

PROMOTING LEARNING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM WITH
CREATIVE DRAMATICS

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews some recent research literature from a variety of fields that directly or indirectly explore how creative dramatics has been used to support learning in schools. The purpose of this paper is to examine ways in which creative dramatics are used successfully to promote learning across the curriculum. The findings of this review include both results from integrating theater into K-12 schools and the implications of those results. Specific topics covered in this literature review include: scholastic benefits from drama and integrated arts instruction, creative dramatics as a means of promoting oral and written skills, the effect on self-esteem of involvement in creative dramatics, and the role of drama in the development of critical thinking.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

As a result of using creative dramatics in teaching, educators have witnessed gains (Jackson, 1997; Pitman, 1997). In this paper, it is assumed that creative dramatics is indeed a useful tool that educators may use to promote learning. This assumption then leads to the query of this research: How can creative dramatics promote learning across the curriculum?

Creative dramatics, like the term “theatre arts”, is inclusive of many practices, to include: acting, movement, scriptwriting, improvisational exercises, technical theater and role playing. Creative dramatic techniques are currently employed in two main ways in U.S. public schools: in drama programs and pull out dramatic classes, as well as integrated throughout the various disciplines. Dramatic integration is especially found in English classes and many elementary level classrooms. The focus of this literature review will include all of these techniques and situations.

Rationale and Purpose

Most children are naturally creative until they are taught to reproduce, rather than to create (Furth 1970; Johnstone 1979). Schooling, therefore, could be more successful if it re-taught children to be more creative and expressive, and therefore, give them the tools to learn in a way which lends itself to how they learn best. In order to engage students and give them the tools to fully understand ideas, students might be better served by encountering the full

range of communicative devices such that creative dramatics lends itself to (Daniels, Hyde & Zemelman 2005).

Furthermore, there is a potential for increasing other types of learning. It has been well documented that students learn most effectively by doing social activities and least effectively through lecture instruction (George 1994; Daniels, Hyde & Zemelman 2005; Rogoff 1990). Recommendations for changing schooling practices include less student passivity and more student control of what they are learning (Daniels, Hyde & Zemelman 2005; Delpit 1995). The question of this paper lends itself to the problem of activity based methods in schools. Creative dramatics may be one solution to this absence. Drama provides a potential set of strategies for bringing more activity and hence more learning into schooling.

This type of learning may also provide academic growth in terms of better understanding a variety of contents such as history and literature. Creative dramatics may also be helpful in such skills as critical thinking. If creative dramatics can be used to promote learning, how can teachers effectively adjust their classroom practice in order to best serve the learning of their students using creative dramatics? Also, what skills and types of learning are actually enhanced by these techniques?

Currently, it is unrealistic to expect all students to have access to a drama program within their schools. Therefore, some hold the belief that dramatics should be integrated throughout the disciplines. Many believe that this could be a tremendous aid in the reformation of schools and that any tools teachers can have to inspire and instill students with the desire and accessibility to learning should be utilized. If creative dramatics are to be used to promote student learning, teachers need to be trained in how to effectively teach them.

However, it is possible that creative dramatics has no use beyond the drama classroom and has little to offer in aiding the learning of academics, critical thinking, and other skills outside of acting. This belief is held, at least implicitly by many. In this paper, although the assumption is made that creative dramatics does promote learning, no position is taken in regards to what degree, or in what ways, or in what curriculum this learning will effectively occur.

Limitations

This paper reviews the literature on the use of creative dramatics in K-12 education. The United States is unique from other countries in its use of creative dramatics, and therefore will be studied autonomously. All types of schooling will be included, both historically and currently. The studies reviewed occurred within the last twenty-five years.

Summary

By reviewing the professional literature on the effective use of creative dramatics in schools, an answer will be sought to the question: How can creative dramatics promote learning across the curriculum? It is assumed that creative dramatics does promote learning, but how and in what ways remains undetermined prior to the review of the literature. For example, what types of learning can creative dramatics promote? Also, in what areas of study should creative dramatics be used; in the drama classroom alone or integrated within other curricula? It is also assumed that children are innately creative. The term “creative

dramatics” is inclusive of all role-playing, acting, scriptwriting, movement, technical theater, and improvisational techniques.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, the literature will be reviewed in order to answer the question: How can creative dramatics promote learning across the curriculum? To provide background to this question, the evolution of dramatic education in the United States school systems will now be discussed. The different strategies and placement of creative dramatics across the curriculum will be summarized and discussed.

The Classical Scholar

Prior to the twentieth century, arts education in America was only for the privileged. Only the rich had access to arts education and dramatics were only incorporated at the collegiate level. Therefore, the history of dramatics did not truly begin within the American K-12 school system until the 1900's.

In the nineteenth century, there was, however, an educational philosophy known as classical humanism (Butts, 1953). According to Butts, the leaders of this movement believed that learning was, “not a matter of sense perceptions received from the external world but [was] a matter of disciplining the intellectual faculties and developing the moral and spiritual and esthetic faculties of the mind” (p. 331). This seems congruent to the belief held by many educators today that learners should be taught how to think and not what to think. The best studies for this learning, according to the humanists, were the classical teachings of the

Greeks and Romans to include oratory and the fine arts (Butts, 1953). However, the common masses were not expected to be capable of experiencing these educational ideals. Socially, the belief was commonly held that good educational practice differed according to class.

Experimentation and Radicalism

There were, however, a few occasions of arts education in public schools that many considered radical at the time. One of these occasions included the work of Francis W. Parker (Knopf, 1961). At his school, students led their own projects using dramatics. Parker believed that a dramatic education was inclusive to the ways in which children could best learn all subject matters. Parker's philosophy was one of the first to emerge that incorporated the idea that children are naturally playful and creators of art.

Also in the late nineteenth century, Marietta Pierce Johnson was one of the pioneers of dramatics in education. She believed in a holistic pedagogical program that was inclusive of the arts. She incorporated spontaneous, imaginative dramatization into her curriculum (Knopf, 1961). Unlike Parker, Johnson utilized the arts as just one strategy of learning, but believed that a curriculum for young people should be integrated.

Dewey and Progressivism

One of the most important figures in the history of dramatic education prior to World War I was John Dewey (Butts, 1953). At the time of Dewey, dramatic education was either taught by and for the rich, or was implemented by isolated schools associated with radicalism.

In contrast, Dewey believed that drama was a useful activity for all learners, regardless of their social status or political beliefs. Dewey believed in the educational value of social interaction and individual expression and saw the benefit of activities in creative dramatics, language, manual and household arts, nature study, art, and music (Butts, 1953). He began a movement that welcomed content that included subjects outside of the core of reading, writing and arithmetic. Because of Dewey's philosophies, a new ideology in dramatic education developed that gave dramatic education a more universal applicability in schooling (Butts, 1953). Following from Dewey's support for arts in education and prior to World War I, there was an increased interest in using speech and creative dramatics in education.

Dewey's philosophies and the progressive movement that followed began the first time period in American history that saw the use of creative dramatics being used for large populations of K-12 learners. Progressives began to champion theater as an educational offering in the 1920's, believing that it supported an individualized, active education that would reach a variety of learners. Dramatic classes began to emerge in K-12 schools as a distinct area of study. However, at this time, the arts were considered inferior to other academic disciplines, often grouped with vocational education and home economics, and not considered appropriate for college application entrance (Butts, 1953).

This new movement not only saw a rise in the use of dramatics in schools, but also a change in how they were taught. Traditionally, drama to this point was taught as a method of acting out scripted plays. By World War I, progressivism had begun to challenge the classical way of teaching the arts. Despite some attempts to break away from a classical stage education, theories still remained closely connected to Europe, although there was some ideology that favored an American movement for the arts. This movement, inspired by

Dewey and other progressivists, favored a more imaginative and improvisational approach to theatre, which allowed students to explore movement and creation with less teacher instruction (Butts, 1953.)

At this time, educators began to look toward creative dramatics as a way to teach independent and critical thinking. A prominent example of progressive use of dramatic education was the work of Margaret Naumberg, Florence Crane and other artist-teachers at the Walden School, which was founded in 1914 (Knopf, 1961; Zoch, 2004). Crane and her colleagues believed that creative dramatics and the other arts would nurture independent thought and bring into consciousness the students' self-actualization (Knopf, 1961). Students wrote their own plays, and the primary criteria for success were the students' own satisfaction with their creations (Zoch, 2004). This idea of self-assessment also brought up new ways of thinking about how to grade dramatics as well as other subjects that can be performance based.

Another school with a special focus on the arts during the progressivist movement in the 1920's was the Lincoln School. Students had a wide array of required and elective dramatic activities (Knopf, 1961). The curriculum of the school included the fine arts, music, natural sciences, home economics, and physical education. This school was an early example of student choice being used as a strategy for the use of creative dramatics in promoting learning. It was believed that students engagement would increase with choice, and therefore, learning would be enhanced (Knopf, 1961).

Recent History

The place of creative dramatics in school has continued to be debated into the twentieth century. Two extremes of thought have developed. One extreme considered disciplines such as art and music to be faddish or unimportant (Butts, 1953). The other considered the arts, including the dramatic arts, to be essential for enriching an otherwise unimaginative curriculum. Progressivists continued to argue that an education of core classes alone does not give students the expressive educational experiences they need to become functioning, social citizens. Progressivists therefore found more educative value in the study of play activities and the arts (Butts, 1953). By the middle of the twentieth century, the arts were commonly being used to expand the high school curriculum, but the debate of their importance remained.

