

ASSEMBLIES

“The Message Behind the Message”

Assemblies are one of the most feared school activities by teachers, administrators, advisers and even students. Why? If we can answer the why and fix it we go a long way to making them something enjoyable for all and at the very least, not an event that makes anyone anxious.

1 – Philosophy – Why do we even have assemblies?

2 – Techniques – What are some strategies that can make your assembly run more smoothly?

3 – CASE – Copy and Steal Everything – What is one event, game, presentation your school has done that you can share?

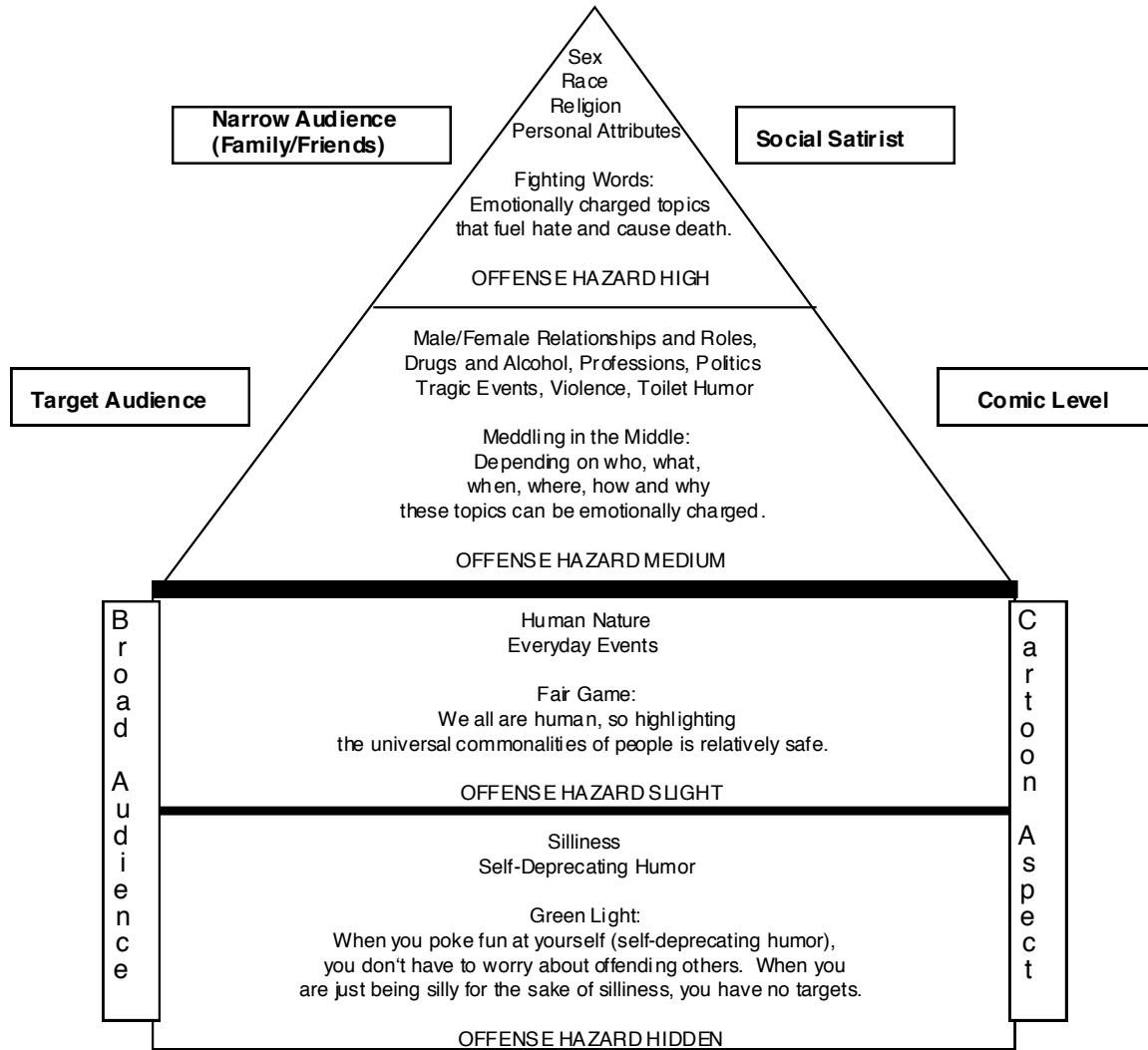
PHILOSOPHY

- *Assemblies are your media! This is your chance to let the whole school know at the same time the atmosphere you are trying to create. Are you taking advantage of your captured audience?*
- *Use your assemblies to honor and celebrate the activities and people of your school.*
- *Stay away from put-downs. They may get a quick laugh, but the hurt lasts longer than the humor.*
- *Assemblies should flow like a movie, not a TV show. There should be no commercials!! Keep it flowing from act to act.*
- *Transitions weave everything together. In some ways, they are more important than each act. Take the time to prepare each one like they really matter. Use humor, sensitivity, cleverness, word play, etc.*
- *It is okay (in fact it is better) to go up there with a script. It strengthens your delivery (and few will notice that you have a paper.)*

HUMOR AWARENESS

The Humor Triangle

When telling a joke, consider two things: Your audience and your comic ability. If you are among family and friends, or you have the sophistication of a social satirist, you probably can joke about topics at the top of the pyramid and not offend. Most of us, however, are not humorists, thus staying in the bottom two levels is a safer venture, especially when considering school audiences which are very broad in scope. In the middle of the pyramid you find topics that when presented at the comic level to a target audience--a specific club, activity or team--can be humorous without offending. The key is knowing **what** your joke is about, **who** you are telling it to, and **why** you are telling it.



- Identify the actual or symbolic targets (the "butts") of your jokes. Are these truly to laugh at in your setting?
- What are the ratings of your jokes? (G, PG, PG-13, R, X) Is the rating appropriate for the setting and audience?
- Do your props or characters perpetuate hurtful stereotypes regarding race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, socio-economic condition, sexuality, etc.?

TECHNIQUES

A M.A.P. FOR ASSEMBLY PLANNING

While there is no exact science to planning and putting on an assembly, this M.A.P. offers a few guidelines to making your school's assemblies better.

Message

