

# English, Speech, and Theatre Liaison Report prepared by Amy Rosenquist

## **I. Department Buy-In and Outcome Definition**

Following conversations with the Chairs, it was decided to focus this academic year on our non-composition offerings. In the current climate of ensuring that courses are relevant to professional and career-related majors, I sought a project that could bridge fine arts classes with career and professional goals for degree-seeking students. I requested assistance in the form of current syllabus SLOs from instructors who taught every fine arts class in the fall 2016 schedule, and most responded promptly.

In the spring, based on fall 2016 findings, I worked with the Chairs, along with theater faculty Rachel Iannantuoni, and Kathryn Nash, to design a three-part assessment of Theater Arts students. The theater faculty were generous with time and information as the pilot was designed and administered.

The outcome for the fall 2016 assessment was to identify fine arts courses in the department that offered value to all students, in terms of soft skill development. Based on findings from that assessment, the outcome for spring 2017 was to develop a pilot, which would then be used to assess the courses with the strongest correlation to soft skill development; these were determined to be the performance-based Theater Arts courses.

## **II. Assessment Research and Design**

In the fall of 2013, the HWC Soft Skills Committee convened for one academic year devoted to research, development, and planning for strategies to incorporate and measure soft skills in our course offerings. The committee first identified a number of soft skills that were important to obtaining and maintaining any professional career, including those personal qualities and traits that were highly valued in the business field. Eventually, the lengthy list of soft skills was condensed into 25 measurable qualities that, it was hoped, our students would master prior to graduation. In addition, the Career Center offered a certificate program in which students could improve and demonstrate their understanding of the importance of these skills.

Initially, the committee hoped to assess what courses embedded soft skill mastery, and to what extent, in various disciplines. Because of other projects as well as concerns regarding faculty buy-in, the committee determined a certificate offering via the business department and Career Center were preferable outcomes of the committee's work.

This assessment within the English, Speech, and Theater department sought in part to pick up the idea of soft skill mastery, and in particular, investigate the strength of the intersection of fine arts courses in literature, creative writing, and theater arts with the ability (or necessity) to develop, refine, or master the skills valued by employers.

I first obtained a copy of the soft skills identified in the spring of 2014 by the Soft Skills Committee as those which were important for students to possess for professional success, and then obtained copies of the Student Learning Outcomes for the literature, theater, and creative writing courses that were being offered in the fall 2016 semester. By charting which soft skills were necessary to succeed in the fine arts courses, I hoped to get a sense of whether fine arts classes could lead to soft skill mastery, and to what extent.

The spring 2017 assessment was based on the results of this assessment, and was designed to measure both students' perception of whether (and which) soft skills were important, and their mastery of those same soft skills - both perceived (self-reported) and objective (instructor reported). The assessment design included two identical indirect assessments structured as Google Form surveys (one pre-test and one post-test) as well as an instructor rubric for use in a direct assessment of the same set of soft skills that appeared on the surveys.

### **III. Pilot Assessment Tools and Processes**

The fall component was an information-gathering project and, as such, a pilot was not administered. Based on this project, however, courses were identified for the pilot. The courses that by far sought to confer the greatest range of soft skills were the performance-based Theater Arts classes: Theater Arts 132: Theater Production, Direction, and Management; Theater Arts 133, Acting I; Theater Arts 235, Acting II, and Theater Arts 242, Improvisational Theater.

These four courses participated in the spring 2017 pilot. The pilot was divided into three parts:

I) An initial survey that students completed, assessing the value they placed on acquiring soft skills, their confidence in terms of having mastered individual soft skills, and the degree to which they had already participated in performance training or activities, if any. The soft skills that were highlighted were determined by the Liaison in consultation with the Theater Arts faculty and Unit-Level Coordinator: presentation skills, teamwork, dependability, communication skills, effective expression, management skills, and interpersonal relationship skills.