The sixties saw a surge of dramatic projects for youth. In 1964, dramatics played a role in educating public school students about the civil rights movement through the Freedom Summer project that took place in Mississippi. The project included a summer school for both elementary and secondary students during the summer (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1998). The project encouraged students, through drama, to be active in the civics of their local communities. The leaders of this project used creative dramatics because they believed that they were naturally synonymous with the ideas of freedom and equality (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1998). A number of dramatic methods were incorporated to teach the students a civics curriculum. Drama allowed educators the tools to provide students with a forum of discussion for real life problems. This case is also a good example of the emerging idea of integrating the arts with such subjects as social studies.

In many schools today, creative dramatics have moved into English classrooms where teachers are making use of drama both as a tool to use in reading and to make their classrooms more active. Many educators now accept that dramatic activities promote learning. At the elementary level, teachers have realized the connection between play, learning, and dramatics and there has been value placed on using it for personal and social growth and developing language skills and creative expression (Squire ed., 1977). Many teachers have realized the natural need in children for movement and that many traditional methods, such as a great degree of rote memorization, can stunt this. At the secondary level, English teachers are more frequently using vocal, imaginative methods of dramatics such as improvisational activities and the interpretation of texts. Secondary dramatic methods tend to move more toward traditional theater activities, such as the performance of scripted plays. Students learn to be both actors and audience members. Many educators have also come to value the use of dramatics as a way to help adolescents develop their social skills and their own identities.

However, the use of arts remains debated and varied. Many schools have neither theater programs, nor have they integrated arts into the curriculum. Also, many schools that have dramatics in their curriculum lack the direction and teacher training to implement creative dramatics with any continuity (Squire ed., 1977). The extent to which creative dramatics is taught in schools today and whether or not it is integrated throughout the curriculum stems chiefly from these traditional versus progressivist debates.

CHAPTER THREE: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews and critiques twenty-five studies that investigated the effective use of creative dramatics in K-12 schools. The reviews are organized into subsections. Each subsection includes a summary for that collection of studies. At the end of the chapter, a comprehensive summary is provided. The subsections are as follows: (1) Integrating Creative Dramatics into Content Instruction, (2) Developing Oral and Written Language Skills Through Theater, (3) Using Theater to Teach Social Issues, Social Skills, and Humanistic Values, (4) Enhancing Critical Thinking through Drama, (5) Creative Dramatics and Identity Development and (6) Strategies for Teaching and Learning Drama.

The studies will be reviewed in order to answer the question: How can creative dramatics promote learning across the curriculum? The reviews will be studied to determine the best ways that students can learn and what they are able to learn while utilizing creative dramatics. All studies took place within U.S. K-12 schools.

Integrating Creative Dramatics into Content Instruction

The reviews of the studies in this section deal with the integration of creative dramatics in content areas other than drama class. Many teachers utilize the strategies of dramatics into their classrooms to promote learning. This section will discuss the most

effective ways to incorporate dramatics into this pedagogy and the benefits students derive from the use of dramatics in the development of their learning.

Melnick & Schubert (1997) investigated the effects of the integration of the visual/performing and/or musical arts, within the civics, English, history and geography curricula. Their aim was to investigate the question: What are the effects on individual students of visual and performing arts within their English, history, civics and geography curricula? Melnick & Schubert (1997) believed that students were not connecting what they learned in their art classes with their other classes, and vice versa.

The researchers conducted a multiple site case study describing a setting where the arts were integrated into arts, civics, English, history and geography in elementary, middle and high school curricula. The sample was derived from eleven school districts across Pennsylvania, representing rural, urban, and suburban regions.

Units ran anywhere from four weeks to a year. Each district had one or more of the arts as the focal point of their developed unit. Some schools developed units within their current curriculum while others created entirely new units. The schools were linked with partners from higher education to develop their curricula.

Data was collected using interviews with seventy educators and twenty-five students over the course of one year. Interviews were conducted with students, faculty and administrators. A variety of questions were asked to include the effects of the curricula on the students. The interviews were recorded and analyzed.

Once data was analyzed, Melnick & Schubert (1997) concluded that teachers and administrators saw an increase in students' self-concepts and in their attitudes toward school. They noted that several schools reported seeing students "blossom" once the arts were

integrated into their curriculum. Positive increases in the attitudes of some of the students increased over time. Teachers further reported that students began to take leadership roles that had not done so before. Student absenteeism decreased, with one school reporting 37% less absences for the duration of the study. The researchers claim that there is a correlation between the decreasing number of absences and student engagement. Student engagement, in turn, provided the students with better learning opportunities. Teachers also reported a more equitable environment for challenged learners and ESL students. These findings seem to indicate that the benefits of creative dramatics when used to learn will aid in self-esteem, personal development, leadership taking, internal engagement, and an equitable environment.

The researchers concluded from their interviews that student learning in the content areas increases when dramatic arts are integrated into those content areas. Most importantly for the researchers, many students claimed to have a more successful learning experience by integrating the curricula and by connecting ideas, and remembered the material for longer spans of time. This would indicate that students learn at a deeper level when subjects, to include the arts, are integrated. By giving students an opportunity to learn in a variety of different ways, an integrated arts curriculum will allow the students a better chance to comprehend what they are learning.

The researchers did not explain how the schools were chosen and no information was given about the gender, ethnicities, and socio-economic make up of their sample, which makes it difficult to know how applicable their findings may be to other settings. The researchers did not say how they analyzed the data or what types of questions were asked in the interviews. More information on their data analysis would be needed to confidently accept the claims of the study. The smallness of the student sample size is also a concern.

Furthermore, it seems reasonable that the teachers being interviewed might be biased as they are not only reporting on the success of arts integration, but also on their own teaching skills.

Betts & McCammon (1999) sought to discover dramatics direct and indirect effects on student learning within a program that integrated dramatic arts into content area curricula. Their query sought to answer if there was a correlation present between the success of an integrated arts program and the culture of the school to include support from teachers and administrators. Can creative dramatics promote learning if the educators in a given school do not support the strategy?

Betts & McCammon (1999) conducted this study on their own schools' arts integration program. The study took place at an elementary school where an arts integration curriculum that included visual art, music, theatre, and dance was being used. The researchers were art specialists at this school.

They conducted a qualitative study, collecting data that included observations of teacher meetings, lesson demonstrations, and interviews with teachers, students, parents, principal, and the theatre specialist, acting as participant observers. Nine teachers were involved in the study. Three groups of students were interviewed by Betts & McCammon (1999), five fourth graders in one class who were just completing the lessons, five fifth graders in the second class, and five sixth and seventh graders who had been in the program for one to three years in the third class. All participants consented to interviews.

The teachers who participated in this integrated program attended workshops on the arts, and then worked with the specialists, who helped develop lessons and gave the teachers feedback on their implementation. These training sessions took place over two years and included training on how to plan activities and how to make connections with other subject

areas. In addition to the teacher training, the program consisted of the teachers' ongoing peer monitoring.

Many of the class observations were also recorded. Transcripts were analyzed. During analysis, values were attached to predetermined categories. A series of assertions were formulated and confirmed or disconfirmed.

The teachers noted that they saw benefits for the children in the integrated instruction. Overall, teachers reported that they saw gains in students' self-confidence, risk-taking, and cooperation skills. However, unanticipated results included a lack of interest from the teachers in the program as the year developed. Four of them expressed that they would not use the program the following year. Although the students benefited as a whole, an integrated arts program will not work if teacher training becomes too cumbersome in terms of time.

Despite the fact that almost half of the teachers in the study discontinued the volunteer program, Betts & McCammon (1999) considered the integration of theatre at Mesquite Elementary a success. They go on to say the success was due to a positive school culture and a supportive principal. Also, parents interviewed claimed to be involved and have a great deal of open communication with the principal and parents. They claimed that the program was a benefit to teachers and to students. Teachers reported student gains in storytelling, performance, and comprehension of subject matter. Students seemed to be able to remember the details of many of their lessons. The children said they enjoyed the exercises because they allowed them to move and get out of their desks. This would seem to indicate a high level of student enthusiasm and engagement.

Researchers Betts & McCammon (1999) concluded that arts all teachers should be positive about integration and receive adequate training in order for arts integration to be successful. Betts & McCammon (1999) suggested that teachers be made to understand how arts integration can help the classroom community and participate in the planning, as everyone involved. The researchers claimed that integration programs must be inclusive of the whole school community and must reflect a practical understanding of how that given school works. Overall, the most interesting thing about the study was the teachers' difficulties in keeping up with the program. These findings seem to indicate that even if teachers believe that integrating arts into their classes will benefit students, they must be given the time and training they need in order to succeed with any longevity.

The researchers' claims could present some bias as they were implementing a program they created, that many teachers eventually discarded. It is always a concern when the researchers of the study are involved in the program being analyzed. Also, the researchers do not present specific solutions to increase teacher enthusiasm toward arts integration programs.

Morris (1992) examined the meaning students constructed while studying social studies using dramatics. He hypothesized that students using creative dramatics would have a better conceptual based understanding of history than those that were instructed through more conventional methods. Furthermore, the researcher hypothesized that students that use dramatic sources achieve higher levels of understanding. For this study, Morris (1992) observed social studies students over a two year period of time.