- When putting together your assembly, consider the message behind the message. How do you want students to behave during the assembly? How do you want them to feel when they leave? Is it possible for your assemblies to change the climate of your school?
- Get your message down first before beginning to plan the assembly. Use the Assembly Checklist (online resource) as you are planning so you don't have to undo any work.

Atmosphere

- The **Location** of your assembly will help set the correct atmosphere for your assembly. If you want a more serious type of setting, you might use the auditorium. Is it possible to do one outside? Think outside of the box (or the gym).
- The **Lighting** is key to setting the atmosphere you desire. Using follow spots or having the lights off altogether can have a big impact on the way the message is received. Consider using colored lighting or shaped filters to set a mood. You can rent a spot light or accessories if you do not have one.
- The **Music** can set or change the mood. Keep the message in mind when selecting music. Use the familiar, but don't overuse.
- The **Introduction** can be your ticket to grabbing your audience. Make it strong and unique.
- The **Placement** of activities and speakers can keep the audience awake and intrigued. Have them in different areas of the gym/auditorium.

Preparation/Practice/Production

- Get as many students involved as possible. The more the better.
- Put together an agenda that allows for a variety of things to happen without seeming to jump from one phase to another. Transitions are critical. Don't allow dead time. Do something while you are setting up the next event. Music can help with the transitions.
- Make sure your sound system is up and running properly. If you are using cordless mics, check batteries and have spares. Cue up tapes. Check volume levels.
- Practice the assembly at least once to check for timing and transitions. Solve the problems.
- Take time to debrief and evaluate. Take notes and use this assembly to improve on the next.

ASSEMBLY TRANSITIONS

Note: Transitions are a critical piece of a successful assembly. Script them out and build time for them into your assemblies. They will help make your assemblies seamless. 1 minute per transitions usually averages out about right. Keep in mind that one of the intents of assemblies is to celebrate each other. You can build celebration or special shout-outs into each transition.

Example:

What not to do: “And now here are our cheerleaders (dance team, choir, band, etc.) (Yawn, boring, obvious...)”

Some ideas to help you script something more creative.

Example #1:

“All our teams have been working really hard this season, but we have one group that has been here working hard for everyone! Our cheer squad is up practicing every morning at 6:30 am to keep our spirits positive. Yep, you heard it right – here at 6:30 so do the math. What time do you think they get up? Let’s hear it for one of the best and most dedicated cheer teams around- the ____ H.S. Cheer Squad.”

