Drama for Teachers:

Course Description

This course uses the techniques of theatre and creative dramatics to teach every subject in the curriculum. My students have presented lessons in English and language arts, history, science, art, music, children’s literature, plays, poetry, improvisation, Shakespeare, storytelling and story building. It provides the means for students from all cultures to come together in mutual respect, understanding and creativity.

The Queens College Department of Education offers seminars in the teaching of English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Languages, Art, Home Economics, Music and Health Education. What happened to Drama? I do not see any opportunities for teachers to incorporate the offerings of the Department of Drama, Theatre and Dance in their curriculum. The New York State Theatre Education Association has been instrumental in the development of the Theatre Arts Standards, Assessments and Curriculum for grades K–12 as well as the certification of teachers in Theatre Education, which became available in February 2004. This course would fill a glaring gap in the education of teachers at Queens College.

Drama for Teachers should be a requirement for all students who want to work in any kind of educational setting. In today’s competitive market, teachers with these skills can inspire students to find creative solutions to every type of problem. Isn’t that kind of “out-of-the-box” thinking the goal of education? One exciting example of education across disciplines at Queens College is the Reacting to the Past program, run by the Freshman Year Initiative. This methodology combines history and theatre in order to transport students back to a specific and volatile time period in which major upheavals were taking place. Students, using the theatrical method of role play to recreate actual figures who lived at that time, become passionately involved through debate and persuasive papers in changing the course of history. My classroom has become Athens in 403 BCE, Massachusetts Bay Colony (1637), New York during the American Revolution, Paris during the French Revolution, and China in 1587.

We can and should invite every student to appreciate what drama and theatre can bring to their lives, especially those who will have the opportunity when they graduate to open doors to their own students. There are enormous resources in the field of Arts in Education available to the teacher who knows how to use them. This course would give students who plan to teach in any subject area a foundation on which they could build throughout their careers.

--Dr. Barbara Waldinger