a couple of days ago. Kids aren't supposed to just die of things unexpectedly like that. I mean, they never even knew anything was wrong with him. We wouldn't have teased him about it if we would have known. I mean, we're not like bad people or anything. (pause) I wish I would have said some nice stuff to him, too. Now. But it's too late.

(Finish "Lovely")

(Scene by Michaela and Erica)
Students: (overlapping)
1: You are a loser, that’s why you have no friends.
2: No one loves you. I bet your parents don’t even love you!
3: I’m surprised you can even show your face around school, I’d be ashamed if I were you.
4: You’re nothing.
5: You’re a low life. You can’t do anything right.

Students: (one at a time)
1: Look, it would just be better for everyone if you just leave and never come back.
2: We all hate you, there’s no sense even trying.
3: So do us all a favor and leave.

Students: (all at once, loudly and then fading)
1: It would be better for everyone.
2: Just leave!
3: There’s no sense in trying.
4: You’re nothing.
5: No one loves you.

E: (Walks away)
M: Wait! Dude, don’t listen to them, they are wrong. I will always be here for you.
E: Ya, I know. Thanks, but I should be getting home. I have some stuff to do.
M: OK. Can I come over later?
E: Yeah, I guess. I’ll see you later.
M: Okay. (Exits. Lights change to spot on Erica)
E: It all happened when I started the 8th grade. I was new to the school. I had no friends
and I was very quiet. I would walk down the halls, and I would hear people say, “Oh,
there’s that new weird kid.” At first I just ignored them, but as time went by, it got
worse. People started picking on me and calling me names. I thought, “What did I do to
deserve this treatment? Why do people have to be so cruel and cold-hearted?” By the
middle of 8th grade, I had enough and I stood up to the people, but they decided to beat
me up. And at that point I knew it wasn’t going to stop, so I felt like there was no point
in living anymore, so I tried to hang myself, but right as I was tying the rope around my
neck, my older brother walked in the room and stopped me. Honestly, if I could go back
in time and change my life, I wouldn’t have moved because I had friends back home and
everyone knew everyone and no one was mean to anyone. Then I entered high school,
and things started to change a lot, now I have friends, and I can actually talk to people
now. Now that I look back, I regret ever trying to kill myself. If my brother wouldn’t
have been there for me that night, I wouldn’t have met these amazing people who are in
my life now. Now every time I feel depressed or angry, I know I can talk to my brother
and my best friend. I learned from my experience that suicide is not the answer to
everything. It’s actually the answer to nothing.
M: (Reenters) I’m so glad you’re still here. (they hug. Lights go down. Students and
others reenter. Lights come back up).
1: Life is worth living.
2: You are worth something.
3: You are loved.
4: Talk to someone if you feel this way.
5: Get help for a friend or peer if they feel this way.
6: Stand up for people who are being bullied.
7: Tell someone.
8: Help is available.
9: (Present information about suicide prevention)

Billy Joel song interlude

Judgment by Clothes
Jock: People who wear skinny jeans and band tees are freaks. They all are so depressed and sad and stuff. They try so hard to be different and they think they're so individual.

Emo: I'm actually not depressed. I'm a happy person. I wear these clothes because I like them. These bands are my favorites, and I like to advertise it. But, people who wear the opposite gender's clothes... You can't even tell what they are. They are the freaks. I mean, dress your gender. For real.

Andro: It's a comfortable way to dress. Really, it shouldn't even matter what gender you are. You shouldn't discriminate. But, people who try so hard to be so not mainstream... What freaks. Seriously, your clothing is not “uncool” and it is “mainstream, and you just look ridiculous.

Hip: I don’t try to be uncool, and not mainstream. I actually really just like this style. It makes me happy. But people who wear the baggy clothes, and the snapbacks, let me tell you... Freaks. #YOLO. Whatever. Wear clothes that fit.

Snap: These clothes are so comfortable, and snap backs work well because they adjust to your head size. And just because I dress this way doesn’t mean I’m one of those dumb, reckless kids. But people who wear drug rugs and beanies... Those freaks need to lay off the pot. Seriously. They make it so obvious that they do drugs. I mean drug rugs. Come on now.

Ston: I’ve never done drugs. Of any kind. I’ve never even drank. Drug rugs are comfy, and warm. And beanies are just low maintenance. But people who wear their cowboy boots and hats and levis are total freaks. Seriously, what hicks. Especially in the city. We don’t need hillbillies.

Coun: I’m not a hick, or a hillbilly. I’m into the same interests as people who dress like they’re from the city. I’m more comfortable in country clothes. But people who dress all preppy and in brand name clothes... Freaks, for sure. And they’re all so mean. And they think they’re so cool, and popular, and think everyone loves them.

Jock: I promise I’m not a mean person, and I don’t think I’m popular. I know some people who don’t like me. I don’t know exact reasons. Some of them probably don’t like me because they stereotype based off of the way I dress, when really... That’s not how it should be.

Coun: You shouldn’t judge based on appearance.

Ston: You should base your opinion on their character.

Snap: People are not defined by clothing styles. At least, they shouldn’t be.

Hip: You should really get to know who people are, and what actually makes them them.

Andro: You never know when you might miss out on a great friend.

Emo: Just because they dress a certain way.

Why I Wear the Hijab Interview by Karsyn Smith

Ainee: So, you’ve heard that in my religion I have the choice to wear my hijab or not, and you’re wondering what made me decide to keep wearing it now that I’m older? I well-I had just finished completing my evening prayer. I walked out of my Aunt’s bedroom. Entering the living room, my mother, my aunt, and my uncle are silently watching the television. The floor
creaks and my mother turns her head towards me and she squints. I know exactly why she is looking; it is because I am still wearing my Hijab from prayer. Her face relaxes and she directly speaks to my aunt and uncle with her eyes still on me.

“Doesn’t she look beautiful in her Hijab?”

Right away, my aunt and uncle start agreeing with her, and she raises her eyebrow at me thinking that she’s made a point. I scoff, rolling my eyes at them. I’m furious, because she wants so badly that I start wearing it, instead of “parading around the house with my hair in my eyes”.

