

Attention: Theatre Educators Interested in Obtaining a Theatre Credential

CTA needs to hear from you.

Please put this on your TO DO list for accomplishment before September 10, 2010

Dear Theatre educator,

We request your professional, persuasive communication skills.

We need you to let CA Teachers Association (CTA) know in an assertive yet professional manner that we want a Theatre credential; one that is not attached to English or any other credential; one that is a Single Subject credential.

We appeal that you contact your local CTA representative to let the rep know that we desire security for our profession by offering college students an opportunity to achieve a Theatre credential.

The approach is to let your CTA rep know that you are a Theatre educator and CTA member. You ask that your rep communicates that we want a Theatre credential as soon as possible to the CTA policy council and CTA Executive board

We request that you keep notes on when you contact your rep, who you talked to, what points you covered and what they said they would do. We need to document our efforts. Please send the above requested information to gai.jones@sbcglobal.net by Sept 15, 2010.

Thank you for this united effort.

Thank you for helping CETA communicate to CTA that theatre teachers in California want a credential for Theatre, which is a core subject.



Ill Prepared to Teach Theatre: English Subject Matter Preparation Programs vs. the Visual and Performing Arts Framework

By Catherine Booth, VP Higher Education

Current California credential law subsumes theatre instruction under the aegis of single subject English. While the literary component of theatre suggests a valid association between the two subjects, the design, technical, and practical aspects of theatre comprise a discrete area of study outside the realm of English literature and language. While assigning an English teacher to teach drama courses often suits the logistical and enrollment needs on an administrative level, the disparity between the curricular standards which the drama course should address, and the preparation of the English teacher to do so, points to a pressing need for a credential in theatre.

As we continue to lobby Sacramento for a theatre credential, I believe it is vital that we examine California

teacher preparation programs in relation to the Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools to discover where we are missing the mark and to spur discussion of what courses should be included in subject matter preparation programs if new legislation passes.

I begin this investigation with the program currently offered at California State University, Los Angeles. While the department information in the university catalog states that the minor is designed for “students interested in expanding their knowledge in using theatre and/or dance as it relates to their performing careers, technical theatre, history/theory, teaching or related fields in the Liberal Arts,” a minor in theatre is not required to satisfy the credential requirements.

The subject matter preparation program in English does require a total of twenty units (five classes) under the category of “Theatre and Drama,” but only two of the courses that satisfy this requirement are taught in the Department of Theatre and Dance. The only theatre course that students *must* take fulfills a general education requirement: Analysis of Drama and Theatre. (From the description in the catalog, TA 152 appears to be an introduction and overview similar to “theatre appreciation” courses offered on most campuses.) Of the additional seven courses offered to satisfy the remaining sixteen units in this category, six are dramatic literature courses, and one is performance studies. Four of the six are taught in the department of English, and *none* of the courses focus on performance or production. Indeed, the only performance related course students may receive credit for is “Introduction to Oral Interpretation” which is offered as a communications elective.

While the single subject English preparation program neither requires nor allows students to receive credit for performance and production courses, the standards which English teachers of drama are required to address clearly assume that teachers will guide students through the process of creating and constructing performances.

Strand number one, Artistic Perception, requires that students utilize the vocabulary of theatre as they “document the production elements of theatrical performances” (Framework 110). While it is entirely possible that a good teacher may guide students to “use the vocabulary of theatre [. . .] to describe theatrical experiences” (83), deciphering the components of production requires insight into theatrical production. Teachers must convey the basic processes involved in production before students can determine whether the production choices were appropriate or effective.

Content strand two, Creative Expression, requires that students “apply processes and skills in acting, directing, designing, and scriptwriting to create formal and informal theatre, film/videos, and electronic media productions and to perform in them (84). Students in the credential program at CSULA may take seminars on play or script writing offered by the department of television and film, but neither course is required. It is conceivable that the only production or performance related training a teacher *may* have to guide students in the process of acting, directing, and designing is an introductory oral interpretation course.

Component strand three, Historical and Cultural Context, asks students to “analyze the role and development of theatre, film/video, and electronic media in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting diversity as it relates to theatre” (85). The theatre appreciation course required by the English preparation program may assist teachers in addressing this standard, and their knowledge in this area may be supplemented with information on performance practices gleaned from dramatic literature courses. The obvious discrepancy, though, is that while dramatic literature courses taught in the English department may address performance, they do not do so to the extent of similar courses in the department of theatre, where the focus is on the continuum of performance practices. This difference in the pedagogical approach to teaching dramatic literature is apparent in the way the English and theatre departments at CSULA structure their dramatic literature courses; the English department divides the literature according to genre: Shakespeare, Dramatic Literature of the English Renaissance, while the theatre department presents the literature as a series: Development of World Theatre I, II, and III.

