THE STORY: Reigning “Master of X-Box”, and “Junk Food Junkie,” Austin suddenly faces the long-term consequences of an unhealthy diet and lack of exercise when he learns his mother has been diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. In partnership with Shaping NJ, George Street Playhouse’s first Educational Touring Theatre musical explores how one family confronts the challenges of obesity by having the courage to make healthy choices together. This fun, upbeat, musical comedy celebrates how positive change can occur with the power of love, hard work and support.

The objective of this production is to engage students in a dialogue about healthy eating habits and exercise, while providing knowledge about obesity, diabetes, and other weight related health concerns. It is our aim, through theatre and music, to encourage students to develop long lasting healthy nutrition and exercise habits.
WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE THE SHOW

Consider asking your students questions to help them prepare for the show, and help them understand the key themes of making healthy lifestyle choices.

A Food Affair: Food means different things to different people, based on family backgrounds and cultures.

1. Describe your favorite meal. Where do you enjoy it? Who cooks it for you?
2. Describe a typical family dinner. How often do you and your family sit down together for a meal?
3. What special foods does your family prepare for holidays or celebrations?

The Facts: Diabetes is a disease in which the body isn't able to convert sugar into energy. Sugar stays in the blood and can reach dangerous levels.

QUICKWRITE & SHARE

A. Describe your favorite meal. Where do you enjoy it? Who cooks it for you?

B. Describe a typical family dinner. How often do you and your family sit down together for a meal?

C. What special foods does your family prepare for holidays or celebrations?
AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As a member of the audience, you will have an important role during the live performance you are about to see. Your job is to follow good theatre etiquette (see the definition of Theatre Etiquette below) in order to make the production fun and exciting for both the actors and the rest of the audience.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE:

THE CONDUCT OR PROCEDURE REQUIRED TO BE OBSERVED BY AN AUDIENCE AT A LIVE PERFORMANCE OF ACTORS IN A SHOW; IN OTHER WORDS... HOW TO BEHAVE.

TURN IT OFF: NO TEXTING, E-MAILING, POSTING, SURFING, OR PHONE CALLS DURING THE PERFORMANCE. IT IS DISTRACTING TO THE ACTORS AND THE AUDIENCE.

IN YOUR SEAT: ONCE THE PERFORMANCE HAS BEGUN STAY IN YOUR SEAT SO OTHERS CAN SEE AND HEAR.

LAUGH, CHEER, & APPLAUD: WHEN IT IS APPROPRIATE. AUDIENCES ARE ENCOURAGED TO LAUGH, CHEER OR APPLAUD. SOME APPROPRIATE MOMENTS ARE: IF THE PERFORMANCE IS FUNNY, SURPRISING, OR EXCITING.

NO CAMERAS PLEASE: DO NOT TAKE PICTURES DURING THE PERFORMANCE.

NOTE: WHISPERING IS STILL TALKING, SO DON'T DO IT.
Here are a series of questions that you can use to assess student understandings and perceptions as audience members from George Street Playhouse’s Educational Touring Theatre production of *Austin the Unstoppable*.

Now that you have seen the show, here are some ideas to discuss with your students:

1. **What is *Austin the Unstoppable* about?**
2. **What ideas do Barry Wyner and Daniel Israel explore in this musical?**
3. **What parts of the production are most memorable to you and why?**
4. **Discuss how the music helped to tell the story. What was your favorite song?**
5. **What do the characters mean when they sing: “Our lives are on these shelves?”**
6. **What is your favorite junk food?**
7. **What is your favorite healthy food?**

**To write *Austin The Unstoppable*, Barry Wyner and Daniel Israel asked themselves questions about their own feelings on food.**

1. Judging from the musical, what “junk foods” do you think Wyner and Israel like to eat?
2. What is your favorite junk food?
3. What is your favorite healthy food?
Q: What was the original inspiration for Austin the Unstoppable? What drew you to this topic?
A: George Street Playhouse asked if I’d like to write a children’s musical on wellness and nutrition, and I thought, “What a great idea!” I knew it would be challenging to make that topic fun, but hopefully we succeeded. I got the inspiration for the story from a YouTube video about a real boy named Austin.