Shutting door behind me, I walk down the pavement to my mother’s silver van. I pull the door close with as much force as possible. Once it is quiet, I stare at the red neon numbers on the digital clock. Why do women have to cover up and men don’t?

I reach for the mirror above my head, and the small florescent light attached to it lights up the car just enough so I can see my reflection. I stare at myself, and as much as I hate to admit it, I don’t look so bad in my Hijab.

I must have been out there a while, because my mom was yelling as loud as she possibly can, calling me inside. Turning from my reflection, I quickly close the mirror and jet out of the car before she decides to come get me herself. She tells me to go and sit in the living room, but instead I take a sharp left turn into the bathroom.

Locking the door behind me, I stand over the sink, once again looking at my reflection. I concentrate on the way my Hijab is placed in a delicate manner, the safety pin is tightly secured under my chin and one side of the cloth is wrapped around my head and the other is around my neck, framing my face in all the right places. I felt confident, I felt like I was at home in my own skin for once. Reaching my hand into my pocket, I take my phone and run my fingers over the buttons, texting my best friend. I tell her that I am thinking about wearing a Hijab, and that I’m scared about it. My heart is beating fast. Finally, after what seems like 1 hour, my phone vibrates and I read what she says. She’s written that she is proud of me, and she’ll stick through it no matter what. I smile and I decide that I’m going to start wearing a Hijab.

The Qur’an teaches us that men and women are equal, that individuals should not be judged according to gender, beauty, wealth, or privilege. The only thing that makes one person better than another is her or his character. Armed with this, I planned to wear my Hijab on the first day of summer school, but I couldn’t wait. The next evening, I laid out my Hijab and pins the night before so I didn’t have the excuse of “forgetting” to wear it.

Once I arrived at school I became more nervous because there were people looking at me in the parking lot already! With each step I got closer and closer to the building and strangely more and more calm. I breathed a sigh of relief that I hadn’t ran into anyone in the halls though. Each person that passed me by just treated me like they always did on a normal day. A person even commented that my Hijab was beautiful and at least two asked me if it was a special occasion. At the end of the day I couldn’t believe that I had worked myself up about nothing all of these years. No one treated me differently, almost everyone smiled at me.

I am beautiful Duo-logue  Lexee and McKenzie

Lexee:  Summer. The time for frolicking and traveling and doing things you may someday regret...When you see relatives you’ve seen a total of four times in your entire life and you get that slightly awkward moment (scene) or when you stay up so late you look like the walking dead and practically scare your mom to death at the very sight of you (scene). Summer isn’t the usual time for thinking, but this summer, I had an epiphany.
McKenzie: When I think of life, there are a few words that come to mind. First of all, life is unfair. We all have had that moment of disappointment when we wanted to do something like go to a party or go out with your friends. “Mom! Mom! Can I go?” “NO!” or “Mom! Dad! This person’s birthday party is tonight! Can’t I go??” “Tonight? NO!” Plus, I’m sure we’ve all heard the phrase “Life isn’t fair.” Right? Anyway. The second word that comes to mind when I think about life is that life is precious. You really shouldn’t waste it doing stupid stuff. Well, I guess you could say YOLO, but let’s face it. That “motto” that your kids keep on talking about? Is just an excuse to go out and do things that you really shouldn’t be doing. The third word that comes to mind when I think about life, is that life is…Tough. There are going to be things in life that will make you or break you. And honestly, it’s your choice to let life knock you down, or to be strong enough to pick yourself back up again. Personally, I had to learn this the hard way.

Lexee: Society is like water. You are constantly surrounded by it and you need it to survive (sputter) but it can also be potentially dangerous. When I was but a child, it has long been told that I once had...confidence (shhh). As I do not remember much of my preschool life, these are simply rumors. As I grew up I became more and more aware of society. Because of this, it has been my basis of self worth and confidence. In return...society has not been very forgiving.

McKenzie: In elementary school, I was quiet, shy, and I didn’t have many friends. The friends that I had were great. Then one of them moved away. And then another one moved away. So, really, that left me with pretty much one friend. That one friend I had? She went behind my back and spread rumors about me. After a while, I started to believe the words that she said. I mean, can’t your best friend only tell the truth? That’s what I had thought. I believed I was fat. I believed that I was ugly, and yes, I believed I was the four eyed freak. Looking back on that now? I realize that that was only the beginning.

Lexee: My size and shape, are NOT what society deems “perfect”. I am not what the general public considers desirable. I have brown hair, curves and I’m short, in opposition to being blonde and stick-like and tall. It is because of these perceptions of beauty and perfection that I have allowed myself to be ashamed and insecure of who I am. Society has eroded me into being something I never dreamed of becoming...it has made me doubt all that I am and all that I could be. It has taught me only the “perfect” go far, and I have been brutally shaped into believing it’s true.

McKenzie: Growing up as a teen, and seeing all of the beautiful teens in the magazines, who were thin, made me realize that my body isn’t... perfect. It hard. I get down on myself, and I think about how it could be different every single day. But let’s face it. No one’s perfect. We all have flaws, physically and emotionally. We all want to have that fairytale ending where we prance off into the sunset with our true love. Some of the people in the audience already have found that person. And have already pranced off into the sunset. What I want, is to find that one person who accepts me for who I am inside, and look past my flaws and will love me for who I am on the inside, and will find me beautiful. My point is,

Both: I’m not perfect.

Lexee: My epiphany this summer, has taught me otherwise.

McKenzie: I have my flaws. But the tough things in life have made me stronger, and also made me who I am today.
Lexee: God created us all to be unique, if He WANTED us all to be the same, He would have MADE us the same.

McKenzie: So if I were to give advice to someone who is really struggling, I would say: Remember this bible verse. Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” When I think of this verse, it reminds me that I am beautiful in GOD’s eyes, and he loves me just the way I am, no matter how I see myself.

Lexee: Why should I be ashamed of one of God’s greatest creations?

McKenzie: Because when I know that God thinks I am beautiful, I feel beautiful.

Lexee: Who am I..who is society to grade or judge His work? Exactly, no one. Society may think of me what they like, but they have no more right to judge me than I do myself.