2) A direct assessment of each individual student in regard to the student's mastery of the above soft skills, conducted during week 16 by faculty who taught the four performance-based courses, as the students presented their final performance for the courses.

3) An exit survey, administered in week 15-16, to re-assess the students in terms of how important it was to them that they acquire the individual soft skills, where they would rank themselves in terms of mastery at this point in the semester, and the level of experience they now had achieved in terms of theater training and performance activities.

#### **IV. Administer Specific Assessment**

In order to analyze the fall 2016 data, I first contacted the instructors teaching sections of literature, creative writing, and theater to request their current SLOs. I received SLOs from almost all of the department's fine arts offerings. I then analyzed each set of SLOs in relation to the soft skills identified by the Career Center. The soft skills were divided into eleven categories that were directly measurable by assessment, such as communication skills, presentation skills, critical thinking skills, and basic grammar. An additional six skills that were a necessary component of mastering the first 11. (For example, students in hybrid or online classes who pass those courses would also have to be adept at technology skills; students who were subject to critique of their acting or physical techniques in a theater class would need to demonstrate resilience in order to take in criticism and make adjustments and improvements to their performance.)

At the conclusion of this analysis, it was clear that Theater Arts performance classes included the highest level of direct instruction, assessment, and expectations in terms of conferring soft skills. Therefore, these courses were selected for participation in the Pilot.

In the early weeks of spring 2017, Professors Rachel Iannantuoni and Kathryn Nash provided in-depth consultation about how to best phrase and capture the soft skill information this assessment was seeking. Their input was invaluable as the initial survey, final performance rubric, and final survey were created. All of the performance-based classes received a link to the survey in week 3, with 62 responses (3 students completed the survey twice, so 59 usable responses were collected.)

Students in Theater Arts 132, 133, and 235 received course credit (not extra credit) for completing the initial survey, and accounted for 100% of the responses. Students from Theater Arts 242 were given the link and encouraged to complete the survey, but did not participate. For

the Fall 2017 Assessment, it will be important to ensure participation from all performance-based classes, perhaps by using the strategy of course credit rather than extra credit or suggestion.

A performance rubric was developed using the same set of soft skills, as well as a template shared by Professor Nash, which she uses to assess theater arts performances. This rubric will be used by instructors in the above four classes to assess the students' mastery of the individual soft skills in the final week of the semester, based on their final performance as well as overall course performance.

The final survey is identical to the initial survey. Results should be available beginning at the end of week 16, and will be compared to both the initial survey results as well as the rubric assessments by instructors.

## **V. Data Analysis**

Fall 2016:

Of the 39 sections of fine arts courses offered in fall 2016, 37 were included in this assessment: 24 sections of literature representing nine course offerings; two sections of Creative Writing; and 11 sections of Theater Arts, representing all six Theater Arts course offerings.

Every course that was assessed was found to impart and measure skills in communication, influence/persuasion skills, and critical thinking. In addition, all but one course required and measured selling skills and basic spelling and grammar. A majority of our fine arts course offerings convey presentation and interpersonal relationship skills.

The Theater Arts classes in particular were found to make the most significant and comprehensive contribution to the identified soft skills. Theater Arts 132, "Theater Production, Direction, and Management," offered students opportunities to acquire or improve every soft skill that was measured. Because of their emphasis on a combination of memorization, performance, analysis, teamwork, and positive integration of critique, Theater Arts classes convey a number of unique business soft skills that are not present in the requirements or coursework for other disciplines.

Spring 2017:

Results from the spring 2017 initial survey given to Theater Arts students confirmed that students do value acquiring soft skills. Communication Skills (46%), Presentation Skills (43%),

Interpersonal Communication (42%), Teamwork (42%), and Management (38%) were the highest ranking, with no soft skill receiving less than 34% in the “Very Important” category. Conversely, students did not rate themselves as having mastered the same soft skills in high numbers; Dependability (23%) and Teamwork (20%) were the only two soft skills in which students ranked themselves as “very proficient” in numbers at or above 20%. Twelve percent of respondents reported professional performance experience, while 70% reported some type of volunteer activity related to performance.