For data analysis, Morris (1992) studied seventh graders studying ancient world history. They examined pre-Columbus cultures from five continents- Asia, Africa, North and

South America, and Europe. They focused on comparing ancient to contemporary life. Learning objectives were posted. Morris (1992) claimed that the students had a balanced focus and learned more than the traditional fact-oriented information about wealthy white men.

Students did their work in groups and each member received part of their grade as a group and had to explain her part in the process. Morris (1992) used no competitive strategies, and instead, used community based, democratic classroom values. One strategy employed included creating and performing poems while incorporating drums and body movement. Another strategy included role-play. For example, one group of students would pretend to be the Chinese ruling class, while another group acted as peasants.

They performed “real world tasks” and were assessed on products or performances they had created. The students posted all visual work in the classroom. Students also wrote essays following each of their dramatic performances.

He analyzed data using the assessments of student products, portfolios, and their performances. Morris (1992) used performance as an assessment in order to gain additional learning opportunities for the students who were acting as the audience. The teacher used musical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, mathematical, interpersonal, and linguistic intelligence to assess students’ social studies knowledge.

Conclusions derived from Morris (1992) included the idea that social studies and drama are naturally correlated because the study of human beings is a creative endeavor. The students conveyed that they had learned to solve problems through dramatic situations. Through role-playing, students were more able to make personal connections and be empathetic to situations of the past.

Further, he concluded that students will achieve higher scores if they are less concerned about numbers, as performance assessments are likely to create because of active participation. Engagement seemed to increase while anxiety over assessment seemed to decrease over time. Therefore, according to Morris (1992), dramatic performance as an assessment can be used to create better comprehension of material as well as to increase students' enthusiasm in social studies.

Through drama, students are more likely to participate and often exceed their teachers' assessments' requirements. Overall, students working in these groups were more likely to be engaged as their group members' enthusiasm increased. It must be noted, however, that Morris (1992) commonly witnessed this enthusiasm when students worked both individually and in groups. Therefore, it would seem dramatic activities increased engagement, whether or not it was done in groups or not.

Morris's (1992) study was isolated to his own class. Also, information, regarding gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status were not provided. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude to what population Morris's (1992) findings apply.

Morris (1992) also showed his bias as his multiple hypotheses seemed to match his conclusions, despite the lack of specific evidence. Furthermore, Morris does not describe what he considers being "traditional methods," and has no example of a class using these techniques to compare it to.

Schneider (2000) conducted a study which examined the use of process drama, a form of dramatics which is based on imaginary, unscripted and spontaneous scenes. She believed that process drama would aid students in comprehension of material as they acquired lasting mental images. She claimed that the levels of thinking in this activity are

similar to those of reading. She also believed that it is a visual exercise and provides a context for writing.

The researcher is a female Caucasian and a former elementary school teacher who was interested in the combination of writing and drama in schools (Schneider, 2000). Her study consisted of the work of one elementary school classroom (Schneider, 2000). The study consisted of twenty-five, third and fourth graders who, Schneider (2000) claimed, were of diverse backgrounds. During the first twenty weeks of a school year, she observed the classroom. During the following year, the researcher analyzed the use of process drama and writing within the units and looked for any reoccurring themes.

The activities included whole class and small group work. The children kept diaries and regularly performed for each other. The integrated, conceptual units emphasized perspective taking and collaborative student texts were also created. Sometimes themes and groups were chosen by the students.

The students worked on concepts in geography, geology, economy, the environment, social studies, and science. Using process drama as a catalyst, students were given the opportunity to write in several different genres. They also learned about role-taking within drama. Imagination was at the center of all learning.

Student work was assessed and analyzed to include their diaries, essays, letters, and dramatic performances. No other information is given on the researcher's investigation.

Schneider (2000) claimed that the children's comprehension of the curriculum increased and that their understanding benefited from the process drama. Further, she claimed that the teacher's techniques allowed the students to learn content, writing, and drama all at the same time. This saved time and aided the students' conceptual

understanding. The students were said to have learned content, tolerance, and the functions of several genres of writing.

Too little information is given on the details of the study for it to be given accreditation. Schneider (2000) did not write of how the student work was assessed or analyzed. The researcher did not give any details of the make-up of the sample, which was just one classroom.

Colangelo & Ryan-Scheutz (2004) designed a study to explore the effects of a full scale theater production on second language learning. The researchers hypothesized that many aspects of theater contribute to the learning of a foreign language. They further claimed that the learning of communication is enhanced through the practice of theater production in general. Productions required students to engage in conversations, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions regarding different contents beyond the theatrical production they were required to perform. The researchers claimed that their comprehension of different subjects would increase. It also required the students to convey ideas and meaning to an audience for a specific purpose. All of these things are inclusive to many national standards.

However, the researchers suggested that theater has been used in foreign language classrooms for decades and the benefits continue to be explored. One such benefit, note Colangelo & Ryan-Scheutz (2004) is the understanding of culture. The directors within Colangelo & Ryan-Scheutzs' (2004) study hypothesized that total immersion of the language would help the students best learn within their production.

The eleven subjects within the study were at various levels of proficiency. The text was a one-act comedy by Dario Fo (1958).

At the audition, students filled out paper work in Italian and read for a part. There were twenty-seven rehearsals. Rehearsals began with ten-fifteen minutes of warm up exercises in which all took part. In all, the workshop took ten weeks.

The actors' main tasks were to memorize their lines and develop their characters. Stage managers and crewmember had the traditional roles but were required to perform them in Italian. The stage managers were also in charge of programs and publicity which were to be produced in both English and Italian. In preproduction, all students were given oral and written exams. One week after the performances an identical posttest was given.

The findings showed marked improvement in both Italian and drama. Students also reported feeling more comfortable with both their theater and Italian language skills. The researchers found that using creative dramatics in the traditional form of theater production can aid in the improvement of foreign language skills, while teaching students how to put on a successful production.

Although the findings reported over all improvement, it did seem that some students were unclear of the play's plot by its end. It is also possible that some students saw their vocabularies increase because of commonly used terms in theater, which were most likely used everyday. The researchers noted that more success may have been derived from a semester long program.

Although the students' language skills improved, it seemed the researchers were not confident enough to claim that long lasting, holistic learning of the Italian language had occurred. Therefore, improvement will occur with the use of creative dramatics in learning foreign language, but at an undetermined level. Also, the study is not generalizable as the

sample only included eleven students and was a single occurrence. Further, ten weeks time could be insufficient for accurate data gathering.

Findings from these studies indicate that integrating creative dramatics across the curriculum will aid in the deeper understanding of curriculum, while simultaneously learning theater skills. Creative dramatics also seems to increase student engagement and enthusiasm. However, time and teacher training must be allowed to ensure the success of integration programs.

Developing Oral and Written Language Skills through Theater

The research studies reviewed in this next section all deal with the effectiveness of creative dramatics in developing oral and written language skills. Much like the last section, all reviews will discuss the most effective strategies to promote learning, but will be specific to language. Likewise, they will discuss the benefits derived from and language skills learned while utilizing creative dramatics.

Hoffman & Vrazel (1991) investigated the use of selected theater technologies to enhance the oral and written skills of entry level theater students at a high school for the performing arts in New Orleans. The researchers also analyzed the students ability to view and critique theatrical events. They further endeavored to study the effects of theater on the students' attitudes of themselves.

The sample included thirty students. They were intercity students, with a third of the sample population consisting of African Americans.

The qualitative study, which took place during an eight week period, and engaged students with oral/written learning experiences through a progressive model of improvisation, playmaking, and specialized writing activities, in that order. However, concepts were also connected. For example, improvisational techniques were used to form ideas for writing.

Students' written material was collected each week. Both the pre and posttest tested knowledge and comprehension of theater technologies. To test the reliability of the sample, the researchers used twenty papers selected from the entire sample.

The use of observation was also used as a form of data collection. Furthermore, a questionnaire was sent home to parents at the end of the eight weeks to receive further feedback on the improvement of the students' oral/written skills.

Students' ability to understand and use complex vocabulary terms increased (Hoffman & Vrazel, 1991). Also, their written critiques of theatrical events increased in depth and sophistication over the course of the eight weeks. According to this study, creative dramatics, specifically technical theater and the critiquing of plays, helps students increase their vocabulary and written skills.

Students also showed more responsibility for their own learning, according to Hoffman & Vrazel (1991). Because technical theater is an ensemblic, creative endeavor, students' experiences were more practical and engaging to them. Creative dramatics also empowered them to take more responsibility for their own processes of learning.

The study took place specifically in a school of the arts, and therefore, may not apply to regular schools. In addition, the sample was small, only thirty students and specifically of an intercity population. Also an eight week time span is short and there is no information given on how the data was measured.

Horn (1992) also conducted a study to explore the relationship between creative dramatics and written skills. This study focused on the effects of dramatics on the written skills of ethnically diverse urban high school students who were working collaboratively to create and execute original works of relevance to them. The researcher's question: Can creative dramatics, in the form of playwriting, be used to promote the learning of written skills in diverse, urban high schools? Also, the researcher sought to see if student self-esteem and engagement in writing would increase.