McKenzie: So don’t make my mistake and believe the hateful words that others say about you. Know that you are beautiful, and love yourself for who you are. Because you are beautiful. Flaws and all.

Lexee: I shape me, not them, or you, or you, ...So I’m not what they deem beautiful, but I am what I deem beautiful—and you know- what more do I need than that?

Unpretty/I Feel Pretty Song  Mariah Boucher and Lindsay Darhling

Transition:

ADHD script

It wasn't me it was ADHD.

(people in background pantomime starting at ***)

When I found out I had ADHD, I took the diagnosis a little differently. I looked at it like the most epic excise ever. If I knew a symptom of ADHD was having a tough time finishing assignments, then I thought it was ok to leave things incomplete: Sorry, guys! It's my ADHD! If I talked out of turn: Relax, bro, according to experts I'm suppose to blurt stuff out.

Basically, ADHD became the ultimate hall pass for doing whatever I wanted:

***Didn't flush the toilet, ADHD.

Didn't finish homework, ADHD.

Didn't eat my vegetables, ADHD.

Threw a water balloon at a ferrari, ADHD. (done pantomiming)

The good thing about getting diagnosed was learning why I struggled so much with homework and paying attention in school. I also learned things I could do to make that stuff easier.

Foot tapping for health and wellness

(as the scene progresses, more people enter the stage. By the end, everyone is tapping their feet, possibly in a pattern. )

Personally, I am a foot tapper. It gives me something to do, feels soothing, and gives my right ankle and calf a fuller and more defined muscle structure.

Like most things I find awesome, country music, yo mamma jokes, being barefoot.... Not every e agrees. Sometimes we can become oblivious to how fast and noisy our RFT (rapid food tapping) gets. At school, students and teachers can become so awestruck with how fast we tap our foot that we become "a distraction" and are told to stop. I don't advocate tapping your foot at such a rapid pace that you get in trouble. You might have to learn to be more subtle, like circle your thumbs, wiggle your toes, bob your head.
And if you are going to tap your foot, be productive about it. Build muscle, improve coordination, and get creative.

Disguises
-possibly cut this first paragraph-
Most of the time when you are out in public or around other people, you can't be super hyper and do whatever you like. This is common sense, because if I did whatever I liked, I'd wear sweatpants and pee outside all day. I'm sure some people may see noting wrong with this, but according to the local police, peering in public is illegal. Fair or unfair, I don't want to go to jail for using my lawn as a restroom.

(pantomime background scenes)
There are tons of things I would probably do if I didn't know they were socially unacceptable. Unfortunately, the more you go out the more you're going to have to patrol your behavior. After a while, it's not that fun to constantly be asking yourself, "should I do this? Should I do that?" as a much more enjoyable way to make sure you don't create a ruckus is to imagine you are a secret agent living among non-special brains. When you're out on a mission, like a date or something, try to stay incognito, take the intensity down a few decibels. Once you find someone who seems like they'd be pretty cool with a truer you, drop hints as to what you're like with the volume at normal (for you). Then, once you feel like they're cool with you, you can drop the disguises. "here's how I really am! Hahahahaha!"

Transition:  (Possibly play a clip of “Born This Way”)

“Coming-out scene”
Sister1: You know, someday you will have to get over it. I’m still the same person and I’ll always be the same person.

Sister2: It’s weird, I’ll never understand. You’ll never be the same in my eyes!

Sister1:  Why me? You know a lot of other people like me. Why is it so hard for you to accept who I am!?

Sister2: Because you’re my sister! You’re not supposed to be different!

Sister1:  That should help you to understand better, I’m the same person as before.

Sister2: But it doesn’t. It makes it harder to understand.

Sister1:  Well, I’m not going to change just because you don’t understand who I am and how I think. Someday you’re going to get it and let go of your personal prejudice. I’m going to live my life and be who I am. You can love me the same, or you can suck it up because I’m not changing because you don’t or won’t even try to understand. I would love NOTHING more than for you to be involved in every aspect of my life, but you’re going to have to buck up and love me either way. You’re my best friend and you mean so much to me. And, you don’t know how you make me feel because you don’t support my decisions. I’ll love you no matter what. You can take me as the person I am or that I
will become or you can simply leave me in the dust. but, I’ll ALWAYS be there supporting your decisions in life.

The Opry Show
By Lindsay Dahrning
O: Welcome to the Opry Winfray show(she enters from the audience right door running shaking hands with audience) I would like to thank you all for coming to my show! (music is playing) we have a very special show planned for you all today we are focusing on the different views and understanding homosexuality First we have Beth and Beth! Come on in Beth everyone welcome Beth! (Beth enters from stage right, come to O gives her a hug and sit in chair across from O) Welcome Beth, it’s a pleasure to have you on the show! So, Beth from what I understand you don't agree with people being homosexual! Beth: I don't have a problem with them, it’s just their choice. I have a really good friend who is gay and an Aunt who is a lesbian. I still love them. I just don’t like or approve the choice they made in being with someone who is the same gender.
O: So you still have them in your lives and accept them, you just don't agree with their choices. Does your family still keep contact with your aunt?
B: Yes. They really don’t accept her as part of the family though, and treat her differently and don't always include her in everything! I don't treat her any differently though. I mean she my aunt. I will always love her no matter what. People should not hate someone or treat them differently just for their lifestyle choices. They are still the same person inside.
O: Well, thank you for that Beth! For being on the show and talking with us.
B: Thanks for having me on and sharing my view points! ( she walks off stage left)
O: Our next guest was selected by my crew from the audience to give us the inside perspective on growing up gay~ Her name is Karsyn. My crew noticed her waiting in line for the show this morning, and thought she’d be the perfect subject to interview for today's show. So let's give a warm welcome to Karsyn!
(Karsyn enters from stage left, hugs Oprah awkwardly and sits)
O: So Karsyn how are you
C:......
O: How was school growing up was it a struggle?
C:....
O: hows your relationship with your family?
O:......
O: Do you have a partner or someone who you can talk to about these things?
C:...(say she is straight and is not a lesbian)
O: Ok we are going to go to a commercial break we will be right back?..
(Karsyn leaves the stage very awkwardly,)
(while the commercial break is happening sham pow person comes down stage. Up stage O is silently yelling at all the crew people)
SP: do you spill extensive amounts of water? the you need sham pow....... (Oprah sits back down and looks calm again)
O: And we back(acts like nothing happened) now for our main guests for the show Jasmine and Aurea are 2 high school students who are both lesbian and dating! So, let's bring them out!
O: Welcome! Welcome! It is a pleasure to have you both on the show!
J and A: It’s a pleasure to be here
O: Let's get down to it then! When did each of you first realize you were gay?
J:....
A:....
\
O: How did your families react when you came out to them?
J:...
A:....
O: What kind of discrimination do you deal with, and how do you handle that?
A:....
J:....
O: If you were to address people who don’t believe gay marriage is right, what would you tell them?
A:........
J:........
O: How did you two meet?
J:.....
A:........
O: Well, that's wonderful. I wish you both the best. Thank you so very much for being on the show with us today and sharing your story! And, audience for being on the show with us today you all get a mini fridge! Mini fridges for everyone!! I'm your host Opry Winfray. Thank for tuning in with us today! Good Night.

