



PRESCHOOL TEACHER'S GUIDE

The Arts Start program is supported by



IT'S OKAY TO BE DIFFERENT: STORIES BY TODD PARR

Friday, March 17, 2023

10:30 AM & 12:30 PM



Welcome!

This guide was created for use by teachers in the Springfield Urban League Head Start program, but it will also be sent to other teachers attending the performance who indicate they teach preschool students. Another Teacher's Guide, with content for K-2 students, is available on the UIS Performing Arts Center website at <https://uispac.com/education/class-acts>. We hope the information and activity ideas included in this guide will help your students better understand the performance they see.

We look forward to seeing you!



Youth programming in the Staley Class Acts series is supported in part by the Elizabeth and Robert Staley Class Acts Endowment, the Helen Hamilton Performing Arts Endowment for Youth, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.



The Arts Start program is an initiative of **University of Illinois Springfield's UIS Performing Arts Center** and the **Springfield Urban League Head Start**, funded by **PNC's Grow Up Great®** initiative. Through this arts education program, Head Start students, their teachers, and their families will become involved in live performances, enhancing the students' educational opportunities and school readiness.



Write to Us

We would love to hear from you and your students! If your students write about the performance they saw or create artwork related to it, you are welcome to send it to us via email to jmose4@uis.edu or through the mail to:

Justine Moser
UIS Performing Arts Center
One University Plaza, MS PAC 397
Springfield, IL 62703

We love sharing student work with our donors and Staley Class Acts sponsors, so they can see the impact of their donations.



Attending a Live Performance

Please use the information below to help prepare your young students for attending a live theatrical performance. For many, this will be their first experience with live theater.

Going to a live theatrical performance is different than watching a movie or TV show – the members of the audience are very important, and the way they behave will affect the performance. That’s why theaters have their own special rules about behavior.

- Tell your students that when they arrive in the parking lot, there will be a lot of other buses there too. They will need to follow the instructions of their teachers and walk in a straight line (or maybe in a buddy-system line) to come into the building. Once inside, they need to stay in line because of all the other students who will be there.

- Ask your students how they think an audience should behave at a live performance. What are some of the things they should do and not do? If it is not covered by the student answers, make sure you talk about:
 - **Listen** to the performance (this ties into “don’t talk,” but it can be helpful to keep all the discussion points phrased in the positive and not in the “don’t-do-this” mode); use a “cupped ear” gesture to emphasize listening when it is mentioned

 - **Watch** the performance; point at both sides of your face near your eyes with your index fingers to emphasize watching when it is mentioned

 - **Clap** at the end of songs and at the end of the performance when the performers take their bows. Take the time to practice clapping with the students. Call one student forward who will pretend to take a bow at the end of a performance and the rest of the room will practice clapping for this student.

Repeat the gestures for the three points above and have the students do it with you.

- Let your students know that like in a movie theater, the area where the audience sits for the performance will be rather dark, but there will be lights on the stage and some small lights will remain on in the aisles. If they need to use the bathroom in the middle of the show, they can come to the end of the row and an usher will use a flashlight to make sure they can find their way to the correct bathroom.



Activities

The activities can be used together in any combination that works for the teacher. It would be best to do some activities **before** the performance, to help students understand the plot of the story, and some activities **after** the performance, to reinforce what they have seen.

I Am ME!

- Think about one way you are unique and different—for example, you like to wear mismatched socks, you can whistle any tune, your favorite hobby is crocheting, and so on—and share it with your students.
- Now ask them to think about one way they are unique and different and encourage volunteers to share their ideas.
- Read aloud *It's Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr. Discuss: What can you learn from this book? What lesson does the author want you to understand? Guide children to understand that the author wants them to recognize that everyone is different—and that is okay!
- Circle back to your initial discussion and talk about how everyone shared something that makes them unique, which also makes them special.
- Give each child a piece of paper, with the words “I Am ME!” at the top. Have children think about four different things that make them unique and different – if needed, you may give them specific topics (their favorite food, their favorite place to go, a special hobby or talent they have). Encourage them to draw a picture for each category.
- Allow children to share and talk about their completed list.

Recycling Sorting Game

In *The Earth Book*, Todd Parr presents practical activities that help children lessen their ecological footprint, such as recycling. Young students love sorting and matching, so make recycling into a learning game! This activity also has a very practical benefit: children who learn how to recycle at school will help out with recycling at home.

- Set up four recycling bins: one each for metal, glass, paper, and plastics. Use visual clues to indicate what belongs in each bin (for example, a picture of a soda bottle for the plastics bin).
- Fill another box with aluminum cans, bottles of various shapes and sizes, plastic containers, papers, cardboard boxes, and bags.
- If this is done as a group activity, each child takes an item from a sample box and then “sorts” it into the right bin. If this is done as an individual activity, the child sorts each item from the sample box into the appropriate recycling bin.

Created by Tennessee Performing Arts Center Education and used with permission.



Activities

“It’s Okay to be ME!” Self Portrait Encourage students to identify his or her own physical characteristics that make him or her unique or different. Using the template below, students can add color to the face, a nose, mouth, accessories, and hair to create a “self- portrait.” Display and discuss similarities and differences.