



Sensory Lesson Plan: Outer Space

Teaching Artists: Teaching Artist 1, Teaching Artist 2

For workshops in schools, we bring 2-4 teaching artists to move the story along, while aids and teachers often help individualize experiences.

Supplies:

- Assorted Fabrics (fleece, tulle, etc.)
- Spray Bottles
- Star Machine (projects stars on the ceiling)
- Finger Lights
- Small fans (ours is also spritz water if needed)
- Light-Up Glow Wand
- Bubbles

Pre-Activity: Introduction (~2 minutes)

- **TA 1** will lead introductions, sharing our names. “My name is space explorer Maddie.”
 - After TAs model, students also share their own names, going around in a circle.
- **TA 1** will introduce our outer space experience, including the agenda for the day!
 - 1st, we will warm up our astronaut bodies and get on our space suits.
 - 2nd, we will build a spaceship with our bodies and blast off into outer space.
 - 3rd, we will explore the solar system, seeing a new planet, space dust, and a meteor shower. We might even see some space bugs.
 - 4th, we will relax underneath the stars in the night sky before returning back down to earth.
 - 5th, we will say goodbye to each other!
- **TA 2** will demonstrate our “yes please/no thank you” model.
 - TA 2 will ask: “Maddie, would you like to feel this fabric?” TA 1 will respond “yes please” or “no thank you”. This is done in both ASL and spoken English. Whenever we introduce a new object or experience, a teaching artist will always ask for a child’s consent before we play!

Teachers and aids sometimes assist here and some students also use devices to communicate!

Agendas are helpful for students with schedule anxiety, allowing them to see where we are in our overall progress. We can then refer to the agenda along the way. It’s great if this can also be posted visually somewhere in the classroom.

“Yes Please/No Thank You” is all about giving the child agency. The right to egress is just as important as giving a child the space to participate fully.

Warm-Up: Astronaut Training (~5 minutes)

- **TA 1** will lead the class in astronaut warm-ups, stretching our bodies together.
- **TA 2** will then lead putting on our space suits, miming each action step by step.
 - Pants, shirt, tuck in shirt, boots, gloves, helmet.
 - First we’ll go normal speed, then super fast, then slow motion.
- **TA 1** leads walking/moving in our space suits, modeling what it might look like.
 - What is it like to move when it feels like it’s super heavy?
 - What about when there’s no weight?
- **TA 2** leads our team as we blast off into space.
 - Encourage students to sit down and buckle in.
 - Lead a count-off from 10, 9, 8...

For the entire warm-up section, if a child has mobility needs, we will adapt as necessary. For example, with a child in a wheelchair, we might run our fingers over their arms in a pitter patter motion to mimic the sensation of putting on a suit, or rock them back and forth (with consent!) to mimic moving in outer space.

(Including the segment on the flip side.)

- What do our bodies look like as we prepare to launch into space?
 - **TA 1** models getting jostled around, pattering fingers on students' arms to mimic this sensation.

Exploring Outer Space (~20 minutes)

- **TA 2** will bring out fabrics as some of the different places and sensations found on the new planet we have discovered.
 - Sequins=ground, tulle= the planet's ring, fuzzy = alien skin
- **TA 1** brings out the bubbles as space dust for students to poke and maneuver through.
- **TA 2** brings out spray bottles as a "meteor shower," offering to spritz each child on the hand or over their heads. They can demonstrate with a fellow TA or aid.
- **TA 1** brings out finger lights as space bugs and fans for feeling the air for students to play with.

Unless we (or teachers) think it's a safety hazard, children can hold on to props for as long as they want. The ultimate goal is for them to be engaged throughout the lesson – sometimes this means they will pick one or two sense that they seek to engage with for the duration of this section.

Laying in the Stars (~10 minutes)

- **TA 2** will explain that it is time to rest before we head back home. After giving notice, **TA 2** will dim the lights and bring out the star machine and place it in the middle of the ground. Students may sit, lie down, or stand to best interact with the projected lights.
- **TA 1** will then introduce and hold onto one or two finger lights to shine on students' hands and bodies. For students with light sensitivity, **TA 1** will focus the lights further away from their faces.
- **TA 2** will then announce that they have captured a shooting star in their special star capturing wand and introduce the light wand. **TA 2** will then walk around the space, giving each student the opportunity to silently or verbally make a wish on the "star."

We have found that dimming the lights creates a calming ethos and helps students lower their energy. It also can service the transition back to the classroom setting after

Because these lights are small, we tend to hold them ourselves with students guiding our hands. Some students might hold them independently if we believe they can do so safely.

Time To Go Home (~5 minutes)

- After notifying the class, **TA 1** will turn on the lights.
- **TA 2** will tell the class that it is time to return back to earth and we have to say goodbye to outer space. This is the opportunity to collect all remaining props in the space. A way to do so is by saying, "it's time to say goodbye to the meteor shower," and the proceed to take the item out of the space.
- **TA 1** can then lead the group in taking off their space suits. For students in wheelchairs, TAs can go around and give them deep pressure squeezes on their arms.
- **TAs** will then lead a brief reflection through gratitude soup. The group will sit in a circle and **TA 2** will explain that everyone will start stirring the soup with their hands. They will continue to explain that we will go around in a circle and say what we are grateful for. **TA 1 and 2** will model: "I am grateful for watching the stars." If the group is non verbal, the group can reflect by using their bodies as the TAs review what the group explored during the workshop.

We find that having students experience changes (such as dimming the lights or taking away props that they particularly like) in the safe space of a creative drama workshop helps them prepare for what that might look like in the world outside of the classroom.