The study was conducted in one school, in one small department. The parent involvement at the school was small, but active. The ethnic composition of the school was comprised of 52.7% Black, 14.1% Asian, 22.5% Hispanic, and 10.8% White. The average daily attendance was 80-84% and the number of students at or below the poverty level was 24.6%. The writing level was 80% and the reading level was 81% at or above grade level.

As in the previous study, the sample was small, consisting of only 29 high school seniors, although 53 began the study but data for them was not included because they dropped out or did not complete the logs and surveys necessary for analysis. The original sample included 44 women and seven men. The sample was surveyed and it was found that, in general, they had little to no knowledge of dramatic literature.

The data gathered for this study included pre and posttests, written statements, and journals. The researcher provided analysis of student journals and interviews. Teachers kept a journal as well.

Student attendance rates improved. Horn (1992) employed the use of attendance records to analyze student enthusiasm, and based her findings on a comparison of attendance rates within the program to that of the school's in general. 97% of the students within the

program were in class everyday. Lateness to class decreased by 25%, and parents reported that enthusiasm for other classes increased as well. This indicates an increase in student engagement, by using choice-based creative dramatics.

Horn's (1992) study indicated an increase in self-esteem. Horn (1992) found that self esteem increased by 20% by noting that students changed their responses over the course of the program to statements such as: I am a leader. This finding shows that students were empowered by the dramatic program and their self-concepts improved.

Scholastic achievement also positively increased. Students gained insights into behavior with the development of their roles. Their conceptualization of making connections between the abstract and concrete improved. By the end of the study, they were also able to translate their ideas from one medium to another. Their self-evaluations and evaluations of their peers became more sophisticated. They were able to better relate their experiences to the world and convey their creative ideas in written and oral language more clearly. The students also, according to Horn (1992), developed critical thinking and problem solving skills. According to the researcher, students who create and execute their own plays will increase their skills in abstract thinking, conveying ideas, evaluating themselves and others, making connections between personal experiences and the world, critical thinking, problem solving, and conveying ideas through oral and written language.

The author claimed that parents believed students had improved in their writing, but Horn (1992) provided no specific data to support that claim. Furthermore, only single quotes from students indicating success were used as evidence. Because the sample was small, and unlikely to be representative of other schools, the findings may not apply widely.

In a similar study, Biegler (1998) examined two different methods involving theater and writing instruction and used to increase story comprehension. Biegler (1998) was interested in studying the effect of socio-dramatic play on children's cognitive functions. The researcher asked the question: What will be more effective in increasing student story comprehension and engagement-a teacher led art activity, or dramatic reenactments?

The sample consisted of two kindergarten classes from the Secaucus New Jersey Public School District. No further information on the sample is given. The study took place over a four-week period.

Students from one class listened to stories followed by dramatic retelling techniques such as role-playing, puppet theater, and pantomiming. The other sample had the stories read to them, followed by an art activity and teacher led instruction. The researcher hypothesized that the class that learned through dramatic techniques would have greater comprehension than the class that was led by teacher instruction.

After learning of the stories, both samples were given strips with parts of the story on it, and asked to put them in the correct order. During the period, each child's story strips were collected and the samples total mean scores were analyzed for any significance. Mean scores, standard deviations and t-test results were then compared. The level of significance was recorded at below .05.

Biegler's (1998) results indicated that there was a 21.5 difference between the means of the samples in which story reenactments were used and in which an art activity was implemented. The findings supported the original hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the two samples.

Biegler (1998) suggested in her conclusion that students who reenact a story become more involved and therefore, more interested. Biegler's (1998) study does indicate that dramatic retellings are more successful than teacher led art activities in the promotion of student learning. She suggested that dramatic reenactments of stories will aid in comprehension as well as engagement in the students.

The findings only apply to the comparison of creative dramatics to teacher led instruction and art activities, and cannot claim to measure students' cognitive gains in general. Also, a collection of data was not gathered to measure increase in enthusiasm and engagement. It was only an assertion by the researcher. While Biegler (1998) produced significant results, it is difficult to tell of what population her study pertained to. No ethnic make up was provided. Additional information, to include socioeconomic background would be needed to validate the study. In addition, there are a number of independent variables, such as the skill of the teacher, that were not considered.

In a study conducted by Androes, McMahon, Parks & Rose (2000), the researcher examined the causal relationship between dramatic activities and reading comprehension in fourth grade students. The researchers hypothesized that imagery was quintessentially involved in the reading process and therefore reading comprehension would benefit from creative dramatics.

Androes, McMahon, Parks & Rose (2000) described reading comprehension as highly dependent on memory and the ability to retrieve and comprehend meaning from text. They hypothesized that students must be able to understand how the segments of a story connect to the whole. According to Androes, McMahon, Parks & Rose (2000), human memory works best when information is creatively elaborated on.

Four Chicago public schools participated in the study. School A had a nearly 100% Hispanic population. School B had a 90% African American population. School C had an equal amount of African American and White students, while School D had a population of 50% Hispanic, 30% White, 10% African American, and 10% Asian. The study consisted of 94 students who participated in the program and 85 students who did not, which made up the control group.

Each of the principals of the schools cooperated, allowing time and support for training and implementation of the study. The program was able to solicit the participation of all of the fourth grade teachers in each of the four schools. Four artists from various disciplines to include two actors collaborated in the project.

Whirlwind, which is a Chicago-based organization, designed Reading Comprehension through Drama, or RCD, a reading program that employs drama techniques based on research regarding memory recall and imagery. Androes, McMahon, Parks & Rose (2000) conducted their study between February and May of the 1996-1997 school year using this program. It consisted of four parts: story, sequence, perception, and evaluation. The program included 20 sessions spread evenly over a ten-week period. The first stage consisted of story elements. The second was comprised of sequence elements: beginning, middle and end. The third stage involved the perceptions to include, see, smell, taste, hear, and touch. The final stage allowed the students to explore evaluation, which consisted of interpretation, critique, and opinion.

In order to test the subjects' growth in reading comprehension, Androes, McMahon, Parks & Rose (2000) used the Reading Comprehension subtest of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). The Riverside Publishing Company (1997) found that the test exceeded

professional standards for educational measurement. The ITBS was given to both groups of students before and after the one-year program. A performance assessment was also used to measure the growth of skills in both drama and reading comprehension. It required students to enact a scene using a portion of the narrative text.

Androes, McMahon, Parks & Rose (2000) found that the overall reading improvement rates of the RCD students were significantly higher ($CM=1.21$) than those of the control groups ($CM=.91$). The RCD students improved significantly more ($CM=8.20$) than did the control students ($CM=.44$) on the Factual Comprehension subscale of the ITBS, $F(1,108)=4.59$, $p=.034$, using the ANCOVA test with pretest Factual Comprehension subtest scores on the covariate.

Like the ITBS, the performance assessment (PA) included overall reading comprehension measures, as well as subsets. Experimental-group students improved their average overall PA scores significantly more from the pretest to the posttest (9.55-point increase) than did the control students (2.88-point increase), $F(1,147)=10.9$, $p=.001$, indicating that the RCD program significantly enhanced the reading comprehension skills of the students. Experimental students also increased significantly more than the control group on all drama based subscales. The relationship between performance on the PA and the ITBS scores was strong for both the pretest ($r=.48$, $n=117$) and the posttest ($r=.43$, $n=115$). This study seems to indicate that drama based reading instruction can be more helpful to students than traditional methods in learning promotion.

The sample is large, but the study may still be limited to certain populations as the exact make up of the subjects was not given. The researchers began with the assumption that

imagery based creative dramatics would aid in memory recall. This assumption could lead to bias in the findings.

Siddall (1999) investigated the question: Is dramatization an effective educative experience for students when responding to literature? He claimed that children are seldom given the opportunity to take on multiple perspectives that naturally ensue from dramatic activities.

The researcher spent two years co-teaching and researching literature study in a fifth grade classroom in a suburban school. He chose to conduct his study on a group of five students who decided to dramatically interpret a text they were reading. The five children involved were chosen from a class of twenty-five with a population of 85% Caucasian and 15% African American, Hispanic, or Asian. The children were put in groups according to their reading levels (low, middle, or high), their book choice, and an even number of boys and girls (Siddall, 1999).

Siddall (1999) believed that children should be able to choose their own text if learning is to be student centered. The students even chose how they would read their books. He further explained that he felt the teacher's role should be as an aid in more meaningful responses to literature. He and his co-teacher demonstrated how to have discussions around books. They also taught different response techniques and activities that could be used to react to a story.

Siddall (1999) conducted his study using action and interpretive research. The goal was to use the research to plan further instruction for the students. He called his process recursive and reflexive and examined how he and his co-teachers language and behavior affected the learning of the students. The data collected included audio and video tapes of

classroom interactions, recorded observations, and interviews with the co-teacher. The following questions were used as a guide to Siddall's (1999) observations:

1. What are the various ways students choose to respond to literature in groups?
2. What are the general characteristics of those student responses?
3. What meanings do students attribute to those responses within the interactions of the groups?
4. What are the various ways a teacher interacts in literature groups? (p.7)

Analysis of the data happened simultaneously with the collection of it. Siddall (1999) transcribed nineteen audio tapes and recorded responses where deep levels of the literature were taking place. The data was coded into units and specific categories. The subjects created a play based on their book, but resembling local news programs. Some students acted as reporters, while others portrayed characters in the book.