The fourth strand, Aesthetic Valuing, requires students to “critique and derive meaning from works of theatre, film/video, electronic media, and theatrical artists on the basis of aesthetic qualities” (86). While the theatre appreciation course may again prove handy in developing lessons that address this strand, aesthetic valuing demands insight into the process of creating art. Students cannot make aesthetic judgments devoid of an understanding of artistic processes. Likewise, students desirous of careers in the arts need exposure to production roles and responsibilities in order to build foundational skills. Strand five, Connections, Relationships, and Applications, presupposes that the instructor will provide diverse opportunities to develop practical competencies.

While the five strands are designed to create a rigorous, comprehensive arts education, the overwhelming focus of middle and high school drama programs is and should be performance. Indeed the standards assessment guide states “teachers should provide a variety of opportunities to meet standards while preparing students to perform quality theatrical works.” Further, teachers should create units of study that “develop a depth of knowledge and theatre skills in such areas as acting, design, styles, dramatic literature, directing, promotion, lighting, and costuming” (151). The single subject preparation program in English currently offered at CSULA addresses only one of these eight areas of development (dramatic literature) theatre teachers are expected to teach.



CETA has always supported that theater courses be taught by highly-qualified, credentialed professional educators. Recognizing that the addition of Career Tech Ed to the mix adds another component to the issue, Jack Mitchell, CETA board member and CA Department of Education Representative, offers this personal opinion, encouraging cooperation as we navigate complicated waters.

Framing the VAPA and CTE Theater Question

By Jack Mitchell, CA Department of Education

It is the Best of times; it is the Worst of times; it was an age of wisdom, it was an age of foolishness, it was an epoch of belief, it was an epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of darkness, it was the Spring of hope, it was the Winter of despair, we had everything before us we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going directly the other way...

Arts education, by all research accounts, is the salvation of our “broken” educational system. The Arts have found their way into unprecedented areas of the labor market. Yet, as Arts programs continue to be cut across the state, the disparity between educational preparation and workforce readiness continues to grow. Current educational reform efforts have focused on reversing this trend, on connecting learning to the work place. State and National education leaders are focused on preparing students for college *and* career. No arts discipline is better positioned to meet this educational challenge than Theater Arts.

What does this mean to Theater educators in California and the nation? How does this change the way we think about our contribution to the broader educational framework? We need to refocus our efforts on Strand 5: *Connection, Relationships and Applications*, to be sure that students understand the power of Theater education

to impact not only learning in other academic content areas, but its application to the 21st Century skills desired across industry sectors. It also suggests that we reevaluate our relationship with the professional preparation programs at both the secondary and post-secondary level.

Career Technical Education in Theater, in the Arts, Media, and Entertainment industry sector, focus not only on providing an academically rich theater education but on providing students with the employability skills and career strategies that are critical in our highly competitive industry. This suggests a new, cooperative relationship between traditional theater educators holding a Single Subject English credential, in California, and Career Technical Theater teachers, employed in Theater focused Arts, Media, and Entertainment programs in districts across the state.

Foundations of Cooperation

Where does this cooperation begin? It begins with the common understanding that all students completing Theater education courses will be better prepared for college and career success regardless of their future career paths. It continues with standards aligned curriculum and a shared instructional framework grounded in the *California Visual and Performing Arts Standards and Framework* and the *California Career Technical Education Model Standards* adopted in 2005. Highly qualified teachers in both V and PA and Career Tech Arts, Media, and Entertainment must be fully credentialed with post-secondary training and/or experience specific to Theater course content. And finally, it requires on-going conversation to assure that teachers in both academic and Career Tech Theater understand not only their common goals but their unique roles in improving student success through Theater education.

All students should receive a strong foundational education in Theater in grades pre-K-8. Multiple Subject teacher preparation programs need to provide training in the V and PA standards in Theater and high quality professional development must be available to practicing educators to assure regular standards based Theater instruction during the school day. At the secondary level, direct Theater instruction should be available to *all* students and high quality career preparatory instruction should be available to students who wish to pursue a career in Theater Arts. The traditional V and PA Theater program and the Career Tech Arts, Media, and Entertainment program in Theater work together to fill these needs. Both programs must prepare students for post-secondary educational success. Since many students begin their journey to Theatrical careers in V and PA Theater classes, there must be a seamless transition between programs. Curriculum in both areas must be sequential and based in the appropriate state approved content standards. Theater teachers must have the background, training, and support to prepare students for the next step in their theater and/or academic education.

In these times, best or worst, students who have experienced a high quality Theater education and rigorous career preparation for theatrical careers stand the best chance of going “directly to Heaven...”, whether a B.A. or Broadway, and we must work together to provide that education.

Jack Mitchell, California Department of Education