Q: How did you work together as collaborators (with Dan Israel)? What was your process?
A: We discussed the plot framework with each other, and also with Jim Jack (Director of Education and Outreach at GSP). Once it was agreed upon, I would write the scenes and lyrics. Dan formed musical ideas based on the lyrics I sent him. Then, we would work in the same room and flesh out the song from his musical ideas. Often, I would alter lyrics to fit melody ideas that Dan had. It was very back-and-forth. When we were in rehearsal, I made many changes to the plot and dialogue based on suggestions from the director and the actors.

Q: What do you want the impact of Austin the Unstoppable to be?
A: I strongly hope that this musical inspires young people to form healthy habits. Kids are dreamers, and they each have the potential to become the next Steve Jobs, Stephen Curry, Ben Folds, etc. But only if they are healthy enough to make those dreams come true. You can’t neglect your health and expect anything else good to happen. Lifestyle habits and eating habits directly affect the course of a person’s life, for better or worse, so I hope this musical helps kids make good choices.

Q: What inspires you as an artist?
A: I see a lot of beauty and emotion in life, and I’ve always loved musicals because they heighten those things. Musicals are like a SUPER emotional, glorified version of life, and I find that so cool. I think art is a good way to make people think, or to inspire them, or sometimes just to entertain them so they forget their problems (for) a while. There’s no greater feeling than watching a group of people-- strangers you have never met-- laugh or cry from something that you wrote. I only want to make art that has a positive effect on people, and I certainly hope Austin lives up to that mission.

Q: What advice or thoughts do you have to share with an aspiring musical theatre actor, writer or composer?
A: Obviously we all know it is a tough business. The real world does not care whether or not you get to express yourself for a living. BUT, it is important to remember that all the great artists you look up to began as nobodies. And if it could happen to them, why can’t it happen to YOU? I think the key is to build plenty of other sources of meaning and happiness into your life. That way, if the art thing doesn’t work out, you will be just fine. If a person has a dream in the arts, I think it is important to make some attempt at pursuing it, because otherwise, you’ll always be wondering “What if?” So I say: Go for it!

The cast of AUSTIN THE UNSTOPPABLE performs throughout New Jersey. Barry Wyner wrote the book and lyrics. Daniel Israel is the composer. These award-winning artists were commissioned by George Street Playhouse to develop a musical about health and wellness.
BARRY WYNER (Book and Lyrics): Barry Wyner has received the Kleban Prize, the Jerry Bock Award, the Richard Rodgers Award, and an IRNE nomination for best new play. His musical CALVIN BERGER has had full productions at Gloucester Stage Co., Barrington Stage Co., and George Street Playhouse (directed by 2-time Tony winner Kathleen Marshall). One of his songs was published in the BMI Workshop Songbook and recorded by TV star Neil Patrick Harris.

People struggle with changes all the time…
I like the challenge of taking a topic some people might say is dry…
and make that funny and heartfelt and an entertaining journey for the characters.

- Barry Wyner, writer, AUSTIN THE UNSTOPPABLE

DANIEL ISRAEL (Composer): Daniel Israel is a member of the advanced BMI Lehman Engle Musical Theatre Workshop, and recipient of the 2010 BMI Harrington Award for Creative Achievement in Musical Theatre. His other new musical in development, THE DIRTY HIPPIE JAM BAND PROJECT, has been featured in various showcases throughout New York City. He graduated from the University of Rochester, Magna Cum Laude with High Honors.

Hmm… What am I eating? What are my nutritional habits?
Do I play too many video games? Do I sit around too much?
Should I be exercising more? Should I be eating differently?

- Kevin Del Aguila, director, AUSTIN THE UNSTOPPABLE, hopes audience members will ask themselves these questions when they see this musical.
Beyond the Show Activities

FUN ACTIVITIES FOR ANYTIME

Here are activities you can do with your students to help further the concepts presented in Austin the Unstoppable.