The instructor assessment, as well as the follow up survey, will be administered during the final two weeks of the semester. Based on the analysis of that data, evidence-based changes may be made for the full fall 2017 assessment.

## **VI. Supporting Evidence-Based Change (Use of Findings)**

Currently, there is a trend to ensure that students graduate from college with marketable skills, a worthy goal when serving a population of urban students who look to successful careers to secure their futures. Regardless of major, most students in professional settings will need the identified soft skills to varying extents in order to obtain and excel in their professional careers. The evidence from these two assessments strongly suggests that students pursuing all types of professional careers that require critical thinking, dependability, presentation skills, communication with the public, resilience, and positive response to evaluation would greatly benefit from being advised to take a performance-based Theater Art class as a way to meet their fine arts requirement or as a useful elective.

### Success Factors

The ease of participation in the fall assessment - merely attaching and sending a document - guaranteed almost 100% participation among the sections being assessed. Response from faculty was almost immediate in many cases. Both adjunct and full time faculty participated. Results were shared with the Chairs, Executive Committee, and in a subsequent department meeting, as were plans for developing and administering a pilot for the Theater Art courses in the spring.

The spring pilot assessment was successful in large part due to the outstanding contributions of the full time theater faculty. Their input, suggestions, and active participation was directly responsible for the large number of participants and thorough scope of this pilot. An overview and status of this assessment was also shared at an early spring department meeting, as well as on an ongoing basis with the Chairs.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this assessment, the following recommendations are presented to the department:

1. A designated team continue to meet with the Business Department to explore future partnerships in terms of recommending Theater Arts classes to business majors as their fine arts or other elective.
2. In collaboration with the Business Department and/or Career Center, Chairs, PACC committee, and administration, formally adopting a Theater Arts recommendation to the Business Marketing or other business major pathway.
3. Consideration of adding Theater Arts as a preferred fine arts elective to other professional pathways.
4. Inclusion of the performance-based Theater Arts classes on the GECC list.
5. A full assessment of our Theater Arts program in relation to relevant professional skills to be administered in the fall of 2017 (weeks 2 and 16).

## Appendix A: Fall 2016 Fine Arts SLO data

(Note: Shaded courses were not included in this assessment)

Fall 2016 Courses

Course #	Title	Total sections	Face to face	Hybrid	Online
Lit 110	Introduction to Literature	5	2	1	2
Lit 111	Poetry	2	2	0	0
Lit 112	Drama	1	1	0	0
Lit 119	Romantic Revival to 20th Century	1	1	0	0
Lit 121	Contemporary African American Literature	4	1	1	2
Lit 126	Contemporary American Literature	1	0	0	1
Lit 128	Latin American Literature	3	1	0	2

Lit 129	US Latino(a) Literature	1	1	0	0
Lit 137	The Black Woman in Black Fiction	1	1	0	0
Lit 150	Literature by Women	4	1	0	3
Lit 155	Literature and Film	2	1	0	1
Lit 211	Shakespeare	1	1	0	0
ENG 241	Creative Writing	2	2	0	0
THR 131	Introduction to Theater	2	2	0	0
THR 132	Theater Production, Direction, & Management	2	2	0	0
THR 133	Acting I	2	2	0	0
THR 134	Theater Diversity in the US	3	3	0	0
THR 235	Acting II	1	1	0	0
THR 242	Improvitational Theater	1	1	0	0

26 sections of literature (23 assessed); 2 sections of Creative Writing; 11 sections of Theater

### Soft Skills

Class	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
LIT											
110	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x

111	x	x		x		x		x		x	x
121	x			x		x				x	x
126	x			x		x		x		x	x
128	x			x		x		x		x	x
129	x	x		x		x				x	x
150	x	x		x		x	x	x		x	x
155	x	x		x		x		x	x	x	x
211	x	x		x		x	x		x	x	x
ENG											
241	x	x		x		x		x	x	x	x
THEATER											
131	x			x		x				x	x
132	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
133	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
134	x			x		x				x	x
235	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
242	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	

