



# EDUCATOR GUIDE



## *Maddi's Fridge*

This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 1 - 4

Supported by:



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## About This Guide

Use this guide to help your students anticipate, investigate, and reflect upon your live performance experience. This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 1 - 4.

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The great thing about the arts is that they can often evolve to meet their context. That means that many of the activities shared are flexible to a lot of different contexts depending on how you choose to frame them in your class. We know you all are experts on your classroom and students, so we invite you to use these lessons and activities as guideposts and adapt them to fit your classroom management style, range of student ability, and time constraints.

#### LEARNING CONNECTIONS

Social Studies: Childhood hunger, food insecurity in communities

Science: Nutrition, health

Social-Emotional Learning: Asking for help and helping others, problem-solving, perseverance

#### LEARNING STANDARDS ICON KEY



THEATER



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL  
LEARNING

**Educators**, we invite you to share with us what you did in your classroom around this guide or the production. You can email [eschildkret@portlandovations.org](mailto:eschildkret@portlandovations.org) or reach us via [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

We want to hear and see what great learning is happening in your classrooms.

## Introducing the Performance

*It is often helpful to share some context with your students before they attend a live performance. Read below for more information on the performance you're coming to see.*

### About the Performance

*Maddi's Fridge* is about the friendship between Maddi and Sofia and a secret that is too big to keep. Maddi is amazing at climbing the rock wall in their neighborhood and helps Sofia conquer her fear of climbing to the top. Sofia's little brother, Luis, is full of energy and creativity. He's obsessed with Cheesy Pizza Bombs, while their dog, Pepito—played by a puppet—adds humor and fun to the play.

One afternoon, after climbing the rock wall, Sofia goes to Maddi's house for a snack. She discovers something upsetting—Maddi's fridge is almost empty, with just a little milk inside. Maddi tells Sofia about her family's struggle with not having enough food but makes her promise not to tell anyone. Sofia feels stuck between wanting to help her friend and keeping her promise.

Sofia tries to help by sneaking food from home to school in her backpack. But things go wrong—one day, the eggs break in her backpack, making a huge mess. On another day, the leftover fish begins to stink and causes a terrible smell. Maddi remains reluctant to accept help, while Sofia is learning it's a bigger problem than she can solve alone. Through their friendship, Sophia and Maddi learn that bravery can look like many things, and reaching out for help is a sign of strength.

### About The Company

Founded in 1977 by playwright David Saar (*The Yellow Boat*), Childsplay is a nationally and internationally respected professional theatre company based in Tempe, Arizona. During his MFA, Saar recognized that children could reap great benefits from experiences with professional theatre. After graduating, he gathered classmates in a 1964 Chevy Impala, and equipped with basic sets and costumes, began performing in local classrooms in Arizona. Today, performing in schools remains a core Childsplay activity with three annual touring productions that visit hundreds of schools throughout Arizona. It is estimated that one in five Arizona K-6 students will see a Childsplay production at their school. More than half of this audience lives at or below the poverty level. Alongside the tour season, Childsplay's annual programming includes: nine months of in-house productions for school and family audiences at The Herberger Theater Center; an on-site academy of theatre classes throughout the year; a variety of education outreach programs embedded throughout the greater Phoenix community; and a national tour.

Childsplay upholds Saar's belief that young people deserve to experience challenging, thought-provoking theatre of the highest artistic quality. The company's respect for children's intelligence and creativity drives them to produce new and innovative works by theatre's finest artists. Equally, their understanding of the challenges facing Arizona's classroom teachers leads them to offer arts education resources throughout Arizona. In the past 43 years, they have educated and inspired more than six million young people and families and have grown to serve an average annual audience of 250,000 students, teachers, and families in Arizona and beyond.

## What To Expect

### The Performance

- The performance is 60 minutes long
- The story deals with food insecurity and involves an argument between friends.
- The play has lots of funny moments

### The Sound

- Actors voices, music, and sound effects are amplified using microphones.

### The Lights

- The performance uses theatrical lighting throughout to emphasize moments and draw the audience's attention to specific parts of the stage.
- At times the theater will go fully dark.

### Resources

- Plan your visit to Westbrook Performing Arts Center: <https://portlandovations.org/about/accessibility-westbrook-performing-arts-center/>
- Learn more about accessibility at Portland Oventions: [portlandovations.org/about/accessibility/](https://portlandovations.org/about/accessibility/)



## Being an Audience Member

An audience member is a part of a larger community – an audience - and you all work together to create your theater experience. Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform. Sharing their hard work and joy with you is one of the best parts of being a performer. Each performance calls for different audience responses. Lively bands, musicians and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and talking from the audience can be distracting. A theater is designed to magnify sound and even the smallest whispers can be heard throughout the auditorium. Childsplay highly encourages clapping and laughing at the parts of the performance that you enjoy.