### 20 MIN

**BECOME A LYRICIST**

Barry Wyner is a lyricist and wrote all of the lyrics, or the words for songs, in Austin the Unstoppable.

1. Write a “love” song for your favorite healthy snack. You might also want to write a “break-up” song for your favorite “junk food.”
   **TIP:** Remember, the lyrics of songs look like poems when written on the page. They can rhyme, but don’t have to.
2. Create a vocal composition, or melody, to set your lyrics to music.
3. Perform your songs for others.

### THE SOURCE OF LIFE 30 MIN

People cannot live without food. In the United States, a very small percentage of the population grows food. Research and write about one part of the food journey. Here are some ideas for topics.

1. What is the difference between organic, free range, and agri-business farming practices to grow chickens? You may also choose a different raw food source, such as beef, pork, and fish.
2. Why can you purchase strawberries 365 days a year?
3. How has transportation changed the way we eat?
4. Where are the farmers’ markets in your area? What is the value of a farmers’ market? Are farmers’ markets beneficial?
It’s Not a Dog’s Life

“WOULD YOU GET YOUR DOG UP IN THE MORNING FOR A CUP OF COFFEE, AND A DOUGHNUT?”

JACK LALANNE, HEALTH AND FITNESS PIONEER AND MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER.

This year, Austin’s weight grew much more than his height. If that continues, he could become overweight, obese... and even sick.

The Most Important Meal of the Day: What did you have this morning for breakfast? It’s hard to imagine a pet owner feeding a dog caffeine and sugar for breakfast. What do you think Jack LaLanne thought of coffee and doughnuts as a breakfast for people?

Breakfast is considered by most nutritional experts to be the most important meal of the day. It prepares your body and mind for the tasks ahead. Yet, how many of us start the day with food covered in sugar? Jack LaLanne, often regarded as “the father of fitness,” lived to be 96-years-old. During his career, he developed fitness and nutrition techniques, invented fitness and nutrition machines, and brought health and fitness to the forefront of popular culture through television. In the quote above LaLanne described his views on nutrition. As a boy, he was a sugarholic—absolutely addicted to sugar. But when he was fourteen, he learned how damaging sugar is to the body and quit using sugar for the rest of his life.

1. Write down what you ate for breakfast for the past three days. What did you eat? Check the label: how much processed sugar was added to your food? How did it make you feel?

2. How did your breakfast prepare you to be successful? What nutrition did it supply your body?

3. Dylan sings, “The human body is like a car, give it gas and you’ll go far.” How far will the breakfast fuel you are giving your body take you?

4. Parents, doctors and health experts talk about how sugar is bad for you. But why? Research why sugar can be damaging to your body. Write a paragraph describing why too much sugar is bad for you.

5. Rethink breakfast: What healthy choices could you eat for breakfast that would prepare you for a successful day—and life?

“Would you get your dog up in the morning for a cup of coffee, and a doughnut?”

-Jack LaLanne, health and fitness pioneer and motivational speaker.
You are what you eat! Using food images from magazines or the internet make a food collage portrait of yourself! If you cannot find all the images you want, draw or paint some foods like Giuseppe Arcimboldo would have done. You can find more of Giuseppe Arcimboldo’s paintings at Google Images.

Before you begin, answer the following questions about Arcimboldo’s portraits. The questions may help you to focus on the food collages you want to make.

1. When you look at Giuseppe Arcimboldo’s paintings, what do you notice first?
2. Besides food, what other elements are in Arcimboldo’s portraits?
3. How do the paintings make you feel?
4. Why do you think he chose to make them look like food?

Now, make a collage portrait of yourself as food. Use the foods that you have eaten in the past two days to guide you.

1. What can you tell about yourself from looking at the portrait?
2. If you think about what you want to accomplish in your life, what changes would you make to your collage so you can fulfill your dreams?
ACTIVITIES FOCUSED ON DIET AND PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Favorite Dish: Process Paper

Have students create a process paper featuring the recipe from one of their favorite meals.

What is your favorite meal to eat? List all of the ingredients that go into the meal, and describe in specific detail what you need to do to prepare this meal. If the meal has several elements, select one to focus on. For example, Austin’s favorite meal is: barbequed chicken, fries, apple pie and a chocolate shake. So, for this activity, he would only select one of these items.

