



Presents

GAMES DAD DIDN'T PLAY

BY JEREMY SCHAEFER

His dad is in prison. He's starting a new school.
Lucas is writing a new chapter in his life,
but his past cannot be ignored.

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT'S INSIDE THE GUIDE:

► An Interview with Playwright
Jeremy Schaefer

► Facts about Children
of Incarcerated Parents

► Discussion Questions

► Classroom Activities
(with Common Core, Missouri GLE,
and National Core Arts Standards)

► Resources for Educators

Write your own story!

Lucas and his mom are starting over: a whole new city, a whole new school, a whole new beginning. *Games Dad Didn't Play* follows Lucas in his new life as he struggles to come to terms with everything he doesn't remember, or want to believe, about his dad in prison. So he imagines a whole new dad; one who hadn't hurt anyone.

As his stories about his imaginary dad become more elaborate, Lucas' new best friend, Eddie, grows suspicious. When Eddie learns the truth, he accuses Lucas of being as "bad" as his father. Unsure of what to do, Lucas lashes out. Eventually, with a little help from mom, Lucas begins to understand he doesn't have to repeat his father's "scared mistakes." He may not be able to change what happened in the past, but he can make his own choices. Lucas chooses to repair his friendship with Eddie, use his words instead of fighting and write his own story for the future.



AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT JEREMY SCHAEFER

What inspired you to bring this topic to the stage for an audience of young people?

In my work with social issues theater, I consistently hear stories of children blaming themselves for actions committed by others that are outside of their control. Whether children are coping with teasing, recovering from trauma, or otherwise impacted by external forces, it's important to remind them that they are not at fault, and what they've survived or witnessed does not encompass their whole story.

In *Games Dad Didn't Play*, members of Lucas's community treat him as guilty by association for his father's crimes and Lucas begins to question whether he could have prevented his father from hurting anyone. I wanted to show a family starting over from tragedy. Specifically, I wanted to show a child's journey toward an understanding of their own innocence, and that their past is not necessarily a forecast for their future.

What did your research process look like for this play?

Prior to starting work on *Games Dad Didn't Play*, I attended several workshops and trainings as to how children respond to traumatic events. I've also spent years working with young people in the areas of teasing and bullying prevention. These experiences very much informed the characters in the play. I was careful to keep this research running in the background throughout my writing process. In the foreground was an empathic connection with each character, pushing for honest portrayals of people in different stages of understanding and acceptance.

Was there anything that surprised you from your research?

So much of the research for any story is the observation of people and people are always surprising.

We don't find out what crime Lucas's father committed, can you elaborate on your reason for leaving out this information?

My primary reason for omitting details of Dad's crime was because I wanted this to be Lucas's story. The absence of details regarding dad enables audiences to join Lucas on his emotional journey rather than travel ahead of him. When audiences experience Lucas's story without the weight of his father's narrative, they can walk in Lucas's shoes without drawing conclusions or casting judgment based on Dad's crime.

What do you hope the children and adults who see this play will take away from it?

Everyone has their own story. Yes, the people in our lives affect our stories, but the narrative belongs to us.

Do you have any advice for young people looking for a creative outlet?

Tell your stories. Make up characters, drop them in different settings and keep exploring until your stories start to tell themselves.



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Jeremy Schaefer began telling stories like many storytellers do: as a child fantasizing about dragons and dragon slayers. Storytelling was a natural way to harness his imagination and create something meaningful out of his dreams and fears.

He went on to receive a BFA in Theater Arts from Illinois Wesleyan University. Jeremy studied playwriting and stand up comedy at the University of Middlesex in London, England. He's since traveled Europe, North America and South America collecting stories and discovering inspiration for new stories.

For more about Jeremy Schaefer you can visit his website at

JEREMYTELLSSTORIES.COM





FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

- ✓ There are **2.7 million** children in the United States who have a parent in jail or prison. In other words, **1-in-28** children (3.6%) have an incarcerated parent. Just 25 years ago, the number was 1-in-125.

SOURCE: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/21/sesame-street-reaches-out-to-2-7-million-american-children-with-an-incarcerated-parent/>

- ✓ Approximately **half of children** with incarcerated parents are under ten years old.

SOURCE: <https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/files/nrccfi-fact-sheet-2014.pdf>

- ✓ Half of the mothers (**52%**) and fathers (**54%**) in state prison reported that they were the **primary provider** for their children before their incarceration.