- As you enjoy the show, think about being a part of the performance.
- What are the differences between attending a live performance and going to a movie or watching television?
- What are some different types of live performances? How many can you name?
- What kind of responses might an audience give to different types of performances?
- What are the different cues that a performer will give you so that you know how to respond? For example, might they bow or pause for applause?



*The interior of Merrill Auditorium*

## Essential Questions

### What is Lois Brandt?

Lois Brandt is a teacher and author who is passionate about helping people of all ages tell the stories they hold close to their hearts. Her short fiction has appeared in Highlights and other fine children's magazines. Years ago, Lois peeked into her best friend's refrigerator and found empty shelves and one small carton of milk; her friend's family didn't have enough money to buy food. *Maddi's Fridge*, Lois' first picture book, is the result of that moment.

Lois served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon, West Africa, and continues to travel widely. She has an MFA from the Northwest Institute of Literary Arts. Lois teaches creative writing at Bellevue College Continuing Education and gives talks about writing to children and adults at local schools, libraries, and writing organizations. Lois lives near Seattle with her husband, assorted kids, two dogs, and a fluffy cat who thinks he's a dog.

Learn more about Lois Brandt: <https://www.loisbrandt.com/about-lois>

### What are Food Security and Food Insecurity?

“Food Security” means everyone in a household has access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life. When families do not have enough food to meet their needs, that is called “food insecurity.”

Food insecurity can look like many things:

- Worrying that food will run out before there is enough money to buy more
- Not being able to afford to eat balanced meals.
- Skipping meals because there is not enough money for food.
- Being hungry but not eating because there was not enough money for food.
- Relying on low-cost food to feed the family.

Food insecurity is a symptom of a much larger issue – that a family does not have the money and resources they need to live happy, healthy lives. In Maine, one in five children (18.7%) live in food insecure households. SNAP benefits in Maine currently serve roughly 150,000 individuals, which leaves 100,000 people to find other ways to bridge the meal gap, the difference between the amount of food people need and the amount of food they can afford to buy. Programs like school pantries, food banks, and summer meal programs can help families bridge the meal gap. What programs are currently available in your school and community?

Find more information about food security and resources at Preble Street's Food Security Hub: <https://www.preblestreet.org/what-we-do/food-programs/foodsecurityhub/>

Find food: <https://www.gsfb.org/food-map/>

## What is a Food Desert?

When families live in a neighborhood where they are not easily able to access healthy food, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables, the geographic area is called a “food desert.” There may be no grocery stores within a reasonable distance, no public transportation for people without cars to rely on, or food options may be limited to convenience stores and fast-food restaurants with few healthy choices. Food deserts most often occur in low-income areas and they affect communities of color at much higher rates. Living in a food desert with limited access to healthy food can contribute to higher rates of chronic health problems and diabetes in low-income communities. Food deserts can occur in cities as well as rural areas, anywhere there is limited access to healthy food and/or few public transportation options. If you identify a food desert in your community, there are lots of ways to address it. Consider working with your school to create a school pantry or creating a community garden for growing fresh fruits and vegetables.

See a map of food deserts in Maine: [https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/atlas\\_docs/vol2013/iss1/5/](https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/atlas_docs/vol2013/iss1/5/)



## PRE-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY: Constellations

Constellations is an active strategy that uses the body to demonstrate connections between people in a community (like a classroom). Use this activity to help your students think about the many ways they are connected to each other and to introduce one of the primary themes of the play: what it means to be a good friend. It makes a great warm-up exercise for the pre-show activity, Friends Helping Friends Images.



#### Materials:

Space to move

#### Procedure:

1. Begin by defining the parameters of the playing space and ask students to stand within it. This activity does not require students to create a circle.
2. Explain the activity—inform students that you will read a series of prompts that require them to respond with their bodies. There are no right or wrong answers, and everyone will have multiple ways to respond to each prompt.
3. Read the first prompt: Place your hand on the shoulder of the person you have known the longest. Give students a moment to respond to the prompt. Invite them to observe the room.
4. Continue offering prompts. Shoulders are a good connection point in this activity, but you can absolutely vary the way students connect. Here are some sample prompts to consider:
  - Place your hand on the shoulder of the person you've known the shortest amount of time
  - ... a person who helped you today
  - ... a person who made you smile today
  - ... a person with a skill you'd like to learn
  - ... a person you'd like to get to know better
  - ... a person whose style you admire
  - ... a person who makes you laugh.
5. After each prompt, invite students to observe the room and the “constellations” they have created.

#### Reflection

Through this activity, students connect into small groups. Consider having students respond to prompts in their small groups before coming together as a class!

- What did you notice about yourself during this activity? What did you notice about the group?
- What, if anything, was surprising to you?
- Why might it be important for us to consider the types of connections we share?
- What does it mean to be a good friend?

