Alliance Theatre

Institute

Instructional Resources

by Liz Davis, Head of Secondary Curriculum & Partnerships

By Megan Tabaque
Directed by Samantha Provenzano

IN-SCHOOL TOUR
February 24 – March 7, 2025

Special Presentation for School Groups Only
Best Enjoyed by Audiences in Grades 6-8

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3-D Printer

Image Source: stock.adobe.com

Considerations for Application:

Accessibility: Incorporate accommodations and/or adjustments to physical directions, including language regarding seating, standing, and/or moving, as needed.

Allyship: Be mindful of the sensitivity of content/prompts related to personal middle school experiences; avoid required sharing, as needed.

Timing: Lesson plans are written as 1 hour; educators may modify the timing for activities, as needed.

About the Show

Synopsis: *CELEBRATING CREATIVITY, INDIVIDUALITY, AND THE TRUE MEANING OF "COOL."*

When Max and Abby, two brainy students, use a 3D printer to invent Melvin – the coolest, most confident 7th grader ever – their plan to fit in with the popular crowd takes an unexpected turn. A hilarious and heartwarming play for middle schoolers, *The Melvin Invention* celebrates creativity, individuality, and the true meaning of "cool." Packed with laughs and relatable moments, this play shows students that being themselves is the coolest thing of all.

Learn more: https://www.alliancetheatre.org/production/2024-25/the-melvin-invention

About the Playwright: Megan Tabaque

Photo source: broadwayworld.com
Learn more: https://www.megantabaque.com/

Megan Tabaque is a writer, director, and actor of mixed Filipina-Canadian descent. Megan has an MFA in Playwriting and Fiction from the Michener Center for Writers in Austin, TX. She currently resides in Los Angeles where she is developing several projects for film and television and is an Assistant Professor of Acting, Playwriting, and Screenwriting at the University of California at Riverside's Department of Theater, Film, and Digital Production.

About the Director: Sam Provenzano

Learn more: http://www.samprovenzano.com/

Sam Provenzano is a director, dramaturg, and teaching artist currently based in Denver and Atlanta — where she is a Resident Artist and Teen Programs Manager at the Alliance Theatre. Sam has her MFA in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities from the University of Texas at Austin with a focus in Theater for Young Audiences, Museum Theater, and new play development.

Pre-Show Lesson Plan

If you could make *anything* out of a 3-D printer, what would you create and why?	
GSE - Theater	TA6.CR.1 Organize, design, and refine theatrical work. a. Identify artistic choices, utilize theatre vocabulary, and demonstrate non-verbal communication skills in the rehearsal process. c. Identify the variety of relationships between characters. e. Recognize and demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and skills associated with collaborative performance.
GSE – Computer Science	CSS.CT.6-8.40 Describe how humans and machines interact to accomplish tasks that cannot be accomplished by either alone. 1. Identify what distinguishes humans from machines focusing on human intelligence versus machine intelligence (e.g., robot motion, speech and language understanding, and computer vision); Explain why some tasks can be accomplished more easily by computers
Student Objective	Students will collaborate within small groups (ensembles) to creatively respond to the essential question: *If you could make anything out of a 3-D printer, what would you create and why?*
Space Set Up	Open space for students to move & work in small groups
Materials	• Graphic Organizer: Press PRINT! (1 half-sheet per small group, template provided on page 6) • Writing utensils (pencils, pens)
Agenda	Welcome & Introduction (5 minutes) Directions: Introduce *The Melvin Invention* (see: *About the Show* on page 3) and let students know that they will have the opportunity to engage in an interactive pre-show lesson to prepare to engage with the show. Warm Up: 30 Second Characters & Relationships (10 minutes) Directions: Form small groups. Allow 30 seconds for each group to creatively illustrate distinct characters and relationships inspired by the show. Whiz kid | Start by modeling this option as an example with a group of volunteers. Be sure to check for student understanding regarding directions and discuss the artistic process, highlighting where ensemble members made bold and interesting choices. Then, initiate whole-class participation in small groups using the following options: Misfit | Bully | Best friends | New kid | Science Club Pre-Show Discussion (10 minutes) Directions: The facilitator will guide students through (3) scaffolded Pre-Show Discussion prompts, landing on the essential question: 1. What kind of stuff is really "in" right now? • What makes these objects so desirable, trendy, or cool?