SOURCE: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/21/sesame-street-reaches-out-to-2-7-million-american-children-with-an-incarcerated-parent/>

- ✓ **62%** of parents in state prisons and **84%** of parents in federal prisons are held over 100 miles away from their residence.

43% of parents in federal prisons are held over 500 miles away from their last residence.

SOURCE: <https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/files/nrccfi-fact-sheet-2014.pdf>

- ✓ The San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents created a **Bill of Rights for Children** of which includes the following rights:

1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.
2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.
3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.
4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parent's absence.
5. I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent.
6. I have the right to support as I struggle with my parent's incarceration.
7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because of my parent's incarceration.
8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.

SOURCE: <http://inccip.org/bill-rights-children-incarcerated-parents/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Lucas makes up stories about his dad?
2. Lucas is very creative, but his made up stories about his dad put him in a tough spot. How could he have made better use of his storytelling skills?
3. Have you ever been caught telling a story that wasn't true? How did you respond?
4. Why does Eddie think Lucas is just like his dad?
5. Who does Lucas go to for help? How do these characters help him?
6. What could Lucas have done when he was confronted by Eddie instead of resorting to violence?
7. What are some ways we can solve problems with friends? If you're having a hard time solving a problem, who can you go to for help?
8. Is all conflict bad? What are some examples of ways dealing with conflict can be helpful?
9. What is a scared mistake? Have you ever made a scared mistake and hurt someone? If you apologized, how did that make you feel?
10. What do you think happens in Lucas's life after the play ends?

COMMON CORE STANDARD

SL.3.1 K-12 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

NATIONAL CORE ART STANDARD

ANCHOR STANDARD #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



Write your own story

Lucas is given the opportunity to write his own story. Write a letter to yourself ten years in the future. Write about what you want your story to look like. Tell your future self how you're going to make that story a reality. If you wish to extend this activity, students can pair up and share their stories or students may present their story aloud to the class.

COMMON CORE STANDARD

W.3 K-12 Write narratives to develop imagined experiences using technique, details and clear event sequences

NATION CORE ARTS STANDARD

ANCHOR STANDARD #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and experiences to make art

Reflection Wall

Place a large piece of paper up on the wall or floor for students to write or draw their thoughts or impressions after the production. Allow time for them to read and look at their classmates' reflections. After the exercise, reflect with some of these questions:

- What did you notice about your classmates' impressions and thoughts?
- What surprised you about the play?
- Is there part of the play that you'd like to discuss as a group?

NATIONAL CORE ART STANDARD

ANCHOR STANDARD #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Commonalities

Set up the classroom with plenty of space for movement and divide it into four quadrants. You can divide it with tape or by mentally noting the lines between the quadrants. Invite the students to silently walk around the room. They should avoid staying near friends or around the same group of people. Mix up how students move, for instance, hopping or skipping. When you instruct them to, they should freeze in place. The quadrants that they're standing in will become the group that they work with.

Ask students to come up with 1-5 commonalities. Once all groups have selected their commonalities, they can pick a spokesperson to share with the class. If time allows you can further discuss how they discovered what they had in common, and their experience with the activity.

MISSOURI PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

PS2 K-8 Interacting with others in ways that respect individual and group differences

Cross the Line

Arrange students in two lines on either side of the room, facing each other for this non-verbal activity. Have them imagine there is a line down the middle. You will read a series of statements and if the statement is true for them they will walk across the room and join the other line. Encourage students to notice who is crossing with them and who is standing on the line with them. If they have a question about one of the statements, explain that it is whatever the statement means to them.

Cross the line if...

- You have stepparents.
- You have relatives that speak other languages besides English.
- Math is your favorite subject.
- Reading is one of your favorite activities.
- You secretly dream of auditioning for *The Voice* or *America's Got Talent*
- You have lost somebody that you really loved.
- You play a musical instrument.
- You have ever been afraid to participate in an activity because people will think you're "not cool."
- You think your parents are too strict.
- Your friends have ever made you do something you didn't want to do.
- You have ever done something your parents told you NOT to do.
- You have ever been afraid to hang out with someone because you thought they were a "loser."
- You plan to go to college.
- You plan to leave St. Louis when you are old enough.
- You have traveled to a foreign country.
- You were born in a state or country outside of Missouri.
- There is somebody in your class you wish you could get to know better, but feel too shy to approach them.