## ACTIVITY: Friends Helping Friends Images

*Frozen images provide students with a non-verbal, embodied way of exploring abstract concepts like Friendship. They are also a great way to assess students' understanding of a topic at the beginning or end of a lesson. This activity uses frozen images to explore what it means to be a good friend. It can be used as a follow-up to Constellations as a way of delving deeper.*



### Materials:

Space to move

### Procedure:

1. Begin by defining the parameters of the playing space and ask students to stand within it in a place where they can freely move their body and not be distracted by others. This activity does not require students to create a circle.
2. Together as a class, brainstorm the characteristics of a good friend. Challenge students to come up with as many examples as possible.
3. Ask students to choose one of the characteristics of a good friend they brainstormed and create a frozen image with their bodies to represent it. The image can be concrete or abstract.
4. Invite half the class to unfreeze and observe their classmates' images, then switch so that everyone has a chance to observe.
5. Take a moment to reflect on the images. Ask students what they observed or noticed about their images. Encourage students to begin by physically describing the images before moving to interpretation.
6. Ask students to find one person whose image they resonated with and stand next to them. It could be someone whose image seemed similar to theirs, or someone whose image they want to know more about.
7. In small groups, invite students to create a new image, this time of a specific moment where someone chooses to be a good friend.
8. As before, invite half the class to unfreeze and observe images, then switch.

### Reflection

- What did you notice about yourself in this activity? What did you notice about the group?
- How did you use your body to portray friendship?
- Was it difficult or easy to create an image of a moment someone chooses to be a good friend?
- Can you think of a time someone was a good friend to you? What did they do?

## POST-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

### Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. Why does Sofia tell Maddi's secret to Luis? Do you think she made the right choice?
2. In what ways do Maddi and Sofia help each other?
3. Have you ever felt like Sofia, where you wanted to help a friend but didn't know what to do? What did you do?
4. Have you ever made a promise to a friend? Was it easy or hard to keep it?
5. What can we do when we see something unfair, like food insecurity, happening in the world?



## ACTIVITY: Magic Lunchbox

*In Maddi's Fridge, Sophia tries to help her friend Maddi by sharing her food at school. This activity uses pantomime to practice generosity with beloved foods, providing students an opportunity to share their favorites with their classmates, even when sharing real food is difficult.*

### Materials:

Space for a circle

### Procedure:

1. Gather students in a circle and introduce the Magic Lunch Box: this imaginary box is where you can place a favorite food you'd love to share - since it's imaginary, we can share whatever we'd like! Place the "box" in the center of the circle.
2. Model pantomiming a food item and demonstrate exploring its shape, smell, taste, and texture. Say what the food is and place it in the Magic Lunch Box.
3. Students take turns imagining a food they want to share, using pantomime to show its characteristics. After showing and naming the food, the sharer places it into the box.
4. Once all foods are in the box, gather for an "imaginary picnic." Each student can pretend to take a food out of the box and eat it (they can choose something someone else shared or the food they brought). While you eat, explain that sharing is just one way to show others kindness. Ask, "What are some other ways we can help each other?"

Tip: use this activity as a starting point for a class discussion about actions to take in your community. See Lois Brandts' ideas for fighting hunger as a class here: <https://www.loisbrandt.com/take-action>

## ACTIVITY: Write a Thank You Note

*After watching the play, engage your students in thinking about the people who have helped them, the way Maddi and Sophia helped each other, by writing thank you notes.*

### Materials:

Paper and writing implement  
Coloring supplies

### Procedure:

1. Give students the prompt: Think about a time when someone helped you and you truly appreciated it, whether that was by helping you learn a new skill, by being a good listener when you needed to talk, or even by finding the right person to help you with a problem that was too big to solve alone. Your helper might be a friend, a family member, a teacher, or a coach. How did their support make you feel?
2. Ask students to write a thank you note to that person. The note should clearly state how that person helped and how their support made you feel.
3. Invite students to draw a picture for their notes' recipient on their thank you note.



4. You can choose whether to ask students to deliver their thank you notes or display them in the classroom (or both! Display notes in the classroom for a set period of time and then as a class, have a mailing session where students put their notes in an envelope and mail them or bring them to their helper.) After students have shared with their groups, invite groups to collaborate to create a single new step inspired by their signature moves. It can be as simple or complex as they want it to be.
5. Once groups agree on a step and practice it a few times, ask each group to give their dance step a name that captures the essence of the move.

We'd love to see your thank you notes! You can email scans of student artwork to us at [offstage@portlandovations.org](mailto:offstage@portlandovations.org) or mail copies to us at 120 Exchange Street Suite 110, Portland, ME 04101. Student artwork is our favorite mail to get!