Cast
Opry: Lindsay
Beth: Lexie
Karsyn
Aurea
Jasmine
Sham Pow person;
Cue card holder: Mel
Mic holder
Make-up person
someone holding a clipboard looking in charge: Mariah

Transition: What they think (Mental illness)
Polaroid style card: What the public thinks of people with mental illness (a group of people being nut-house style “crazy”)
Card: What nurses think of people with mental illness (Nurse: Time for your meds. Patient: I don’t need meds! There’s nothing wrong with me!)
Card: What the media thinks of people with mental illness (Person in a straight jacket laughing creepily).
What it’s really like to be a person with mental illness:

Lights dim on stage. Four or five patients are visible. Two of them interact as Claudia and the child she mentions in the monologue. Claudia is DRC in spotlight.

Being the Patient
By: Claudia V. Saucedo
You often hear about people in mental hospitals…but do you really know why they’re there? Most wouldn’t have the slightest idea, or would imagine something horrible. I once thought that way, it was the way my mother raised me to think, with her own fear of crazed people and a bad experience with one, when she was young. She and I never imagined, I would spend time in an asylum.

I remember that day, it is burned into me much like U.V. rays, there is still that faint metal scent in the back of my mind. I was a patient in a mental hospital, kept in isolation the first night I arrived, not strapped to a bed like you would imagine in most cases. Now you’re probably wondering why I was there, and if you’ve been there and gotten out without having actual mental issues, then you can imagine what the cause of my being there was. Suicide attempt is not taken lightly by the law.

If you’re wondering what I saw… well, there was a girl suffering from hallucinations, a lot younger than I, a lot of people with simple problems with simple problems that made them snap. I then began to realize that the patients there are no different from the people out here, the only difference is the way people treat them. Every now and then, you read and hear about people who ended up there, yet very few people ever wondered why they did what they did. When you end up in the same situation as another person, your view of things changes, maybe not as drastically as mine, but, something inside will always feel… Different.

Anxiety and Cutting
To those of you who know me, I’m an optimistic person. I really do believe in happy endings. To those of you who know me better, you know its not always sunshine and butterflies and frolicking through flowers. Anxiety disorders have affected me for a very long time. I turned to cutting as a way to cope, starting in 6th or 7th grade. People assume if somebody cuts, they’re always sad or upset and that cutting is an ineffective way to cope and that people who do are dumb and immature... Things like that.

If you’ve never cut... You don’t understand. You might try to, and you might pretend to, but you can’t. If you have cut, you understand what I’m about to say. There’s a period of time right afterwards where a sort of numbness takes over. Every emotion and thought that cause the anxiety and feelings before the cutting all sort of disappeared there for awhile. Then it comes back. It always comes back. Over the years, I maintained my optimistic and happy personality, while my anxiety worsened.

In 8th grade, I transferred schools for the first time. Anxiety. Freshman year, my Grandma Rachel died from lung cancer. Anxiety. Sophomore year, I got my heart broken for the first time. Anxiety. Junior year, I came out to my family, and didn’t get the best response. Anxiety.

It always feels like just when things are okay, something bad happens. It feels like a never-ending cycle, because it is. But that’s life. It took me a long time to realize this, but stuff happens. If it didn’t you wouldn’t appreciate the good things. I have a lot of positive things and people in my life. Sometimes the good outweigh the bad, sometimes not. My struggle with anxiety has taught me realism mixed with
optimism, and to appreciate things and people I love. Struggling, and watching those I love struggle, taught me to never take any good thing or good person for granted. You never know what they may be going through, or how hard they’re trying to be happy, just like you.
**Depression Scene**

Patient #1 and Patient #2. Patient #1 is explaining their situation and illness while Patient #2 inquires about their presence and illness. Setting is obviously a facility of some sort be it long or short term.

**Patient #2:** So, why are you here?

**Patient #1:** Major depressive disorder.

**Patient #2:** So you’re sad? A lot of people get sad and they don’t end up in places like this.

**Patient #1:** What I go through is a bit…different.

**Patient #2:** How so?

**Patient #1:** A lot of people get sad, but it’s usually because something really bad happened. And they have some control over it. I don’t. Some days I’m depressed for no reason and I don’t know why and I can’t do anything about it.

**Patient #2:** So you get sad for no reason. Still doesn’t seem like a big deal.

**Patient #1:** It’s a lot more than that. When the depression sets in it can cause physical problems I can’t control. I feel really lethargic. Sometimes I even get full body aches and pains. I can’t seem to motivate myself to do anything, no matter how much I might tell myself I want to. It keeps me from being able to get things done. Sometimes even responsibilities that I really need to get done. Even simple things like getting up to prepare a meal for myself can suddenly feel like mission impossible.

**Patient #2:** All that just from being depressed?

**Patient #1:** Yes. And most people don’t understand. They think I’m lazy or just don’t care. It usually makes people angry towards me or avoid me altogether, which just makes me feel worse because I always feel like there’s no one there for me. No one to help me.