Example #2:

A: Hey “B” do you know how to dance?”

B: Well, I have been practicing my moves lately and am feeling pretty good about them. Want to watch? (Does some bad dancing)

A: Well, I don’t think I would give up my day-job. You have potential but a ways to go. We have a group that can really show us how it is done and could help you out if you want some coaching. They might even choreograph a number especially for you. Let’s bring out this year’s Dance Team to dazzle us.

Example #3: A: It is spring and we are headed into concert season. Going to the Gorge, White River Amphitheater, all those cool places. So, “B” who is your favorite band?

B: That is easy – I have an entire play list just of the ____ H.S. Band (Choir). They are even my work out music. And before they go on the concert circuit – we get a sneak preview. Let’s rock and roll with our own star studded band.

ASSEMBLY IDEAS

HUMAN POWERPOINT – PRESENTATION

1. A series of freeze frames that tell a story (use an overhead projector to show the “slide,” flip off to move to the next one.
2. Narrator advances the “slide” and gives explanations.
3. Be creative! People can be objects (a chair), concepts (wind) or human characters.
4. Add simple props, costume pieces, or signs.
5. It is important to hold the pose until the overhead light is turned off.

CHANGING CHANNELS – PRESENTATION

1. A technique for giving an overview of events that have happened over the year in a funny stream of dialog.
2. Select 7 – 12 major events from your school year.
3. Write a short dialog about each event as if it was a radio or TV broadcast.
4. Blend the dialog so that the next event interrupts the on-going event with a grammatically correct yet silly sentence as if someone is changing channels in the middle of the report. Example: The soccer season has just kicked off and looks to be promising. Returning from last year we have...The Cat in the Hat – the main character from this year’s musical production “Suessical”. This year’s production opens March 21 and is a romp through familiar stories such as ... Your Senior Prom – what will it be like?
5. If it is done as a TV skit, you can use people popping up from a table, a spotlight, etc.
6. **Note:** If done as a TV skit, it takes a lot of practice but is more effective than the radio version.

SONGS IN REAL LIFE/MUSICAL

1. Use popular song lyrics as punch lines for the characters in the skit.
Ex. “Man, there’s **‘No one, no one, no one’ (Alicia Keys)** who can pass this test. I’ll never be able to.”
”What?!? Come on man... **‘Don’t stop...believin’! Hold on to that feeling! (Journey)**”
“Fine, **‘I won’t give up...on...(Jason Mraz)**” this test.
2. Can be done by playing the audio or singing the lines.
3. Vocal abilities are not required, own the awkwardness!

180 days in 180 seconds – PRESENTATION

1. Skit-like presentation is that it is rapid paced and a bit chaotic.
2. Select 2 or 3 events from each month. Write very short descriptions of the event. Create signs for each month on paper. (optional)
3. Actors go through the events very quickly with people possibly tossing things on-stage from off stage.
4. One person calls out SEPTEMBER or someone goes by quickly with a sign. Actors go out and quickly go through the motions as someone from off stage rapidly reads events.
5. OCTOBER is announced. Same format.

Example – SEPTEMBER – Welcome the freshmen. First day of school. First dance. First football game. First test. OCTOBER – Homecoming. Pictures! More tests! NOVEMBER - Veteran’s Day. Playoffs! Thanksgiving. While the events are being called out, the actors are going through the motions and things are being tossed to them for each event.

SKIT WITH OFF-STAGE VOICES – PRESENTATION

Write a skit where the actors' voices are coming from off stage so actors just mime the events. Actors need to overact. Dialog needs to be active so you give the actors something to do. Comparisons work well with this with one actor or group freezing while the other actor or group acts. Ideas include:

1. How to ask someone to a dance the right way / the wrong way.
2. Freshmen first day of school versus Senior first day of school.
3. A day in the life of the Principal vs. a day in the life of the ASB President.

SKIT USING A FAMILIAR STORY TO TELL A NEW STORY – PRESENTATION

Write a skit that takes a familiar story, such as a fairy tale, and tell a story with your school mascot as the primary character. Can be used with off stage voice technique or enlist the strong actors from your drama program to act the “play.” Ideas include:

- Your school playing a rival school in a big game. (the villain/hero story)
- Kick off a community event or fundraiser via a mini-musical using well known songs.
- Celebrate your teachers with a take-off on a familiar sitcom