Measurable:

A= Communication skills

B= Presentation skills



C= Interviewing skills

D= Selling skills

E= Meeting management skills

F= Influence/persuasion skills

G= Teamwork skills

H= Interpersonal relationship skills

I= Dependability

J= Critical thinking skills

K= Basic spelling and grammar

Class	1	2	3	4	5	6
LIT						
110				x		
111					x	
121						x
126				x	x	x
128					x	x
129					x	x
150				x	x	x
155	x	x	x			
211	x	x	x			
ENG						
241		x		x	x	
THEATER						

131						X
132	X	X	X	X	X	X
133	X	X			X	
134						X
235	X	X	X	X	X	
242	X	X	X	X		

Implied (necessary to meet the course requirements and/or SLO's):

1= Stress management

2= Resilience

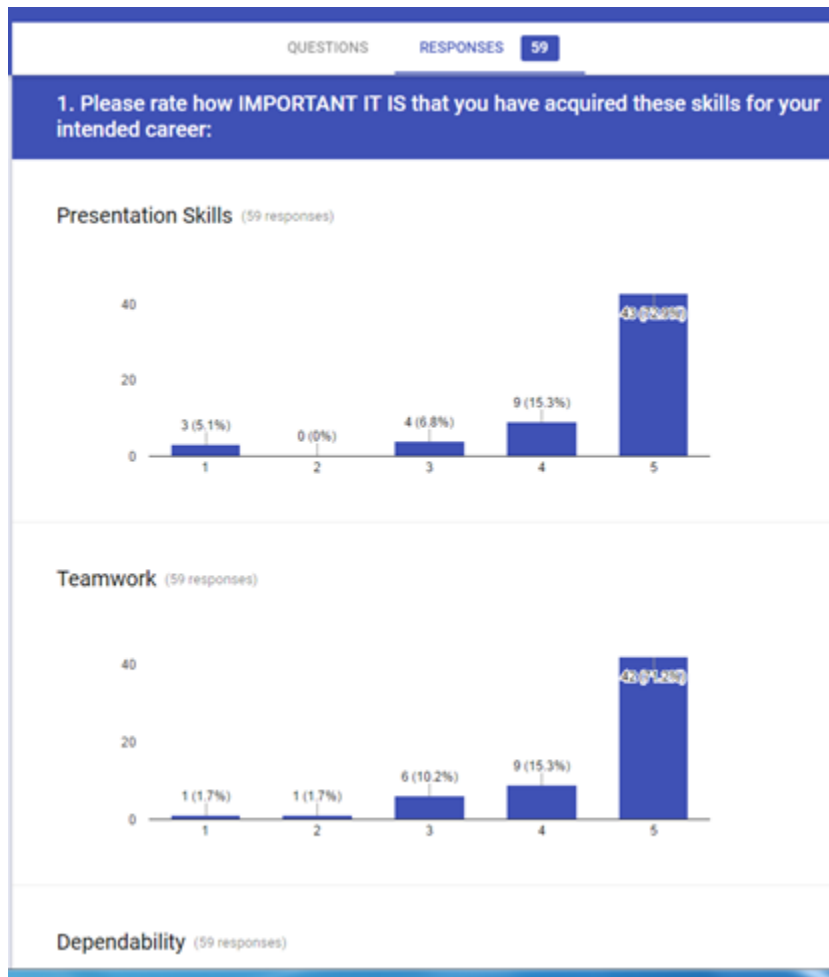
3= Skills in dealing with difficult situations