**Patient #2:** Aren’t people like that supposed to be violent or something? It seems like there’s always something in the news about depressed people killing other people.

**Patient #1:** No. The complete opposite actually. Usually I stay away from people and I feel exhausted all the time. I don’t want to hurt people.

**Patient #2:** You feel alone, but you stay away from people. How does that make any sense?

**Patient #1:** I feel alone because I don’t feel like anyone will understand what I’m going through. People think it’s as easy as just trying harder. They don’t understand that’s like telling an amputee to try harder at growing back a limb. There are things like therapy and medicine that can help make things easier, just like an amputee can get a prosthetic, but in the end it’s still harder to deal with for me than someone who doesn’t have this problem.

**Patient #2:** So why does that make you avoid people?

**Patient #1:** Because it’s easier to be alone, than to have people who don’t understand reprimand you and criticize you and make you feel like they don’t care. Assuming people don’t care is always easier than actually dealing with it front and center.

**Patient #2:** So…depression is a pretty serious thing then? I always thought it was just like being sad.

**Patient #1:** No, it’s something that I struggle greatly with like most people with mental illnesses. Mental illnesses are usually genetic and caused by an imbalance of chemicals. Some mental illnesses are even caused actual deformities in a person’s brain.
Patient #2: So it’s a problem you’re born with? So in other words you’re always going to have this problem? Like, you can’t do anything about it? Doesn’t that mean you wouldn’t be able to have a job or anything like that?

Patient #1: No. It just means I struggle a bit more than others and sometimes I have to rely on things other than myself for help, like therapy so I have someone to talk to. Many people who suffer from different mental illnesses go on to do great things. We have just as much potential as anyone else…

Transition?

Ashley: Imagine a lady you’ve never met picking you up at school and tells you you’re not going home. The six to eight years in foster care changed my life. I went into foster care after I cracked my head open in second grade. At first I was confused with what was going on, I was in school watching a video on safety. I was seven years old and wondering whom this person, who was taking me out. After two hours of waiting they sent my little brother to one home and me to another just outside of the heights. I spent two months in the first house then got transferred to my third house. This house already had three children of their own. I was at this house for about three years. While at this house I would have visits with my little brother and my biological mother, Karen. I also had counseling visits to get rid of my anger problem and talk about my sadness. While at the visits with Karen, I would ask when we were going home and she said soon. After three years with my foster family, I had a meeting with my counselor and foster mom. My counselor talked to my foster mom first while I sat in the lobby, and then they brought me into the room saying they had news for me. At first I thought it was something big like my mother had actually gotten herself together and I get to go home, but I was nowhere near being close. My counselor was sitting on a couch opposite of my foster mother and me. My foster mom sat next to me holding my hand and telling me over and over to find a way to stay strong and that I’m a smart girl. After five minutes of waiting they finally told me that I won’t be going back home because my mother terminated her right for my older sister, my younger brother and me. We all had one last visit with Karen, then it was done. Try telling a seven-year-old girl who hoping that she was going home that she was wrong. That she’s never going home again. A week after the news, I was interview by Q2’s A Waiting Child. The listening agent was going through all the families profiles, but only had an eye on one family. They had no kids but they did have four cats. After weeks of waiting, I met the family at McDonald's for dinner to see what they were like. (Details on the meeting)

That was the first of a series of visits. After a month of visits with the new family, I was going to move in with them. I was getting a family to call my own! I was going to move in that Friday after school. On Friday, February 9th 2007 I moved in and nine months later I was adopted into the Campbell family. November 10th 2007 I was in the St. Vincent ceremony building with my new families and my biological sister to support me after two hours of the ceremony I finally became a
Campbell, finally apart of a family that loved me and wanted me. After all my years of struggle with staying strong, I finally found not only love and happiness but also my strengths. (Tell about hot fudge sundae tradition). (exit)

Madison: That place was like heaven. The mountains so close you could touch them. It was just perfect. All my friends and family were there for me, and I was always around people I loved. It was a small town. Everyone knew everyone else, and watched out for each other. You could let your kids walk around town and not worry that much. It was my last year living there before I moved to Montana. Me and my friend were hanging out and one of her guy friends started hanging out with us. I didn’t really know him. One day I stayed home from school. That’s when my heaven shattered into my hell. I just got out of the shower and had my music loud. He walked into my room and I was startled. He grabbed me and threw me on my bed. That day my life changed. I held that secret in for over a year. It came out and everyone was really supportive and not judging on what happened. It’s better to tell than hold that burden in. Now Montana is my new heaven.
Mariah’s Monologue:
You know, I’m a pretty happy person on the outside. I love people and I love helping them overcome every single obstacle they have in their daily lives. All in all, I’m a happy, giggly, out-going girl and of course, I have NO personal problems. Ok so that not exactly true, right? Like, ok, I get angry sometimes. But, not like everyone else. I get REALLY angry, over the stupidest crap! Like, when you’re sitting in class and for some ODD reason the teacher decided to be nice and just let us watch a movie. I’m sitting there minding my own business and the obnoxious kids who think they are your friends HAVE to sit by you. This already ticks me off! So, they scoot their LOUD desks RIGHT next to me and decide they are going to talk to each other through me. It’s like REALLY?! DO you absolutely have to do that right NOW. They’re talking, the person behind me is snoring, The teacher is threatening to turn it off and give us home work and they don’t have the freaking decency to shut UP! I start breathing heavily my blood starts to boil then BAM! I’m mad. Now, maybe I have some repressed feelings about my parents, or my sister, or even my friends. Maybe I’m mad at myself for being different. All I know is that I’m angry and I was always angry up until my sophomore year. I joined theatre and I learned to control my anger by channeling it into this great energy. Into being a great actress! Into being on this stage as we speak. Theatre, acting, it theoretically saved my life, now, hopefully, it is my entire future.

