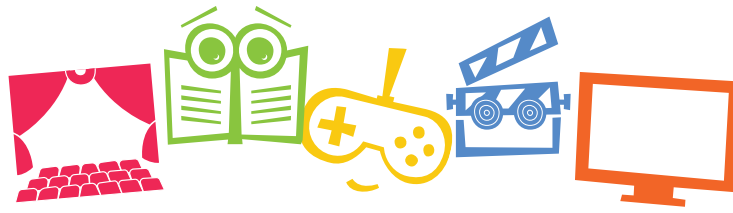


NTC
Ed Talks



Production Innovations

Social Norming Science



Jon Mikkelsen
Creative Director

In July 2017, Jon Mikkelsen, Creative Director at The National Theatre for Children, shared his thoughts on the topic of how Social Norming Science fits

into his design for K-12 programming at NTC. Jon Mikkelsen oversees all of the theatre, video, digital, print and gaming aspects of the educational programming at NTC. Below are Jon's thoughts.

At The National Theatre for Children we visit over 3,000 schools a year with programs designed for all age groups from elementary, middle school and high school. Our program catalog has hundreds of titles on many different subjects including energy efficiency, water conservation, STEM education, anti-bullying and more. But, those are the stats; the "what." Let's discuss the "how."

All of our shows are developed around the science of social norming; it's the theory of how people come to share values in a community. Specifically, social norming states, in our case, that kids develop their values based on what they *believe* their peers are doing. The problem is, many times kids are mistaken about what their peers are *actually* doing. For instance, high schoolers may believe that most of their peers smoke cigarettes. That's a mistaken perception. Most teens don't smoke. As the Truth Campaign (teen smoking campaign) has proven, once students are given the real information, they can change their behaviors.



Our shows work in a similar fashion, but with some important distinctions.

What is social norming?

Kids develop their values based off what their peers are doing.

During any one of our shows, no matter what the subject area is that's being covered, the entire audience is given the same information, at the same time. For instance, in presenting shows that educate students about energy efficiency, all of the students receive the same information, on the same day, at the same time. Prior to the show, some students may already have knowledge about energy, electricity, and what we can do to save it, while others may have very little information on the topic. Despite the wide variety of knowledge levels or commitment to act, misperceptions can be set straight, and a clear path to action can be established.

In order to drive a message home and make certain it is remembered within a community, it needs to be shared by the entire community. That's where The National Theatre for Children comes in: we provide communal theatrical experiences that deliver a message to schools as a social group. Because the students know each other and are surrounded by their friends and their teachers during the performance, the students laugh and share their enthusiasm together. Once the students leave the performance space they continue to talk about what they learned as they make their way back to their classrooms. Most importantly, they



Students laugh and share their enthusiasm together.

continue to talk about it at *home* with their families. The message reverberates over and over again immediately following the performance, in the classrooms, and at home. This shared experience, and its echo effect, is what can influence and change behavior.

Theatre is so universal and such a basic part of the fabric of our society that we can forget its power. That would be a mistake. Theatre is a singular form of communication with the ability to enlighten minds, connect hearts and drive the audience to action. *It's what we do.*



NTC is a premium provider of educational programming with operations in the U.S., Australia and New Zealand. We work directly between schools and clients to promote beneficial behaviors and life skills to students in grades K-12 on a local, regional and national level.

Since 1978, we have formed connections and helped develop relationships between thousands of schools and corporations, nonprofits and governmental organizations. Our value is not just in the impact we create; our turnkey services also change the lives and trajectories of students, mobilize parents and entire families with beneficial messages, and cultivate community-wide goodwill for clients.

Our award-winning educational programs are provided free for schools and are customizable to accommodate specific messages and goals for clients. Through formats including live performance, in-class discussion, graphic novels, print curriculum, and digital games and activities, we present topics such as energy conservation, safety, financial literacy, STEM, water and environmental stewardship, and health and social responsibility in ways that engage and empower students. In doing so, we are helping our clients to be forces of change for students, parents and communities.

Everything
Connects with