Reflect by asking students what surprised them about the activity? Did any of the statements make them feel proud/excited to cross the line? Did any of the statements make them feel nervous to cross? Did they cross even though they felt nervous?

MISSOURI PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

PS1C K-8 Citizenship and contribution within a diverse community

Listening Circle

Organize the group in two concentric circles. The people in the inner circle should be face to face with the people in the outer circle. Give one group a minute to talk about a time they made a new friend. Their partner can only listen; they cannot interrupt or comment. Once the first group has talked for a minute, give the other group a chance to talk to their partner. You can use the following questions to reflect after the listening circle.

- What was it like to talk for a minute?
- What was it like to listen for a minute?
- What did it feel like to be listened to for a minute?
- How did you know your partner was listening? Or were they?

COMMON CORE STANDARD:

SL.4 K-12 Tell a story with descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

MISSOURI COMMUNICATION ARTS GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

LS1B K-8 Demonstrate listening behaviors

LS2A K-8 Share ideas or experiences verbally or using communication systems

Frozen Pictures

The concepts of judgment and shame take place in the play. Students will create frozen pictures, like a selfie or portrait. In the images, encourage students to keep in mind: how near or far they are from each other, levels in space (high, middle, and low), eye contact, and where the audience is. Divide them into small groups (between 3-5) students. They should create two frozen pictures. In the first, at least one student will demonstrate what feeling ashamed would look like and at least one student will demonstrate what judgment looks like. The other students will step into role as bystanders. In the second picture, students in role as bystander will become upstanders and/or allies to the student who felt ashamed. Encourage students to explore acceptance in this image.

Have each group present their pictures to the class. Take time to reflect on what creating the images and sharing them was like. What did the different groups stories have in common? What stories did students see?

MISSOURI COMPREHENSIVE GUIDANCE & COUNSELING STANDARDS

PS2C K-12 Practice problem-solving and conflict resolution skills

NATIONAL CORE ART STANDARDS

ANCHOR STANDARD #5. Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.

ANCHOR STANDARD #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.



RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

Sesame Street: Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/incarceration#>

Rutgers University: Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet

<https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/files/nrccfi-fact-sheet-2014.pdf>

Teach Wire: Behind Locked Doors – How Can Schools Support Pupils With Parents In Prison?

<https://www.teachwire.net/news/behind-locked-doors-how-can-schools-support-pupils-with-parents-in-prison>

Project Avary: Top Ten Things You Should Know

Project Avary offers long-term support, resources, guidance and training for children with incarcerated parents.
<http://www.projectavary.org/top-ten/#>

Prison Fellowship: List of Children's Books That Deal with Incarceration for Ages 3-7, 7-10, and 10+

<https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/support-friends-family-of-prisoners/resources-for-children-of-prisoners/>

Scholastic: Writing My Autobiography – A Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/writing-autobiography-0/>

Edutopia: Why Storytelling in the Classroom Matters

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/storytelling-in-the-classroom-matters-matthew-friday>

Child Development Institute: Storytelling for Children

<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-activities/storytelling-for-children/#.WVH8WRMrKu4>

CDC: School Violence – Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/prevention.html>

20 Innovative Ways Schools Are Combating Bullying

<http://www.onlinecollegecourses.com/2012/02/01/20-innovative-ways-schools-are-combating-bullying/>

The Conflict Resolution Education Connection

<http://www.creducation.org/>

The Art of Peacemaking (activities start on page 42)

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/ArtinPeacemaking.pdf>



3311 Washington Ave.
St. Louis, Missouri 63103

P: 314.932.7414 F: 314.932.7434

MISSION

Inspired by the intelligence and emotional wisdom of young people, we create professional theater, foster inclusive community and nurture meaningful learning through the arts.



Prison Performing Arts involves incarcerated youth and adults in the performing arts to inspire intellectual curiosity and personal development. We nurture discipline, teamwork and communication skills necessary for successful re-entry into society. We encourage members of the larger community to connect personally with program participants, and we offer continuing programs for participants who have been released. PPA is delighted to support the work of Metro Theater Company.

© METRO THEATER COMPANY 2017

Content for this Guide was compiled and written by Andie Murphy. Graphic Design by Britni Eggers.