

# **Proposal**

## **Developing a collaborative Theater and Technology Project**

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This proposal aims to present a collaborative project to be developed with the youth from MAPS using drama and technology.

The project was born from a need to help the Brazilian and Portuguese Children and Youth to improve their communication, expression, imagination, social, conflict resolution, decision making, written, public speaking and technological skills.

The children will construct the play in a collective, collaborative and participatory way. I will facilitate the creative process trying to stimulate the youth to be in charge of their own creativity.

The work will constitute of several exercises, which will support the creative writing process as well as the dramatization skills needed for the enactment of the play. I will follow Augusto Boal, a Brazilian's director and author of Theater of the Oppressed, Forum Theater, Invisible Theater among others, philosophy and techniques during the whole project.

During the playwriting process the children will use the software that I am developing called Virtual Forum Theater. After they finish the play they will have a choice to create the scenery, the characters, props and animate them using technology as well as in real life. They will choose what they want to do first, but the final goal is to have both options performed by them.

The group will be able to use the Forum Theater tool to run the script and in so doing they can decide what works and what does not works in their script. They will also enact the play themselves and reevaluate the script. In other words they will develop a feedback process, where they will improve their script during rehearsals as well as using the technology available.

I want to give those children the opportunity to reach ownership by creating and shaping a play that will arise from their interactions and work together, while building and improving their playwriting skills, as well as their self-esteem.

Furthermore as Edith K. Ackermann<sup>1</sup> cites in her paper “Enactive Representations in Learning: Pretense, Models, Machines”:

“Taking on other people’s views, changing one’s stance in the world, and animating things, I argue, are powerful heuristics by which children put empathy at the service of cognitive growth.”

Therefore at the same time that this project will improve the social skills, problem and conflict resolution, and cognitive development, it will also expose the children to technology augmenting their technological fluency<sup>2</sup>, which is a very important skill in the actual cyber world.

I would like to develop this project with Brazilian’s children from Somerville/Cambridge area. The option of running the project in English or Portuguese will be their option. I am certainly open for both in case we do not get a minimum of ten Brazilian’s children to work with. We can also make it a bilingual project and have the final play in both languages.

We might be able to publish the play on the web by the end of the project depending on the state of the art of my computer tool, as well as produce it to present to a wider public. In case that the children want to present the play, they will be responsible for the whole process of scenery and custom making, as well as everything involved in the production and presentation. It is important that they take ownership of the whole project.

We would need to have access to at least five computers during some of the sessions. If we cannot have access to MAPS’s computers we should plan some field trips to the closest city library.

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<sup>1</sup> Ackermann, Edith (1999). **Enactive Representations in Learning: Pretense, Models, Machines**. Ref: In (1999) *Learning Sites: Social and technological Contexts for learning* (Bliss, Light, & Saljo, Eds.) Elsevier: Advances in learning and Instruction. Chap.11. pp. 144-154.

<sup>2</sup> Cavallo, David (2000). **Technological Fluency and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: Emergent Design of Learning Environments**. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Media Laboratory.