### Resources

Schedule an author visit with Lois Brandt (FREE In-Person visits for Title 1 Schools!) <https://www.loisbrandt.com/school-visits>

Learn more about food insecurity in Maine: <https://www.maine.gov/future/hunger/dashboard/food-insecurity-rates#:~:text=The%20most%20recent%20Map%20the,food%20insecurity%20in%20New%20England.>

Read about the Maine Hunger Initiative: [https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/2025-02/GOPIF\\_EndingHunger021025\\_2\\_0.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/2025-02/GOPIF_EndingHunger021025_2_0.pdf)

Access resources to fight childhood hunger: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/hunger-relief-programs>

Create a school pantry: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/hunger-relief-programs/school-pantry>

Make Luis's Cheesy Pizza Bombs: <https://www.loisbrandt.com/cheesy-pizza-bombs>



## ABOUT PORTLAND OVATIONS

**Portland Oventions**, founded in 1931, produces dynamic performing arts events including classical music, jazz, opera, dance, theater, and Broadway. We believe that cultural enrichment should be high quality and accessible to all. Oventions collaborates with other nonprofit organizations, education systems, and the business sector to promote lifelong learning while celebrating the power and virtuosity of the performing arts. We bring the exhilaration of the performing arts into our communities with free events as part of Oventions Offstage, connecting artists and audiences. Join us at unexpected “art happenings,” classroom workshops, masterclasses, community discussions, and pre-performance lectures to explore together the relevance and connection of the performing arts to our lives.

### **Land Acknowledgment**

Portland Oventions’ programs are presented on Wabanaki land, home of the Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and Penobscot Nations, their elders past and present, and future generations.

We encourage you to learn more and take action in support of Maine’s Indigenous communities through the following organizations

#### [Abbe Museum](#)

*Maine’s premier museum dedicated to indigenous history and culture. Their mission is to inspire new learning about the Wabanaki Nations with every visit.*

#### [Maine-Wabanaki Reach](#)

*A Native-led non-profit that supports the self-determination of Wabanaki people through education, truth-telling, restorative justice, and restorative practices in Wabanaki and Maine communities.*

Created and written by Dr. Liz Schildkret

Designed by Katie Day

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We want to know what *you* thought about the performance. You can write your answers below or draw a picture on the back of this page. Thank you!

**PERFORMANCE:** *Maddi's Fridge*

**SCHOOL NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TEACHER NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**YOUR NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ May we use your name when we share your comments?  
Yes\_\_ No\_\_

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**What did you like about *Maddi's Fridge*? Why did you like that part?**

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**What was something that you learned during the performance?**

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**What would you like to tell other kids about *Maddi's Fridge*?**

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**What types of performance would you like Portland Oventions to offer in the future? (Feel free to share what type of art you are interested in (theater, dance, music), what cultures you might like to see, what topics the art might connect with, or specific artists.)**

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We want to know what you thought about the performance.  
Draw a picture of a part of *Maddi's Fridge* that you liked. Thank you!



**YOUR NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **SCHOOL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TEACHER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Please scan and email to [offstage@portlandovations.org](mailto:offstage@portlandovations.org) or mail to Portland Ovations 120 Exchange St Portland, ME 04101

Please take a few moments to fill out this survey after you attend the performance. You can also fill it out [online here](#). Your response provides valuable insight on the impact, accessibility, and relevancy of the School-Time Performance Series and will allow us to improve and strengthen the program. Thank you.

**PERFORMANCE: *Maddi's Fridge***

**TEACHER NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GRADE(S) OF STUDENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SCHOOL NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CITY/TOWN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**1. From your perspective as a teacher, how would you rate *Maddi's Fridge*?**

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

**3. What made this a valuable experience for your students? (If it wasn't, what can we do better?)**

**4. What was your primary reason for choosing to bring your students to *Maddi's Fridge*?**

- I wanted my students to experience the performing arts.  
 The performance topic fit with my curriculum goals.  
 The date and time of the performance fit our schedule.  
 The ticket price is affordable.  
 Other (please specify):

**5. How did this live performance connect to or enhance your curriculum?**

**6. Did you use the Educators Guide provided by Portland Oventions before or after attending the performance?**

- Yes     No

**7. Why or why not?**

**8. What improvements could we make to the Educators Guide to serve you and your classroom better?**

MAIL RESPONSES TO: Portland Oventions 120 Exchange Street Portland, ME 04101  
EMAIL SCANNED RESPONSES TO: [offstage@portlandovations.org](mailto:offstage@portlandovations.org)

**9. How would you rate the following components of attending the School-Time Performance?**

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Reserving & paying for tickets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication about the day of the performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrival at the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Departure from the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. What types of performances would you like to bring your students to in the future?** (Feel free to share art forms, topics/themes, specific artists, etc.)?

**11. A number of generous individuals and organizations make it possible for Portland Ovation to offer these School-Time Performance tickets at extremely discounted rates. Is there anything you'd like them to know in terms of your experiences or its impact on your students?**