I am me.
I am not so bothered that my feet are long.
It’s not so bad that my nose is a tower.
It doesn’t kill me that my hair likes to frizz.
Who cares if my midsection is a bit too fluffy.
Sure, I would love it if my skin were perfectly clear.
Yes, it would be great to twirl in a prom dress, striking everyone with my gorgeousness.
But none of that really matters.
I am me.
I am built of skin and bones and fat and muscle.
But so are you.
I am me, and I have a heart beyond that lump of tissue that beats in my chest.
I am me, and I genuinely care about people.
I am me, and I am proud that I can look beyond surface appearances.
I am me, and I make people laugh,
I love deeply,
and I keep my promises.
I am me, and I have the power to encourage someone and change their day, maybe their life.
I am me.
I am me, and I am flawed, imperfect, sometimes selfish, sometimes silly, not the best at anything.
I am me, and I have a passion to change the world.
And I'm going to.
Concluding Ensemble
Everyone enters the stage wearing solid black with a white mask. Several people carry a poster board with a stereotype largely written on it. Music for “Find Yourself in You” begins to play. One person flips her board to reveal a truth about herself and removes her mask and begins singing the song. She helps another person flip their board and remove their mask. Masks are removed and boards flipped until the whole cast is signing the song and dancing mask and stereotype free.
Appendix C

Posters
I am a speechie.
I am obsessive compulsive.
I am atheist.
I am in love with a girl.
I am a cheerleader.
I am semi-vegetarian.
I am human.
I am me.

ACCEPT Project

November 16 & 17
Billings Skyview Theatre
7:30 pm
$3 Students $5 Adults
or food bank donation

“Like” ACCEPT Project 2012 on Facebook.
I am a falcon

I am shy

I am smart

I am a runner

I am caring

ACCEPT Project

November 16 & 17
Skyview High School Theatre
7:30 pm

ACCEPT Project 2012 on Facebook
I am clumsy.
I am more shy than I act.
I am anxious.
I am lonely.
I am afraid.

I am human and I believe that you should treat others equally.

I am me.

ACCEPT PROJECT

November 16 & 17
@ 7:30pm  Skyview Theatre

ACCEPT Project 2012 on Facebook
I am a ginger.
I am an aspiring comedian.
I am crazy.
I am my own person.
I am a leader.

I am human.
I am me.

ACCEPT Project

November 16 & 17
7:30 pm
Skyview Theatre
$5

ACCEPT Project 2012
on Facebook & YouTube
I am Italian.
I am a draw-er.
I am powerful.
I am happy.
I am sweet.
I am human.
I am me.

ACCEPT Project

November 16 & 17
7:30 pm @ Skyview Theatre
$3 students $5 adults

ACCEPT Project 2012 on Facebook
I am very funny.
I am a positive guy.
I have ADHD.
I love animals.
I am human.
I am me.

{ACCEPT Project}
Launches November 16 & 17
at 7:30 pm
at Billings Skyview Theatre
$3 Students, $5 Adults
or bring a food bank donation

ACCEPT Project 2012 on Facebook
Appendix D

Facebook Page
"If you want to feel that you belong in the world, a family, or any relationship, you must tell your story. But if you want to see into the hearts of other beings, your first task is to hear their stories. Many people are gifted storytellers. Only the empathic are true storyhearners."

~ Martha Beck

This is a great quote so fitting for the ACCEPT Project purpose. Take the time to hear someone's story today.
ACCEPT Project lives! We will be performing new ACCEPT Project pieces during our January 24th Theatre Showcase. Bring your material to auditions on January 7 & 8. Not in Billings? Share ACCEPT Project art and theatre with us here, by email, or through our website or YouTube channel!

October is anti-bullying month for the Billings school district. Use art to show someone acceptance instead of bullying this month. And remember, the ACCEPT Project is anti-bullying all of the time!

School starts back up next week. For Billings Skyview Students, this means that more ACCEPT Project events are on the horizon. We would love for others do join us! Do you have an art or performance idea that would promote acceptance and understanding of others?
Appendix E

Email
Hello everyone,
Our fall production is rapidly stampeding its way into Skyview's Theatre.

Skyview Theatre Presents:
ACCEPT Project
November 16 & 17
7:30 pm
$3 for students (Friday night is free with activities cards)
$5 for adults or 3 non-perishable items for the food bank

This show is different from anything we've done previously. Rather than performing a play for entertainment, we've decided to do Theatre for social change. My students have been learning about documentary theatre, art for a purpose, culture, and social issues. The students have gone through a process which included researching cultures they don't understand, writing personal monologues, creating scenes from real events and experiences, and interviewing others about their experiences. The resulting performance piece is a collection of monologues, scenes and music covering themes of bullying, suicide, ADHD, physical appearances, homosexuality, mental illness, and speaking out. Our hopeful purpose of the piece is that it would not be a singular performance, but rather a launching pad for a movement of acceptance and understanding. Through our Facebook page, we already have groups in Chicago and South Dakota creating pieces of their own. I would be happy to provide ideas for any teachers, students, or clubs who would like to get involved in the project. I'm attaching a form that I have distributed to groups and individuals who are interested in the project as well as two of our posters.

We greatly appreciated your support. Thank you for encouraging your students to come to the show, and for promoting acceptance in the school and community.

Sincerely,
Jackalynn Snow
Appendix F

DVD
Physical DVD enclosed.

Clips can be found at http://acceptproject.weebly.com.
Appendix G

Program
Special Thanks

Thank you to the Billings Gazette, Go Idaho, Simply Family Magazine, The Planet, and Hot for getting the word out for us.

Thank you to Administration, Faculty, and Staff for your support.

Thank you to Spencer Carthage for your technology assistance.

Thank you to Jessica Dumas and Cowley Flock Law Firm for printing our posters.

Thank you to our parents and friends who have

If you would like to stop bullying in your school, sign an anti-bullying pledge. If you or someone you know is at risk of suicide call 1-800-273-TALK and take appropriate action.