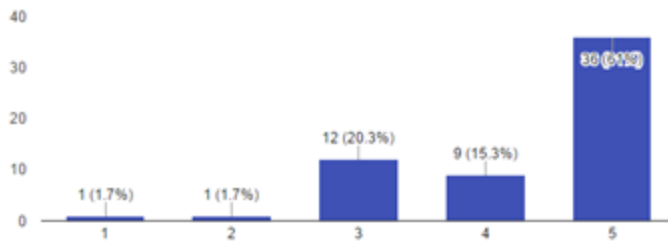
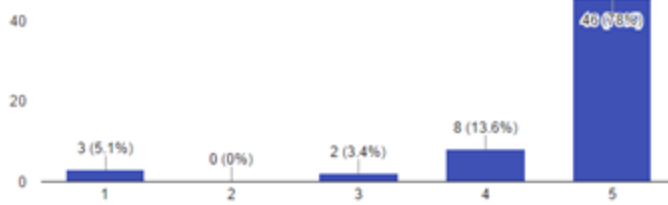
4= Networking skills

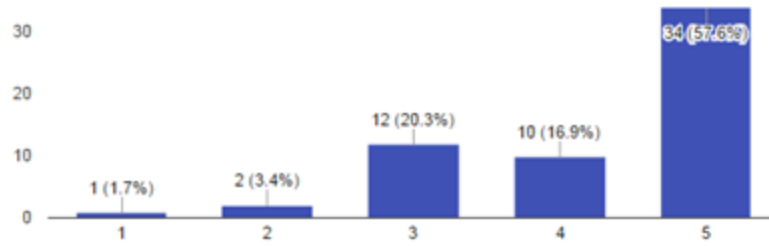
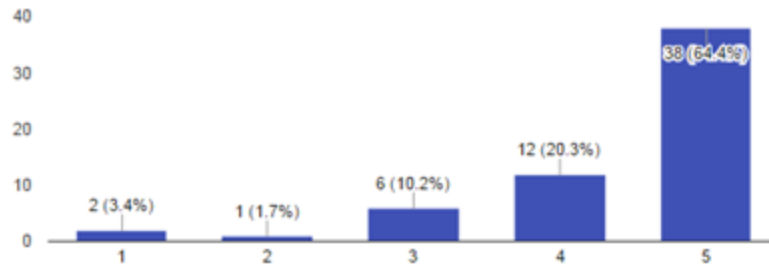
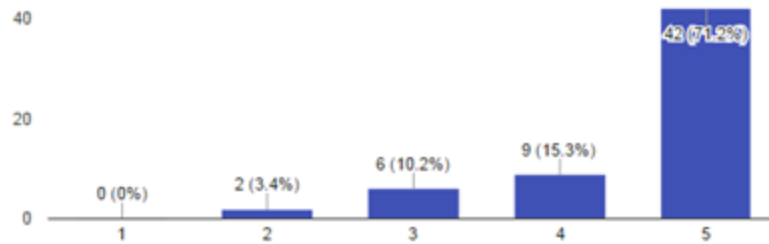
5= Technology skills

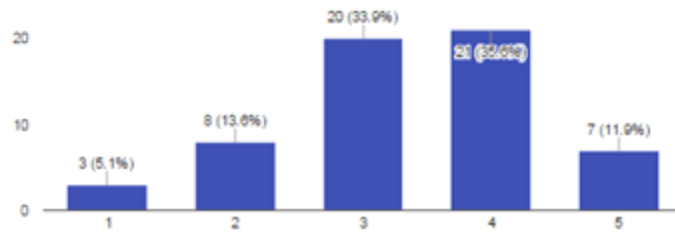
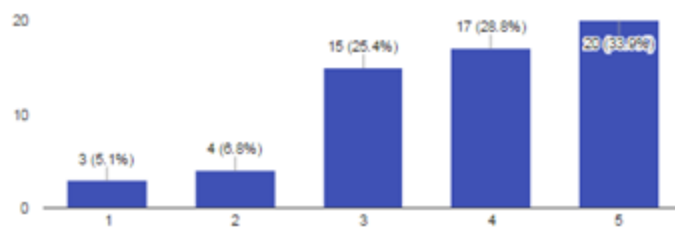
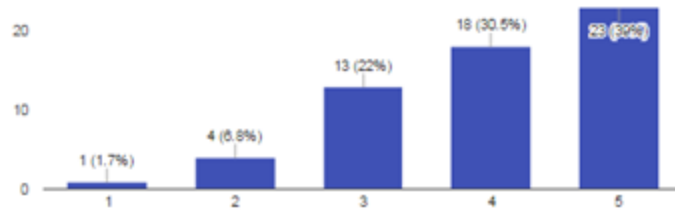
6= Cultural awareness/appreciation