The researcher found that the students seemed to draw mostly on emotional reactions and story comprehension. The group that chose to dramatize their project had deeper understanding of the literature (Siddall, 1999). Their interpretation went beyond the basic story elements. They were able to elicit multiple perspectives. They made connections to their lives outside of the story.

According to this Siddall's (1999) study, students promote their own learning by being given choice to exercise their own performances and interpretations. Through the use of creative dramatics in the form of play creation and performance, students will understand literature at a deeper level.

The researcher was also a teacher of his program, which may present bias. Also, his program may only be successful in suburban schools, as the study only took place in one classroom. Siddall (1999) placed the students according to reading level abilities, but does not say of which reading level ability his sample was derived. Therefore, if the group in the study were all of high reading level ability, the success of the program might have been due to a sample of students who did not have problems with literature comprehension to begin with.

Dever & Wishon (1995) conducted a qualitative study that examined sociodramatic play as a tool for literacy. The researchers used the philosophies of previous educators to hypothesize that young children are natural explorers of their environments. They suggest that reading is the comprehension of abstractness, and therefore the learning of it lends perfectly to drama.

Dever & Wishon (1995) participated in sociodramatic play with three first grade children. Subjects were selected with the help of teachers according to their willingness to engage in sociodramatic play and their ability to read and write at the first grade level. Detailed descriptions of each of the subjects were given.

The subjects took part in 18, 25 minute sessions over an eight week period. The children and Dever & Wishon (1995) decided on the themes of the sessions together. A total of 359 literary events were observed during the play process. The researchers acted as a guide to improving the students' literacy while they played. They modeled behavior which was often imitated. Data analysis was open ended. The researchers provided detailed qualitative data of the sessions.

The researchers also made visits to other classrooms where they would record sociodramatic play taking place in other situations. They interviewed the teachers in these classrooms.

Interviews with the teachers found that the subjects made better use of literacy after the sessions. Likewise, the researchers' data found that the students' story comprehension benefited from the use of creative dramatics. According to this study, even very young children will benefit in the understanding of literature by reenacting it.

The sample only included three children and took place in under 45 hours. The researchers do not explain what is meant by "literary events." They also have no consistent way of measuring deep comprehension of literature.

Ruiz (1995) investigated the learning of language skills by ESL students. Her study was conducted to see at which level of formality ESL students best learn language skills.

She examined one unit of study in one classroom. She audio taped and transcribed the lessons. There were three different types of learning activities that varied in their formality.

Class openings were a formal, ritualized event. They include the flag salute, and the answering of rote questions such as how many days there are in that given month. The weather is ascertained and recorded on the board. These events tended to have very fixed topic sentences and call for specific, syntactic forms. Most of the students tended not to show the upper ranges of their language abilities during this type of event.

All lessons included small group work in language arts or mathematics. They were sometimes formal and at other times were not. Ruiz (1995) noted that students showed a lesser degree of language competence than in the first activity.

In the class, sociodramatic play was the least formal activity (Ruiz, 1995). The children were allowed to pretend they had a store. The students showed control over their speech patterns, and tended to use patterns of their home communities.

Ruiz (1995) concluded that the less formal, dramatic activities optimized their language learning, while the formal ones were damaging. Elaborations on these findings are not included.

The important information of location, grade level, and the student make up were not given. The researcher gives much opinion without evidence, and does not fully explain her conclusions. For example, she claims that looking at dramatic play is more useful than tests for assessments, but does not say why.

The findings in this section indicate that in addition to a number of skills derived from dramatic pedagogy, students' skills in oral and written language will increase. In general, students will understand literature at a deeper level when implementing dramatic strategies. Reenactments of text and role-playing will aid in comprehension at all grade levels more so than traditional reading instruction. For ESL students, dramatic activities will optimize language learning. Creative dramatics will also empower students to take more responsibility for their learning.

Enhancing Critical Thinking through Drama

The research studies reviewed in this next section all deal with the effectiveness of creative dramatics in developing critical thinking skills. All reviews will discuss the most effective strategies to promote learning, but will be specific to critical thinking. Likewise,

they will discuss the benefits derived from and critical thinking skills learned by students while utilizing creative dramatics.

Baker & Delmonico (1999) conducted a study describing a program for increasing critical thinking skills in high school theater and language arts classrooms. Baker & Delmonico (1999) focused on the lack of their targeted group's critical thinking skills, that they believed hindered the students' academic growth. They intended to take an in-depth look at the students questioning, analysis, and evaluation skills.

The project was conducted at two different sites. Subjects included 240 teachers and 446 students at two different high schools, one in a rural town, and one in a suburban town. The rural school, Site A, had an ethnic student population of 87.8% White, 6.1% Asian, 3.1% Hispanic, 2.9% Black, and 0.1% Native American while the teachers were 97.3% White, 1.3% Black, 0.7% Hispanic, and 0.7% Asian. The attendance rate at Site A was 96.5%. The suburban community, Site B, consisted of 65.1% White, 31.7% Hispanic, 2.1% Asian Pacific Islander, and 1% Native American in its student make up, while the teachers were 98.4% White, 1.3% Hispanic, 0.3% Asian Pacific Islander. The attendance rate for these students was 88.1%, which is significantly lower than Illinois's state average of 93.8%.

In order to gather data that confirmed lack of critical thinking, researcher's administered surveys to both students and faculty at both sites over a three-week period. The lack of critical thinking in the classroom was documented by surveys, interviews, journals and a problem based test called The Cornell Critical Thinking Test. The test gives the students a hypothetical situation to problem solve. During the same period, the researchers recorded observations and anecdotal records, as well as administering the Cornell Thinking Test at both Sites A and B.

During the first week, the researchers surveyed the subjects to see how they currently had incorporated critical thinking into their instruction. They separated the surveys into five sections: metacognition, strategies to increase thinking, partnership strategies, teaching for transfer, and teaching critical thinking. Of the faculty surveyed, the majority of teachers at Site A indicated that they teach metacognition “sometimes,” while the majority of the faculty at Site B claimed to teach it “often.” In order to compare with the faculty survey, researchers also administered a survey to their student subjects at both sites. The questions were identical. Only a quarter of the students at Site A indicated that their teachers used metacognition “daily” or “often.” During the second week of the study, the researchers surveyed the faculty again, but this time asked them what they thought of the students’ skills for critical thinking. Teachers were asked whether students engaged in positive discussion techniques and only half said that they did. The researchers then surveyed the students to see if they felt they implemented positive critical thinking strategies. At both sites, when asked whether they used positive study strategies, three-fourths said they were “adequate” or exceptional. During the third week of the study, researchers surveyed the parents of the targeted student subjects to assess their perceptions. The researchers sent the survey home, and encouraged the students to bring them back completed by the end of the week. Three-fourths of the parents said that they interacted with the students while they did their homework “sometimes” or “never.”

Finally, the researchers administered the Cornell Thinking Test to student subjects. This test was selected because it is one of the few that claims to test critical thinking skills. Because of time constraints, to provide adequate student processing, to reduce test-taking anxiety, and to make it more accessible to low level reading abilities, the researchers

condensed the test. The researchers therefore created a pre-test from the odd numbered questions and a post-test from the even ones.

The researchers then evaluated the test using the formula rights minus one half the numbers wrong as suggested by the Cornell Critical Thinking Test Manual. At Site A, out of 40 correct responses, the mean was 23.41, the Median 24, and the Mode 25. At Site B the mean was 21.43 correct answers, the Median was 22, and the Mode was 24. However, the researchers felt, that after using the test, it was unsatisfactory for testing critical thinking skills.

Baker & Delmonico (1999) used this data to determine that there was a lack of critical thinking in instruction at the sites and launched what they called an intervention. They began by having the teachers use pre-reading strategies. They implemented student and teacher read-alouds, questioning techniques, graphic organizers, journals, multiple intelligence projects, role playing and the use of transfer techniques.

They claim to have achieved their goal of increasing critical thinking skills in the students through their analysis of teacher observation. However, they also determined that teaching critical thinking is a complex task and its increase in students is not within complete control of the teacher. Teacher observations from this study indicate that students' critical thinking skills will increase using creative dramatics as one strategy.

Further, many student scores went down from the pre to the posttest in their use of critical thinking. The researchers admit their techniques for increasing critical thinking in English and drama classrooms may not be successful. According to the Cornell Thinking Test, students' critical thinking skills will not increase with the use of role-playing.

Baker and Delmonico (1999) had a deeply held belief that there was poor instruction at these sites, and that their techniques could solve the problems. This creates a great deal of bias. The researchers do not mention how any of the subjects were selected. It is a concern that the researchers were not confident with their own analysis tools for critical thinking. Much of the data in this study indicates that critical thinking will not be enhanced through creative dramatics.

The next study also explored the potential of drama in developing critical thinking. Ferguson & Montgomerie (1999) investigated the effects of using drama on inner-city students to aid in critical thinking. The researchers see critical thinking in elementary students as being able to create and produce their own performances when dealing with text. To Ferguson & Montgomerie (1999) this included the abilities of creating one's own processes, interpreting illustrations, and being empathetic to the situations of different characters.

Subjects selected for the study were from four to eight years old. Subjects were in one class in an inner city school.