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Cast
Directed by Jackalynn Snow

Ensemble
Claude Saucedo, Cote Whittington, Brandon Jackson, Molly Blake, Jennifer Warner, Cherry Laeng, Madisen Aguilar, Claude Saucedo, Leslie Rocker, Danny Beek, Mariah Bouchard, Ashley Campbell, Victoria Cates, Lindsay Dalling, Drini Dossen, Joanne Dossenfield, Erika Fish, Mel Haddie, Michaela Hutchison, Madison Ivory, Kenzie Kiedrowski, Trevor Miller, Zachary Nemmers, McKenzie Pietsch, Kasey Smith, Keanna Studzinski, Ryan Stodack

Scenes
Something Needs to Change
Written and performed by Victoria C. Cates and ensemble.
“Lovely” by Sara Haze performed by McKenzie Pietsch & Victoria C. Cates.
Cruz’s Monologue
Written and performed by Claudia Saucedo.
It Was Just a Joke
Written by Jackalynn Snow. Performed by Ryan Stodack.
Help is Always There
Written by Erika Fish & Mishelle Hutchinson from an anonymous interview. Performed by Erika Fish and ensemble.
“Still Rock and Roll to Me” performed by ensemble.
Judgment by Clothes
Written by Joanne Dossenfield. Performed by ensemble.
Why I Wear the Hijab
Anonymous interview performed by Kasey Smith.
I Am Beautiful
Written and performed by Lesa Bazak & McKenzie Pietsch.
ADHD in HD
“Drains Gone Wild” excerpt from ADHD in HD: Brains Gone Wild used with permission of the author. Copyright © by Josh Jonathan. Clocker FreeSpirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN. Reprinted with all rights reserved.
“It wasn’t me, it was ADHD” performed by Drini Dossenfield.
“Foot tapping for health and wellness” performed by Madison Aguilar.
“Disguised” performed by Dani Wandelast and ensemble.

Scenes and Crew

Ten Minute Intermission
The Laquedua Show
Written by Lindsey Dalling. Performed by Lindsey Dalling, Lesa Bazak, Kasey Smith, Aurora Lang, Joanne Dossenfield and ensemble.

What They Think of Mental Illness
Written by Madisen Aguilar. Performed by ensemble.

Being the Patient
Written and performed by Claudia Saucedo.

Anxiety
Written and performed by Joanne Dossenfield.

More Than Sad

Seeking a Family
Written and performed by Ashley Campbell.

My New Heaven
Written and performed by Madison Ivory.

Private Dressing
Written and performed by Drini Dossenfield.

Anger Management
Written and performed by Mariah Bouchard.

I Am Me
Written by Jackalynn Snow. Performed by McKenzie Pietsch.

Behind the Mask

Crew
Trevor Miller, Dani Wandelast, Madison Aguilar, Spencer Miller, Damon Liddell, Danny Bank, Melanie Hoefling, Cade Kiedrowski, Zach Nemmers
Appendix H

Website
I am... shy... spontaneous... different... I am... human... I am... me.

ACCEPT Project

ACCEPT= Acting/Art Changes, Challenges, & Enlarges Pro-human Truths.

Join us in creating art and performances that increase understanding of others.

Theatre class, both as a student and a teacher, has always impressed me as being a place where people of an odd assortment of backgrounds and social groups come together to form an unlikely, but loving and vibrant community. I have come to question what the world would be like if it took a few lessons from Theatre class. What if people stepped out of their combative blindness and their stereotypes and got to know people for who they actually are? What a beautiful community we could create. Thus was born, the ACCEPT Project.
The ACCEPT Project was launched in 2012 by a group of students at Skyview High School in Billings, Montana. The group set out to create a work of theatre that would stir audiences to celebrate diversity and seek to understand those different from themselves. Furthermore, it was and is the goal of the project to inspire artists around the world to create art for acceptance.

The posters below advertised the ACCEPT Project launch performances. More importantly, they celebrated uniqueness and humanity.
THE ACCEPT PROJECT LAUNCH PERFORMANCES

The premiere ACCEPT Project performance was staged at Skyview High School in November of 2012. The show was made up of compiled works, including personal monologues, monologues and scenes based on true events and interviews with people from many parts of the world, and thematic scenes, music, and movement pieces. Evening shows were performed for the community and student shows were performed during the school day. Following the performances, hundreds of students signed pledges to do their part to end bullying in the schools. An artwork was created out of the signed anti-bullying pledges.
Artwork and Video of some of the things the ACCEPT Project has done thus far:
THE ACCEPT PROJECT

BE A PART OF THE ACCEPT PROJECT

How will you change the world? Contribute to the ACCEPT Project. Create your own art that promotes understanding and acceptance of humans. You can share photos and video clips of your work on our facebook page or send us an email. We would love to post some of your amazing strides toward social change here on our website.
Appendix I

Lesson Plan
That’s Weird

by Jackalynn Snow
Sources: Self, Olivia Gude, Jennifer Combe, Jillian Campana, The ACCEPT Project, Bernard Williams

Student Demographics
- High school Juniors and Seniors 16-19 years of age
- Some physical and learning disabilities
- Christian and Secular; assume more
- White, Native American, assume more
- Low to upper-middle class
- Assume some GLBT
- North American, perhaps more
- Female, male, perhaps more

Summary and Rationale
Students will journal about their own experience, they will write short scripts, they will perform short scenes in Forum Theatre format, they will design a silhouette based on themselves and create an artistic cut-out of the silhouette representation of their uniqueness which will be arranged into a large, collaborative art piece which will be displayed in the school. Students will learn about Olivia Gude, Bernard Williams, and The ACCEPT Project. Students will evaluate the complex concepts of "weirdness" and "otherness." Students will consider and evaluate their own actions, treatment of others, and sense of self. Core curriculum standards of listening, speaking, comparing/contrasting, narrative writing, argumentation, and critical thinking skills will be addressed and practiced. Students will make an artistic statement about their own uniqueness and learn to be sensitive to, appreciate, and celebrate the uniqueness (and even weirdness) of other humans.

(Note: This lesson is designed for High School Language Arts students and can be connected thematically to specific literary pieces. It could also be adjusted to various grade and developmental levels, or various curriculum areas, especially Theatre, Social Studies, Visual Arts, Health, etc…)

Enduring Ideas
Community
Individuality
Acceptance

Learning Targets
I can relate a significant experience through writing and speaking.
I can discuss the concepts of "weirdness," "other-ness," and acceptance.
I can recognize stereotypes and differentiate between flaws and unique qualities.
I can devise and write a short theatrical script.
I can perform improvised and memorized scenes.
I can appraise my own personality and experiences.
I can recognize and appreciate my own unique qualities.
I can discuss symbolism.
I can design and create a symbolic silhouette art piece.
I can collaboratively construct a group art piece.
I can interpret and explain the art works.