	2. How do you define a "miracle"? • Is technology *miraculous*? • Is artificial intelligence *miraculous*? • What made Frankenstein a *monster* rather than a *miracle*? 3. If you could make *anything* out of a 3-D printer, what would you create and why? Interactive Activity: Press PRINT! (20 minutes) Directions (Step 1): Return to small groups. Each group will collaborate to complete a creative writing task inspired by the show: We will use a 3-D printer to create a _____ (anything the group wants!) because _____. (reason or rationale) To do this, the "inputs" should be: _____, _____, and _____. (3 qualities of the object). We'll also need: _____, _____, and _____. (3 additional attributes of the object) Directions (Step 2): Rehearsal. Now all you have to do is press PRINT! Each group will collaborate to create a short performance that illustrates their object and its qualities and attributes. Provide the following guidelines to inspire this creative process: 1. Everyone should participate, but not everyone needs to speak. 2. Each presentation should include an effective and original sound effect to emphasize the 3-D printing process (*beep boop*). 3. Each presentation should clearly illustrate the "inputs" - but the group has the option to *conceal* naming the final object (to see if the audience can guess). Sharing (10 minutes) Directions: Each group shares. If time, facilitate brief audience discussion and feedback using the framework: *I liked...* | *I wonder...* Closure & 3-2-1 Reflection (5 minutes) Directions: Facilitate a whole group 3-2-1 discussion: (3) – Discuss (3) favorite objects created today (2) – Discuss (2) miraculous ways humans and computers interact (1) – Discuss (1) prediction for the show based on this lesson
Assessment	Formative: Student participation & engagement in Interactive Activity, Sharing, and Reflection

Graphic Organizer: Press PRINT!

Ensemble Member Names:

We will use a 3-D printer to create a _____
(anything the group wants!)

because _____.
(reason or rationale)

To do this, the "inputs" should be: _____, _____, and _____.
(3 qualities of the object).

We'll also need: _____, _____, and _____.
(3 additional attributes of the object)

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Graphic Organizer: Press PRINT!

Ensemble Member Names:

We will use a 3-D printer to create a _____
(anything the group wants!)

because _____.
(reason or rationale)

To do this, the "inputs" should be: _____, _____, and _____.
(3 qualities of the object).

We'll also need: _____, _____, and _____.
(3 additional attributes of the object)

Post-Show Lesson Plan

How do we define "cool"?	
GSE - Theater	TA6.CR.1 Organize, design, and refine theatrical work. a. Identify artistic choices, utilize theatre vocabulary, and demonstrate non-verbal communication skills in the rehearsal process. c. Identify the variety of relationships between characters. e. Recognize and demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and skills associated with collaborative performance.
GSE – Social Studies	L6-8WHST7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
Student Objective	Students will collaborate within small groups (ensembles) to creatively respond to the essential question: *How do we define "cool"?*
Space Set Up	Open space for students to move & work in small groups
Materials	• Resource: Chill Talk - *Lines from The Melvin Invention* (1 total, template provided on page 10) • Graphic Organizer: The Dream Team (1 per small group, template provided on page 11) • Writing utensils (pencils, pens)
Agenda	Welcome (5 minutes) Directions: If significant time has passed, re-introduce *The Melvin Invention* (see: *About the Show* on page 3) and let students know that they will have the opportunity to engage in an interactive post-show lesson to unpack their engagement with the show. Warm Up: Chill Walk & Talk (10 minutes) Directions (Step 1 – Chill Walk): Invite students to move throughout the room, looking for and filling empty spaces. Prompt students to alter their movement choices in a variety of ways, such as: *Move like...* an animal | a celebrity | you're in slow motion | an athlete | a robot Be creative and have fun with this activity to loosen everyone up! Then, land on the prompt: *Move like... **the coolest kid in school**.* Allow ample time for students to express what "cool" looks and feels like in their bodies. Then, pause movement to facilitate a brief discussion regarding the experience ("In 1 word or 1 short phrase, how did that feel?").

	Directions (Step 2 – Chill Talk): Invite 4 volunteers to extend this activity. Provide each student with 1 (folded, concealed) strip of paper containing a line from *The Melvin Invention* (see template provided on page 10). These volunteer actors will move throughout the room (again: like the coolest kid in school). Then, they will stop at a designated mark, open their line, and read it in full character, with as much vocal and facial expression as possible. The Facilitator should model this exercise using this line: MELVIN. *(in his coolest, chillest, voice)* So hey, I dunno if you're into it, but I'm going to Science Club Friday. You should come. (page 27) Then, the remaining 4 student volunteers can proceed: • #1 - MELVIN. Hey. Want to join Science Club Friday? I'm new. (page 28) • #2 - MELVIN. Oh? Hey, didn't see you there. Want to come to Science Club Friday? Could be mad fun? (page 28) • #3 - MELVIN. Friday is the Science Club meeting. I heard it'd be cool. Not gonna lie. (page 28) • #4 - MELVIN. Friday. Check it out, Science Club. Okrrrrr! (page 28) Post-Show Discussion (10 minutes) Directions: The facilitator will guide students through (3) scaffolded Pre-Show Discussion prompts, landing on the essential question: 1. Yes or No: Are these things/people "cool"? • Science • Technology • Parents and/or Caregivers 2. What's more important: being "cool" or being *yourself*? • Is it possible to be both? • Is "cool" a lagging indicator? o *In other words:* Is a person's "coolness" sometimes realized in hindsight or retrospect as part of someone's legacy, rather than in the moment? 3. How do we define "cool"? • How does "cool" look, sound, move, and/or feel? Interactive Activity: The Dream Team (20 minutes) Directions (Step 1): Inform students that a "dramaturg" is a literary advisor who works in a theater; and they are responsible for researching, interpreting, and providing context regarding the details in a script. In this activity, students will form small groups to research (1) historical figure – one of "the best scientists of our time" (page 13) -- referenced in the show:

	Katherine Johnson | Carl Sagan | Mae Jemison | Neil Degrasse Tyson Albert Einstein | Nikola Tesla | Dr. Hideo Kodama Together, students will utilize a Graphic Organizer (provided on page 11) to research & cite reliable sources to determine the individual's: • Lifetime & Location(s) • Significant contribution(s) to the field of science (1-3 facts) • What made that person really *cool (*1-3 opinions) Directions (Step 2): Rehearsal. Historical figures come to life! Each group will collaborate to create a short performance that creatively illustrates their research. Provide the following guidelines to inspire this creative process: 1. Each presentation should incorporate elements of Chill Walk (movement) & Chill Talk (speech) inspired by today's Warm Up, as accessible. 2. Each presentation should clearly illustrate a distinct setting (the historical figure's lifetime and location). 3. Each presentation should include at least (1) actor *in role* as the historical figure. Sharing (10 minutes) Directions: Each group shares. If time, facilitate brief audience discussion and feedback using the framework: *I liked...* | *I wonder...* Closure & 3-2-1 Reflection (5 minutes) Directions: Facilitate a whole group 3-2-1 discussion: (3) – Discuss (3) favorite historical figures researched today (2) – Discuss (2) definitive characteristics of being "cool" (1) – Discuss (1) "cool" takeaway from the show based on this lesson
Assessment	Formative: Student participation & engagement in Interactive Activity, Sharing, and Reflection

Resource: Chill Talk
Lines from The Melvin Invention

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Model (Facilitator)

MELVIN. *(in his coolest, chillest, voice)* So hey, I dunno if you're into it, but I'm going to Science Club Friday. You should come. (page 27)

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Volunteer #1

MELVIN. Hey. Want to join Science Club Friday? I'm new. (page 28)

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Volunteer #2

MELVIN. Oh? Hey, didn't see you there. Want to come to Science Club Friday? Could be mad fun? (page 28)

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Volunteer #3

MELVIN. Friday is the Science Club meeting. I heard it'd be cool. Not gonna lie. (page 28)

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Volunteer #4

MELVIN. Friday. Check it out, Science Club. Okrrrrr! (page 28)

Graphic Organizer: The Dream Team
The Best Scientists of Our Time

Research Team Names:

Scientist's Name:	
Image or Illustration:	Lifetime:
	Location(s):
	Significant contributions (1-3 facts):
	What made this person really cool? (1-3 opinions):
Reliable Sources:	

Extension Activity
Vocabulary from *The Melvin Invention*

GSE – English Language Arts	ELAGSE6RL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Directions: Use an online or print dictionary, as well as the context provided, to define the following vocabulary words (in order of appearance) from *The Melvin Invention* in your own words.

Word	Part of Speech	Used in Context (page #)	Definition (in your own words)
1. Inscrutable		*It's **inscrutable** even to NARRATOR.* (page 2)	
2. Singular		The **singular** Maximilian… (page 2)	
3. Indomitable		And the **indomitable** Abilene… (page 2)	
4. Spiraling		**ABBY.** Am I **spiraling**? (page 3)	
5. Amoebas		**ABBY.** ...we'll end up getting absorbed into chess club like nerd **amoebas**! (page 5)	
6. Unveil		*They **unveil** the box.* *(page 6)*	
7. Contraption		*MAX and ABBY carry the **contraption** away.* (page 7)	
8. Abomination		**ABBY.** We potentially make an **abomination**? (page 10)	
9. Hypothesis		**MAX.** But since we've met you…Abby has a new **hypothesis**. (page 22)	
10. Intriguing		**MAX.** But you! You're new! You're stylish! You're **intriguing**! (page 26)	
11. Melancholy		*MELVIN grows even more **melancholy** as the sound reverberates.* (page 31)	
12. Troubleshooting		**ABBY.** One moment everyone. We have to do some **troubleshooting** (page 34)	