Students engaged in the curricular theme of farms. The researchers read the children a story and allowed them to pick any character they wished to meet from the book, and then, they enacted that character. The researchers then encouraged the children to engage in their own process drama regarding a series of texts.

Ferguson & Montgomerie (1999) then used a text that only had illustrations, making it so the children had to further use their creative impulses. They would also have children take over the explanation of the illustrations, ignoring the text. Another exercise had

children imagine they were in the role of the protagonist and as the fictional character searched for treasure, so did they around the room.

Ferguson & Montgomerie (1999) concluded that drama can support the development of critical thinking. Young children are likely to think more critically when allowed to play and express their ideas. Findings indicate that through the use of creative dramatics, young students will be able to model reenactments that show connection to texts, but this study does not seem to prove that it enhances critical thinking.

The researchers make broad claims with little data to back it up, other than their own teaching strategies. Information on gender and ethnicity were not provided. Their conclusions seem largely intuitive.

The findings of this section do not indicate that critical thinking skills will necessarily increase with the implementation of creative dramatics as a form of learning. Although other benefits were derived from creative dramatics in these studies, the data does not indicate that critical thinking is one of them.

Using Theater to Teach Social Issues, Social Skills, and Humanistic Values

While studies in the last section investigated whether creative dramatics can help students with critical thinking skills, another potential use of creative dramatics is in helping students to explore and learn about social problems. Creative dramatics have also been studied to see if they help to develop social skills in youth.

Sanders (2004) investigated a community-based, theatrical project that centered on the use of creative writing, drama, and music as tools to learn about and cope with social

problems. Sanders (2004) claimed that a participatory learning experience is the most helpful thing for students. He believed that minority youth need specialized, personalized curriculum to deal with our racist and capitalistic society. His intentions were to increase students' academic achievement as well as to develop critical thinking skills about the world around them.

He conducted a qualitative study at a free summer school for talented adolescents called the Urban Odyssey. To accommodate the socio-economic status of many of the students, the study was conducted without any cost to the subjects provided by a grant. In addition, the grant paid for visiting faculty that consisted of artist professionals in the community.

The sample was derived from inner city youth and included one Puerto Rican American female (age 15), one Asian American male (17), two African American males (15 and 17), and five African American females (14 to 17). The research was conducted on two days during the beginning of the 2nd week of classes. The students were noted as having a pre-existing understanding of isms.

To test the validity of his theories he implemented a program that combined the use of creative writing and Theater of the Oppressed. The test was conducted for five hours a day for three weeks. Sanders (2004) utilized critical participatory action inquiry of gifted adolescents between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. Data was collected primarily from the students' writing samples and interviews.

The activities were designed to allow the students opportunity to explore issues such as racism, sexism, and classism that were prevalent in their lives. Forum theater was used as the main technique and had three categories: dramaturgy, staging, and performance. Forum

theater began in Brazil and has been practiced for several decades. Sanders (2004) implemented a five questionnaire after each performance and discussion. The questions were as follows: (1) Did the experience affect your thoughts and feelings about racism and other isms? (2) Were you able to use your creative writing skills in this activity? (3) Did the skits that you produced help you see and think about the isms in a different way? (4) Did the skits facilitate your understanding of how social change can take place? (5) Please make any comments you wish about this activity. In the discussions, a major focus involved exploring the ideas of social change.

The students began to discover that a change in one person might not affect the entire society. Students, through their performances and writing, were able to develop a deep understanding of oppressed peoples with different circumstances from their own. The researcher concluded that the program began a change in the adolescents toward a collective conscious of society's paradigm of dominance and oppression.

Sanders's (2004) findings seem to indicate that the creation and use of creative dramatics can be successfully used as a method for allowing students to explore oppression in society. They also show that dramatics can be a tool to encourage creative writing. Further, the study indicates that dramatics encourages students to work in collective, empathetic groups.

Although Sanders (2004) findings indicated a successful learning program for his students, his sample was small. He also taught the students himself. Sanders (2004) had a strong opinion on social issues, and may have conveyed bias to the students.

Day (2002) conducted a study that explored the impact of performance on students as they learned of homeless issues. The actors were young and had been homeless themselves.

The type of theater was Forum Theater and dealt with the issue of refugee children in schools. Day (2002) hypothesized that drama could be used to explore these serious social problems without being threatening to the audience.

The workshop took place over an hour and a half and involved sixty secondary students between the ages of eleven and fifteen. Day (2002) gives a break down and detailed description of the workshop. The students were given the option to take the place of the main character.

Descriptive observations and interviews were the primary means of data collection. One-to-one interviews were conducted between students and teachers. The data was analyzed across data methods to code and determine themes.

All students and teachers were familiar with homeless youth in their school, so all subjects felt as if the information was relevant. Most teachers felt that it was a benefit that the actors were not from the school. Students claimed repeatedly that the workshop had given them insight into the plight of homeless youth. Students portrayed empathy and made the connection that other students besides homeless youth may be being marginalized in their school. Students expressed a strong desire to “do something” after the workshop. Day (2002) concluded that the students learned and were enthusiastic about helping homeless youth.

These findings indicate that if students think information is relevant, the viewing of creative dramatics can promote learning. Students can also gain empathy for those with circumstances other than their own, and inspire activism.

Further research not isolated to one subject or performance would be useful. It is questionable if all students were affected, as participation other than the viewing of the

performance was voluntary. The study also raises the question of whether or not a workshop of this type would be valuable to a sample that was unfamiliar with homeless youth.

Danielson (1992) conducted a study that examined the effectiveness of drama in the development of social skills in a tenth grade “low ability” English class. He hoped to show that dramatic strategies could effect the development of social skills in a number of ways.

In the study, 42 students in two different classes were given an identical pre and post test. The tests were designed to show students’ social skills. Some examples of the statements the students had to disagree or agree with were, “I like to speak out in class...I like meeting new people...I can get my friends to do what I want.” (Danielson, 1992, p.8). Once collected, each response from each student was recorded and compared by class, individual, and response. Teachers observed and kept logs as well. Additionally, students were asked to comment on class activities.

Results showed that some positive attitudes of social skills were developed in each class, but that little differences occurred between the classes. Danielson (1992) said that the drama activities seemed to promote learning readiness more than it did the actual learning of social skills. He claimed that the results of this study suggest that drama should be implemented in “at risk” programs. Danielson (1992) claimed that the findings indicated gradual gain in students’ attitudes regarding their responsibilities when working in groups. This study implies that creative dramatics can be used to promote a more socially cohesive classroom environment, but does not prove that students will use their learned social skills outside of that class. For example, students will be able to work more equitably in groups while using creative dramatics. The findings also indicate that student engagement for learning will improve with the use of drama.

However, it also seemed that some students may have found the group exercises a negative experience. Danielson (1992) also admitted that his findings seemed to indicate that the drama activities did not always provide growth for some students who had problems with self-esteem or behavior. These results imply that some students will not be engaged by the use of creative dramatics in groups, nor will it always promote learning of social skills for all types of students.

The study offered no detailed description of its sample, decreasing the chance of generalization. Danielson's (1992) social skills test seems to define social skills as congruent with confidence. It would seem that shy students or those with low self-esteem could still demonstrate sound social skills.

Kelch (1992) conducted a qualitative study, which asked if creative dramatics could be used to promote the learning of students' "humanistic" values and their abilities to work well in groups. Kelch (1992) defined humanistic as, "a devotion to human welfare, interest and concern for man, showing a strong interest in people" (p. 1). She wanted to test to see if a combination of discussion, role-playing and writing would promote this learning.

The study's participants included fourteen eleventh grade students enrolled in a creative and performing arts magnet school in Philadelphia. The district has a minority population of 67%, which was mirrored by the school population. CAPA, the school in question, was one of several magnet schools set up to bring diverse populations together. It was located in a low-income neighborhood.

Kelch (1992) gave a very detailed description of each student involved in the study, which included observations on their feelings and relationships in the class; she also described his own feelings and relationships. Within the sample, there were six African

Americans, four Caucasians and one Hispanic student. There were eight female students and three males.

The class used the plays “Our Town,” by Thornton Wilder, “No Exit,” by Jean Paul Sartre, and “Cacophony,” by Beverly Barnes Kelch to explore their values. The research group was scheduled for two, 45-minute periods, four days a week. Students were exposed to an exploration of their values from real life situations and in role-playing situations derived from the exposure to the selected plays. Some related games and improvisations were also used.

Data included interviews, student and teacher logs, discussions, observations, and audio and videotapes of the classroom. Students also conducted written, peer evaluations. Kelch (1992) recorded extensive qualitative data on the students’ verbal responses.

The results indicated that the group acquired improved communication skills through the use of drama. Kelch (1992) concluded that students could be taught humanistics, value, self-worth, and good behavior through creative dramatics. Students expressed increased concern for other people and related experiences of being humanistic outside of the classroom.

Kelch’s (1992) findings indicate that creative dramatics will increase communicative skills in students as well as humanistic values. It also seems that appropriate behavior can be taught through these strategies. The study also shows that some students will connect this learning with their outside lives.

Kelch’s (1992) sample was small. The study was of her own teaching, which could create bias. This study was conducted at a school of the arts. This could make it difficult to generalize to schools where students did not choose to be involved with creative dramatics.

