

# IMPROV PROGRAM

*Skills for life and character development*

## Introduction

At TDChristian High School, we believe that true success encompasses much more than academic achievement alone. It involves nurturing students' emotional, social, and spiritual growth by enfoldng, engaging, and empowering them to become well-rounded individuals who are prepared to thrive in all aspects of life.

These core values inspire TDChristian's improv program. Every Grade Nine student is required to take a half-credit improv class where they learn skills that will serve them in their high school years and beyond. The Grade Ten elective credit goes deeper, challenging students to consider how the discipline of improvisation can help them develop and strengthen their personal character. In Grade Eleven and Twelve students can earn credits in both an improv performance, and/or improv community service stream, developing servant-leadership skills teaching, coaching, and mentoring others.

## Rationale

Our Improv Program is a dynamic training system, unique in the country, designed to fulfill all the standard ministry requirements for drama... and so much more. As technology increasingly permeates every area of our lives, improvisation celebrates in a space where to be completely successful, one must be completely human. To err is human, and improvisation incorporates mistakes through the creative process so that students no longer fear failure, but welcome it as part of the learning process.



# Core Values

- **Equitable and Accessible:** Everyone can improvise. Whereas a sports team or school play has a limited number of roles and large discrepancies in the significance and demands of these roles, improv offers a common playing field in which everyone may successfully participate regardless of their level of experience or expertise.
- **Democratic and Collaborative:** Everyone is an important part of the work. Because everyone can improvise, space is given so that everyone's voices have a space in which to be heard. Improv stops being improv unless all players are contributing, so finding ways to encourage each other's participation is baked into an improv ensemble.
- **Practical and Applicable:** Everyone uses and needs improv skills. Most of our education system focusses on training hard skills, but what course teaches how to behave in a job interview? Or a first date? Or how to best find creative flow in a group project? These are essential skills, and they are directly addressed in improv.
- **Flexible and Diverse:** Everyone is different, so the training must be too. Improv training engages the entire person. Ones' knowledge base, physical self, feelings and emotions, personal history and experiences are all critical in the work of play. Because of this, students adapt the work to their own needs and desires.
- **Fun and Engaging:** Everyone loves to play, so if learning can be made into a game in improv, it is. Games afford room for personal goals and challenges. Friendly competition and opportunities to delight and engage peers in performance make the learning celebratory, communal, and joyous.





## Public Performances

Students from our Improv Teams perform every Wednesday at lunch at adLIBB (Lunchtime Improv in the Black Box theatre). They compete every year in the Canadian Improv Games, where they have had great success, medaling nine times in the last ten years. We also host a “Fire Hall Show” in June of each year, as well as hosting an annual “Christmas Invitational” in December.



## Trips

Trips are frequently taken by the improv team to other schools developing their improv programs. We have performed and run improv workshops for churches, youth groups, and seniors. Each year we travel to Ottawa to watch (and sometimes compete) in the Canadian Improv Games.



## The Improv Pedagogy Intensive

In mid-August each summer, TDChristian offers a National Improv Pedagogy Intensive for teachers wishing to incorporate improv pedagogy into their work. The course runs for a full week, and participants can earn a CSTC credit upon successful completion. Teachers learn alongside other teachers as well as members of the TDChristian Improv Team. While ideal for those interested in teaching improv, instructor Richard Peters offers insight into a methodology of teaching that incorporates UDL, Game Theory, and insights gleaned from Second City and iO Chicago, Bad Dog and CB Pro in Toronto, and over 25 years teaching and performing improv.



## Questions?

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