## Appendix B: Initial Theater Arts Student Survey Data (Week 3)



**Dependability** (59 responses)**Communication Skills** (59 responses)**Effective Expression:** (59 responses)

**Effective Expression:** (59 responses)**Management skills** (59 responses)**Interpersonal Relationship Skills** (59 responses)

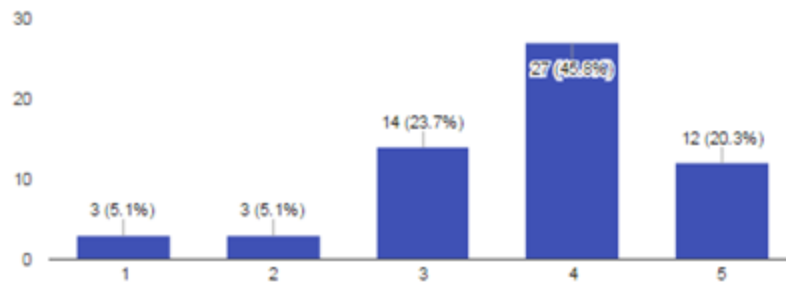
**2. Please rate how PROFICIENT you are in these skills, as of today:****Presentation skills** (59 responses)**Teamwork** (59 responses)**Dependability** (59 responses)

QUESTIONS

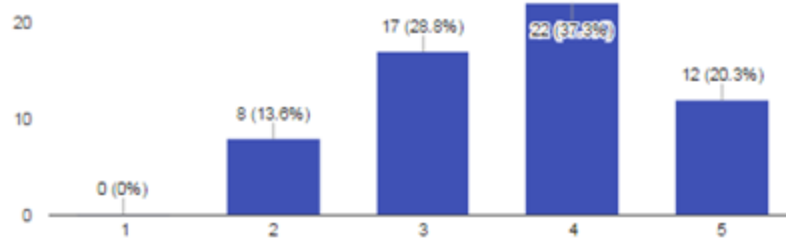
RESPONSES

59

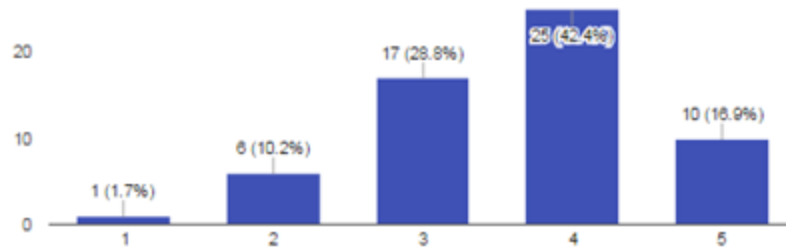
### Communication Skills (59 responses)