One study, conducted by Klein (1993), defined and measured empathy in relationship to sympathy, aesthetic distance, imagination, dramatic predispositions, and identification with characters in theater for young audiences. The researcher asked: Can the viewing of plays increase empathy for characters in students, in order to teach social skills and values? Klein (1993) focused on students as audience members, rather than creators.

Of the children, thirty-three first graders (mean age 7:2; range 6-8:0), thirty-five third graders (mean age 9:2; range 8:7-10:2), and thirty-seven fifth graders (mean age 11:1; range 10:6-12:3) (N=104) from classrooms in three different schools within one school district were selected. Half of this elementary school population sees a play once a year as a field trip. The majority (92%) of the children were Euro-American, with 8% representing minorities (3-African-American, 3-Native American, 1-Asian-American, 1-Hispanic, 1-East Indian).

The students were asked to answer a written questionnaire which included Bryant's Empathy Index (1982), and then to view a play, "Crying to Laugh," which was specifically written to encourage young audiences to embrace their emotions. The index was then used to measure empathetic measures. The 22-item questionnaire asks children if each situation is "no" (like me) or "yes" like me. Bryant (1982) revised her original test to be more geared toward children and items are intended to measure emotional contagion, empathetic concern, and sympathetic projection.

Another sample of adults was used to obtain the same information. They were given a 33-item questionnaire that allowed them to answer with a nine-point scale ranging from very strong agreement to very strong disagreement. The samples were taken from low, middle and upper socioeconomic classes.

Once a post-test was given, the researcher found that there were significant grade level and gender differences among scores for the Empathy Index. First and third graders differed significantly from fifth graders and fifth graders to adults, with the youngest being less empathetic to the characters. Additionally, female scores averaged 2.6 points higher than those of males, indicating that females are more empathetic to the characters. Each item was also individually analyzed.

Drama and imagination across the samples were also measured. There was a strong correlation between the answers on all of these related questions. Those that answered positively to enjoying acting things out and viewing plays were more likely to be empathetic to the characters; therefore enjoyment of drama could be congruent to empathy. It must also be considered that children who are taught that it is okay to cry in their homes, may be less empathetic to the characters than those children who are not. Klein (1992), admits this, but is unable to account for it. Overall, the study provided reasonable evidence that children are far more likely to sympathize, rather than to empathize with this play. It remains undetermined if students will learn social values from viewing plays.

Unfortunately, because the study was only conducted using one presentation, it is unable to be generalized to other plays. Variables that may account for some of the findings may include pre-existing values and a like or dislike for drama. The students were mostly Caucasian. Therefore, a more diverse sample might be needed.

The reviews in this section indicate that creative dramatics, in general, can be used as an effective tool for exploring problems in society. Dramatics can also be used to increase empathy and humanistic values in students, as well as inspire activism. However, all students may not learn these social values through the use of creative dramatics. The studies

also indicate that not all students will successfully learn social skills when utilizing these strategies.

Creative Dramatics and Identity Development

Researchers have long been interested in how different learning and extra curricular activities affect identity development and self-esteem. Self-identity development is considered a promotion of learning in this section and all reviews will discuss this issue.

In 1994, Ward conducted a study that looked at the relationship between play production and self-esteem. Ward (1994) believed that the production would have a positive influence on the class of first graders who were to put on the play. She wanted to know how the play would affect the self-esteem of the class as a whole as well as how it would affect the self-esteem of the diverse genders and ethnic make up of the class.

For this study, Ward (1994) used 21 students, seven who were African-American and fourteen who were white. There were eleven boys and ten girls and the students ranged from five to seven years of age. Reading ability levels varied from fluency to illiterate.

Ward (1994) assessed the self-esteem of the students in the class by giving them an interview and having them use a self-evaluation instrument. The children were first asked to brainstorm and narrow down a list of “things people could be good at.” They then rated themselves according to how good they felt they were at these things. An interview followed.

Ward (1994) focused on a two-week period in which the class cast parts, made the props and invitations, studied theatrical vocabulary, memorized their lines, and studied the

elements of theater. Each student was given a speaking part. The play was then performed for other first grade classes and parents.

A post test similar to the pre test was given. Averages were then calculated. Whole class and individual changes were analyzed.

Ward (1994) found that student self-esteem rose as a result of being involved in a dramatic production. All but three of the students' self-esteem averages increased between the control and the variable assessments. These findings indicate that, in general, young children's self-esteem will increase by being involved in play production.

While the self-esteem of the Afro-American students had gains, they were not as significant as those of the white students. Also, the self-esteem of the female students rose more than that of the male students. This further indicates that white and female students are more likely to benefit in positive self-identity development through dramatics than will African Americans and males.

The researcher claimed that the students represented a wide array of intelligences, but gives no information on that finding. The sample was small and this study may not be generalized to all grade levels. Also, the Ward's (1994) analysis instrumentation restricts the idea of self-esteem to what one does well.

Inquiry has been conducted regarding the effective use of creative dramatics in relation to male self-identity development. Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Henderson (2003) investigated boys' interest in dramatic activities by asking what boys attitudes were toward oral performance work? Using oral performance as a learning and assessment strategy, the researchers explained, raises many questions regarding the use of creative dramatics with boys who are developing masculine identity (Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Henderson, 2003).

The researchers note that the attitudes toward creative dramatics is important in promoting their learning because it is so widely used in English classrooms as a way to teach students oral communication skills. Does masculinity get in the way of performance education or does performance education hinder the development of young men? The researchers claim that this sort of research is imperative in the understanding of boys' struggles in English classrooms.

Their idea was that English and drama were contrary to boys' extracurricular and leisure activities. However, the researchers cite the conflicting data regarding boys' enthusiasm for oral performance, as some researchers suggest that boys' tend to enjoy having the floor. Therefore, generalizations occur in their review of the literature. In their discussion, the researchers note that there are always quiet boys and talkative girls.

Studies were conducted in two sophomore classes of twenty-seven boys and thirty-one girls. No ethnic make up was given. Three times as many girls than boys were receiving A's and B's in the class.

The study occurred over a two-week period and included twenty-four English lessons. Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Henderson (2003) began their study by identifying teaching activities that require students to engage in oral performance in these English classrooms. Observations were made regarding boys' interaction in the activities, and interviews were given to record the boys' perceptions. They were also asked which activities they found useful and how they would change the teaching techniques if they could.

The researchers then focused more in depth on a particular oral task. It was that of performing poetry. Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Henderson (2003) explained that after a six week unit of poetry discussion and analysis, the students were expected to produce a five

minute presentation involving an oral performance and discussion. Throughout this process, most of the boys were off task. In particular, four boys sat at the back of the class and seemed to set a dominant, masculine trend. However, the seeming “leader” of the group had his poems ready when it was his turn, assumed a strong bodily stance, and delivered the lines with passion. He incorporated arm gestures and seemed actively engaged.

Another boy, Chris was potentially marginalized in the class. Chris expressed being nervous about the poetry exercise. He said that he wanted to be able to video tape his reading, rather than to perform it in front of the class. His video taped performance, claimed Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Henderson (2003), was excellent. Clearly, Chris was leery of the classroom environment’s attitude toward his reading poetry. Chris’s masculinity seems to have been threatened by the idea of performance, even though he received an A-. The researchers go on to give several more qualitative examples.

The researchers then examined the patterns of achievement assessed with these activities. To provide an overview, student assessment profiles were gathered and examined. Differences between oral and written tasks were also noted.

The researchers found that boys who were social leaders and had higher self-esteem had less anxiety than other boys when performing. These boys also tended to score higher on performance assessments. The researchers also concluded that some boys do indeed enjoy oral performance. For other boys, who did not seem to be as masculine in their self-identity, performance assessment scores were lower. These boys seemed embarrassed and uneasy during observations.

It would seem performance and masculine self-identity development conflict for some boys. These observations, said Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Henderson (2003), show

the complexity of performance regarding gender. This study indicates that some boys' learning is promoted by using creative dramatics in English classrooms, while others are not.

It may be a concern that all of the researchers were female. Also, the researchers do not measure what they see as "masculine," although their determination of it in specific boys is heavily relied on for their findings. Assumptions are made on the part of the researchers such as suggesting that creative dramatics are contrary to leisure activities of boys in general.

Huntsman (1982) conducted a study to determine if creative dramatics can play a role in self-actualization. The goal was to see if experience in improvisational dramatics aided self-actualization as determined by three tests: The California Personality Test (CPI), Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), and the Self-Report Inventory (SRI).

The sample consisted of 30 volunteers. Half of the subjects did a wide variety of improvisational activities, while the other half provided the control group. Subjects were given the three assessments as both pre and posttests. An analysis of variance was run to determine whether there were any significant differences between the pre and posttest scores.

Huntsman (1982) then grouped the data into four categories: self-confidence, self-worth, spontaneity, and ability to relate to others. Self-confidence increased significantly in the treatment group. The analysis of the number of positive comments made by the treatment and control groups revealed a significantly greater number of positive comments made by the treatment group. There was a significant gain in the treatment group indicating trends toward greater spontaneity.