1. How healthy do you think the dish is for you? Why?
2. How can you calculate how healthy this meal is? Enter the ingredients of your recipe into the website: www.caloriecount.com/ cc/recipe_analysis.php to determine the number of calories and the overall health of the meal.
3. What did you learn from caloriecount.com? Did anything surprise you? If so, what?
4. What changes to ingredients or preparation could you make to the meal to make it healthier, but still make it delicious?

Create The Unstoppable Dance!

Small groups or full class activity. Using the opening number from the show, create The Unstoppable! The Unstoppable is an energetic, active dance routine set to Unstoppable. Students can invent an imaginative set of movements that will get their heart rate pumping and exercise the major muscle groups in the body.

Every Unstoppable must have these three elements:
1. Flashy Handshake/Fistbump
2. Bold Super Hero Pose(s)
3. Five Unstoppable Jumps

Video your classes Unstoppable Dance and submit it to our website where it can go head to head with head to head with Unstoppable Dances from other schools. Each year the best (most liked) Unstoppable will be featured on our website and receive an exciting class prize!
Use the JOURNEY FROM FARM TO FORK flowchart to answer the following questions.

1. Where does all food start? Why is it called a raw source? Do you know of any of these places in your local area?

2. What does packaging mean? Can you describe different types of food packaging?

3. Some food is left whole and packaged, but other raw sources are made into something else. Think about the food you eat or have at home. What are some examples of manufactured food?

4. Once food is finished being manufactured and packaged, it is transported. What types of modern transportation are used? How has transportation allowed food from different countries to be more accessible?

5. Once a distributor has the food, they can sell it to places where the consumer can buy it. What are some of the places where people go to get food? Is all the food that we buy and eat healthy?

BUY FOODS THAT DO NOT CONTAIN CHEMICAL ADDITIVES.
THEATRE: Define the words below as they pertain to plays and musicals

Actor: A person who represents a character in a play.

Blocking: The positioning of actors on stage during a performance.

Book: In a musical the book is the dialogue the characters speak, which tells the story.

Character: A person in a play or a story. Also the way a person in a play or story acts or behaves.

Composer: One who writes, particularly music.

Director: The person who coordinates all aspects of a production. The director is responsible for all the details needed to tell a story, including the blocking of actors, the details of the sound and light cues, the costumes, the set designs, and all other elements of a production.

Lyrics: The words of a song.

Musical: A story performed by actors using music, songs and dialogue.

Production: A presentation for the stage, screen, radio, or television.

Theatre: The building where a performance is held for an audience, or the acting out of a story through the use of actors performing dialogue.

Writer: A person who is able to make-up stories using spoken words, written words, or music.

FOOD: Define the following words

Organic Food: Foods that are produced using methods that do not involve modern synthetic inputs such as synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers, do not contain genetically modified organisms, and are not processed using irradiation, industrial solvents, or chemical food additives.

Free Range: Animals allowed to roam and forage freely, such as free-range chickens.

Natural Food: The term is often assumed to be foods that are minimally processed and do not contain any hormones, antibiotics, sweeteners, or food colors that were not originally in the food. The terms are often misused on labels and in advertisements.

Agri-business: Range of activities and disciplines used for modern food production. These activities can be done on a large corporate scale or on small family owned farms.

ABOUT GEORGE STREET PLAYHOUSE

The mission of George Street Playhouse is to enrich people’s lives by producing world-class theatre. Founded in 1974, George Street Playhouse is one of New Jersey’s preeminent professional theatres committed to the production of new and established plays. With a staff of 50 artists, technicians and administrators, George Street Playhouse develops innovative theatre that encourages the growth of the theatrical art form while reflecting and addressing the needs of our community. Through our Mainstage Series and education and outreach initiatives, the Playhouse reaches an ever-growing cross-section of the diverse New Jersey community and contributes to the development of the American theatre repertory. Annually, the Playhouse serves an audience of approximately 140,000.

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