### Effective Expression (59 responses)



### Management Skills (59 responses)

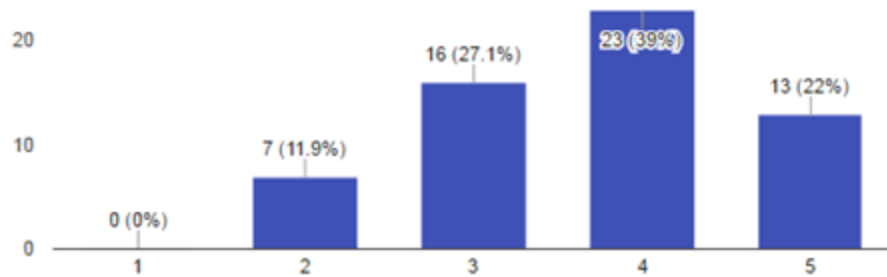


QUESTIONS

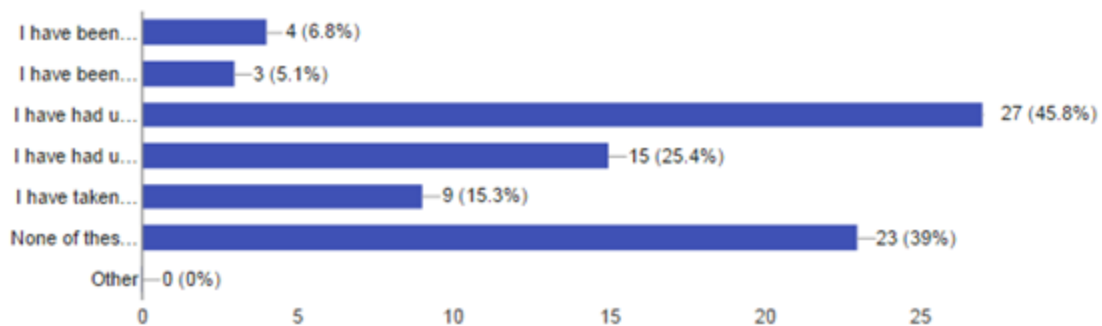
RESPONSES

59

### Interpersonal Relationship Skills (59 responses)



### 3. Please check all that apply: (59 responses)



### Additional Comments (optional): (0 responses)

No responses yet for this question.



## Appendix C: Theater Arts/Soft Skills Instructor Assessment Rubric

	Exceeded the Standard	Met the Standard	Approaching the Standard	Did Not Meet the Standard
Presentation Skills	Always presents in an articulate, engaging, professional manner, with smooth transitions and physical movements	Frequently presents in an articulate, engaging, professional manner, with smooth transitions and physical movements	Sometimes presents in an articulate, engaging, professional manner, with smooth transitions and physical movements	Infrequently presents in an articulate, engaging, professional manner, with smooth transitions and physical movements
Teamwork	Always works in a cooperative, equitable, and pleasant manner with colleagues	Frequently works in a cooperative, equitable, and pleasant manner with colleagues	Sometimes works in a cooperative, equitable, and pleasant manner with colleagues	Infrequently works in a cooperative, equitable, and pleasant manner with colleagues
Dependability	Always prompt, prepared, engaged at rehearsals and performance; perfect attendance	Frequently prompt, prepared, engaged at rehearsals and performance; above average attendance	Sometimes prompt, prepared, engaged at rehearsals and performance; below average attendance	Infrequently prompt, prepared, engaged at rehearsals and performance; sporadic attendance
Communication Skills	Always demonstrates clear, accurate, engaging, professional communication	Frequently demonstrates clear, accurate, engaging, professional communication	Sometimes demonstrates clear, accurate, engaging, professional communication	Infrequently demonstrates clear, accurate, engaging, professional communication
Effective Expression	Diction, nonverbal cues, and intended meaning are always clear	Diction, non-verbal cues, and intended meaning are frequently clear	Diction, nonverbal cues, and intended meaning are sometimes clear	Diction, nonverbal cues, and intended meaning are infrequently clear

Management Skills	Always able to direct, lead, motivate, and engage others	Frequently able to direct, lead, motivate, and engage others	Sometimes able to direct, lead, motivate, and engage others	Infrequently able to direct, lead, motivate, and engage others
Interpersonal Relationships	Always communicates and works well with others (fellow actors, instructor, audience members, staff)	Frequently communicates and works well with others (fellow actors, instructor, audience members, staff)	Sometimes communicates and works well with others (fellow actors, instructor, audience members, staff)	Infrequently communicates and works well with others (fellow actors, instructor, audience members, staff)