**Artmaking Method Taught**
Playwriting, staging skills, acting and improvisation, symbolic design, projection, silhouette cutouts

**Pre-Class Preparation**
Computer, slideshow, cords, projector, remote, speakers, songs/music, examples, rulers, pencils, open space (stage area), black card stock or construction paper, large white roll paper, exacto knives, scissors, cutting pads or surfaces, glue, tape, sticky tack, blue tape, staples.

<table>
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<th>Teacher Activity</th>
<th>Student Activity</th>
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| **Day 1**
Tell a weird story (elevator story). Conclude with, “so that was weird.”
Play weird music.
Model, observe, and facilitate.
Ask, “So, what is ‘weird’?” Ask students to define/explain the word “weird.” Ask them how they know that something is strange or off. Ask if their parents or someone else has ever thought that something normal to them was weird. Facilitate discussion. Discuss how “normal” is determined in our culture and others.

Day 1
Students respond by telling weird stories of their own.
Listen to weird music.
Sketch images related to your weird story.
Free-write details of your weird story—include impressions, feelings, associations, fleeting impressions.
Share portions of sketches/writings with a small group or partner.
Define, explain, and discuss the concept of weird. Share experiences and insights.
Day 2
Journal: List some times that you felt like you didn't belong. Choose one of those experiences and write about it in detail.

Show a monologue from the ACCEPT Project (Victoria, Cruz, or Ryan). Facilitate discussion on how other's perceptions of "weirdness" affected these people.

Show "Judgment by Clothes" video. Facilitate discussion regarding whether we treat people who dress differently or have other differences as "other" than us.

Discuss the concept of "other-ness."
Create a "connotation continuum" on the board placing words with a positive connotation on one side and those with a negative connotation on the other end and neutral in the middle (ex. words: different, other, unique, strange, weird, eclectic, etc...)

Show example script. Explain script-writing techniques.

Day 3
Direct short performance of example script.
Teach students about the form of forum theatre, and perform several examples using the example script.

Divide students into small groups. Have them develop one group member's script into a forum theatre piece.

Days 4-6
Help groups to choose roles (director, actors for specific roles) and facilitate direction and rehearsal of short scripts. A student who did not experience the event should play the role of the central character.
Each group will get a turn to perform their piece with the rest of the students in the class taking turns coming into the scene and changing the outcome one character at a time in Forum Theatre style.

Lead discussion of different outcomes based on character choices. Focus on the implications of weirdness, other-ness, and acceptance.
Assess students based on participation, engagement, and understanding of key concepts.

Day 2
Journal: List some times that you felt like you didn't belong. Choose one of those experiences and write about it in detail.

View monologue performance from YouTube/ACCEPT project. Discuss.
View "Judgment by Clothes." Evaluate and discuss.
Define and explain "otherness."
Place words/terms on the appropriate level of the connotation continuum.

Go back to your journal entry. Answer, how did you feel "other" in that experience?

Re-write your experience of feeling "other" or like you didn't belong as a short theatrical script.

Day 3
Act in short play in Forum Theatre format.
Replace one character at a time within the short play and improvise a different action/reaction for that character. Discuss/reflect upon the different outcomes and the acting experience.

In a small group, share scripts. Choose one group member's script to clarify and edit into a forum theatre piece.

Days 4-6
Choose/assign roles for group members.
Block and rehearse the short play.
Perform the short play for the class.
Volunteer to improvise new choices for individual characters in other groups' plays.
Engage in discussion.
Write a self-evaluation/reflection.
### Day 7

**Journal/Worksheet**: What is weird or “other” about me?  
What is unique about me? What are the most crucial aspects of my personality?  
What do I love about me?  
Play an instrumental jazz song. Have students sketch whatever images come to their minds while the song is playing.  
Have students define “symbol.”  
Share examples of symbols.  
Have students evaluate symbols that may appear in the sketches they drew during the song.  
Hand out worksheet.  
Fill out a worksheet for a familiar literary character. Model the process that the students will go through in discovering a symbol for themselves with the literary character.  
Show the students the example silhouette art piece. Show the slides of silhouette examples, discuss the symbolism that could be inherent in those pieces, and explain the art project and its purpose.  
Assign homework: Students devise a symbol to represent the wonderful, unique, “other” thing about themselves. They should reference today’s journal and worksheet.

### Day 8

Demonstrate projection, drawing, and cutting processes.  
Provide art materials to students.  
Supervise and offer encouragement and suggestions while students create their silhouette.

### Day 9

Facilitate student presentations and the building of the community art piece.  
Give students the form for reflection and self-evaluation.

<table>
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What is unique about me? What are the most crucial aspects of my personality?  
What do I love about me?  
Listen to jazz song and sketch images that come to mind.  
Define and explain “symbol” and “symbolism.”  
Generate examples of symbols.  
Evaluate sketches for symbolism.  
Complete “That’s Weird…” Project Worksheet.  
Contribute to discussion about symbol regarding a literary character.  
View silhouette art. Analyze symbolism. Think about what type of symbol to create.  
At home, devise a symbol to represent the wonderful, unique, “other” thing about self using journal/worksheet.  
Learn art-making skills.  
Create a silhouette of the chosen symbol.  
Present silhouette artwork. Explain why the symbol was chosen and what it represents.  
Build a community art piece to display symbols as a group piece. Hang the artwork. Reflect and self-evaluate. |
Assessment:

**Forum Theatre Script and Performances**
Evaluate students with a rubric based on:
- Participation and engagement
- Writing and script format
- Acting/speaking skills demonstrated
- Collaboration efforts/success
- Understanding of terms and concepts
- Self-evaluation

**Art/Silhouette Project and Presentation**
Evaluate students with a rubric based on:
- Participation and engagement
- Understanding of terms and concepts
- Thoughtful presentation
- Demonstration of art skills/effort
- Self-evaluation

Citations:
Appendix J

Cast Photo