This data revealed that the students who learned improvisational techniques had significant gains in self-confidence and spontaneity. However, self-worth and ability to relate to others did not see significant gains. The studies findings indicate that drama is a

worthwhile tool for the positive development of youth and their identities in regards to self-confidence. This study was unable to prove that creative dramatics has any effect on self-worth or ability to be empathetic towards others

The sample is small. No information is given on the age, gender, ethnic makeup or locale of the subjects. It is unclear to what the researcher is referring to when he differentiates between self-confidence and self-worth.

The reviews in this section indicated that creative dramatics will have a more positive effect on identity development for Caucasians and females than it will for African Americans and males. However, improvisational techniques seem to increase the self-confidence of all learners.

Strategies for Teaching and Learning Drama

All reviews in this section deal with the utilization of dramatics in and of themselves. Drama classrooms and programs are discussed specifically and autonomously in this section as an integral part of the curriculum. However, research findings on teaching drama effectively also have potential implications for teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Buckner (1992) investigated whether students will more readily accept what is taught if the instructor is willing to do what is asked of the students. Therefore, the researcher reasoned, it is essential for the dramatic teacher to assume a role in the productions. Buckner (1992) claimed that performing alongside students in a production allows the students to observe and participate in developing character. This process is routinely used by the researcher whether in a production or in class. If and to what extent can this process prove

beneficial to young actors? Buckner (1992) sought out to discover how this process could be likened to a mentor/apprentice approach to creative dramatics.

Subjects were selected from two of Albuquerque, New Mexico's secondary school productions of "Romeo and Juliet." The sites were public high schools and included socioeconomic backgrounds from poor to upper class. The subjects were predominantly white and Hispanic, but also included Asians and blacks. The researcher gave no information on the gender make up of the subjects.

The casts were constructed according to normal audition procedures. The reasoning for casting included availability and interest of students, combination and chemistry, and the make up of the drama departments themselves.

Buckner (1992) conducted her study over a period of a ten week production. A test was given to determine students' understanding of character development. The test concentrated on the importance of: concentration, focus, relationship, action, and choice. It was given before and after the production as a pre and post test. Included in this test were short essay questions which assessed student understanding of preparation for audition and rehearsal, description of the role of the actor, and a description of each student's most and least successful roles.

There were also two surveys used in the project. One of the surveys was given to the students at the very beginning of the project. These questions explored the students' perceptions of teachers in general, as well as their drama teacher, in particular. About half way through the ten weeks, a survey was also given to the parents. They were asked to describe their child's participation in the process.

Test results indicated that there were no differences between the internal perspectives of the students' character development. There were, however, significant changes in attitudes regarding emotional recall and character analysis. The students were unanimously positive about the teacher being involved as an actor in the production. The student/teacher relationship was enhanced. The two school subject poll did not seem necessary, as the results were almost identical.

The results of Buckner's (1992) study indicate that students' ability to develop their characters is enhanced when their teacher assumes a role in the production. This study raises the positive possibility of teacher modeling in other content areas. Overall, Buckner's (1992) study should indicate to educators that the teacher assuming a role in productions could have a positive effect and is worth more investigation. It is also important to consider how teacher modeling might have an effect on students who had different perceptions and attitudes toward their drama and other content area teachers.

Since Buckner (1992) only conducted the study over the course of one production, it is difficult to determine the long term effects. The study's brevity poses multiple problems. Also, drama classrooms may not be generalized to other classrooms as they are usually an elective and students are there by choice.

A second study of drama education methods that may have implications for effective teaching and learning across the curriculum was done by Adams (1992), who conducted a quantitative study to determine whether first year, middle school students in a magnet program were able to develop better characterization in a scene study project after receiving some basic skill knowledge on directing methods. The researcher suggested that students would show a marked improvement with characterization after learning some directing skills.

Adams (1992) noted that most books on acting do not include necessary information about blocking and scene break down, which would be learned by having some training in directing. Adams (1992) found his study important because most students present scenes that lack direction. He determined through his own experience and that of his colleagues that there have been no guidelines available to drama teachers that deal with scene study units. He hypothesized that most teacher decisions regarding scene study are correlated with the given teacher's personal background and experience. Adams (1992) determined that this was insufficient as much of drama classrooms' curricula involve scene study. How can acting teachers approach scene study? Adams (1992) sought to determine guidelines that student actors could use for staging a scene.

Two classes of first year drama students were selected. Students repeating the course were not included in the study. The study was conducted at Southwood Middle School. Two different teachers taught the classes, switching halfway through.

Prior to the scene study units, a four-part pre/post test was given. The first part was a Likert Test on attitudes regarding acting and self-esteem. The second part was a student assessment of the importance of different elements of scene performance. The third part instructed students to order their approach to scene study. The fourth part was biographical.

The first class was given the new material that included the directorial information. The class that was given the directorial instruction began with a game intended to show the students how memorization is easier with action, thus showing a major importance of blocking. Then, the students were taught how to break a scene into beats, and allowed to try it out on a play; the intention being to allow them the chance to make their own decisions and determine that there was no one right way. The students were then assigned roles, according

to normal casting procedures. The researcher then allowed them to work slowly in groups, encouraging them to implement classical directing decision-making.

The other class was taught using the traditional methods for the first part of the unit, which included: reading the play, discussing acting, and a brief introduction to blocking and rehearsals.

The final presentations of both classes' scenes were evaluated using an instrument that uses specific criteria to include characterization, physical attributes, memorization, overall performance, and presentation on a rating of one to ten. After both units were completed a separate researcher from the University of Miami evaluated the videotaped scenes. In addition to the aforementioned measurements, a parent survey was sent home that inquired after the parents' attitudes toward theater and their child's involvement in it.

The findings from this research indicated that there is a marked improvement in scene characterization after the actors are taught some basic directing skills. In addition to this finding, a number of other results were determined from the pre/post tests and the parent surveys. The pre-tests determined that the students had good attitudes toward acting, which implied that they entered the program with preconceived notions of drama being a valuable exercise. However, the student results indicated that the students placed more emphasis on character relationships and creating an acting space on the post-test. The character relationship average went from a 2.4 in importance to 1.8 and creating an acting space made a significant change from 4.5 to 3.5, while line memorization's significance decreased for the students receiving a ranking of 3.0 on the pre-test and a 4.5 on the post-test. However, this study's main independent variable is that of the parents' attitudes, as all parents seemed very

supportive of their children's dramatic endeavors, so the subjects must have at least mostly found encouragement at all levels.

The findings of the study indicate that directing knowledge is effective for learning promotion and will improve characterization in performance. This has implications for other content areas. It would seem that if students are taught in empowering ways, such as giving them the knowledge of how to teach their peers, their conceptual understanding will increase.

However, as only one school was compared with high parental involvement, this study cannot be generalized. No socioeconomic information was given. Also, there was no information on gender or ethnic make up of the students provided. The teaching of the researcher could have also been superior to that of the teacher of the control group. Additionally, Adam's (1992) does not give a time frame in which his study takes place, making the long term effects undeterminable.

Placing creativity over the National Curriculum, Hackleton School began a "creative arts morning" and a study was conducted by O'Shannessy & Woods (2002) to document the changes. The researchers determined to examine the benefits to the students and teachers. The researchers further took a look at the school's long-term aims.

In the school year 2000-20001, the children were mixed into different grade levels and into groups of 20-25. The school is a rural elementary school with students ranging from ages five to eleven. There were eight full time teachers and three teaching assistants. It was mainly a middle class district and no students in the study qualified for free or reduced meals. Teacher turnover rates and unexcused absences were low.

The school organized every other Friday morning open to the arts. In their groups, the students do one activity, and move to the next one each creativity day. The activities

include drama, dance, weaving, mask making, marbling, bubble painting, collage, music composition and percussion.

O'Shannessy & Woods (2002) observed these sessions and noted, "...a very distinctive climate" (p.166). The researchers took copious field notes and remarked on the teacher enjoyment in the program. However, creativity at Hackleton is considered hard work. There was very little misbehavior or inattention, although there were times when children would become over excited and have to be settled.

O'Shannessy & Woods (2002) claimed that there was a high level of school and community teamwork contributing to the success of the school. There was a sense of cooperation, rather than competition. There seemed to be a great degree of learning. Older children would often learn from younger ones. The children seemed to enjoy working with students of different ages. Some also said they enjoyed working with different teachers of different classrooms.

O'Shannessy & Woods (2002) concluded that a multiple array of skills are developed from a strong arts program. The students learned group skills, as well as all forms of arts and their different mediums. They claim that some students discovered hidden talents and that great works were achieved through experimentation.

The data from O'Shannessy & Woods's study (2002) was not very thorough, although some qualitative anecdotes were present. The researchers tended to infer conclusions regarding things such as student engagement upon their observations and interpretations alone. The community seemed ideal and leaves little room for generalizing. The author provided no data on gender or ethnic make up. No mention was made of the training of the teachers. It was unclear whether students were assessed.

The reviews in this section indicate that teachers' assuming of roles and students' learning of directing skills will promote learning when teaching creative dramatics. Implications for other content areas may include effectiveness of teacher modeling and student empowerment. Strong art programs seem to bestow students with multiple benefits if supported well.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed and critiqued twenty-five studies that investigated the effective use of creative dramatics in K-12 schools. Findings from these studies indicate that integrating creative dramatics across the curriculum will aid in the deeper understanding of curriculum, while simultaneously learning theater skills. Creative dramatics also seems to increase student engagement and enthusiasm. In addition to a number of skills derived from dramatic pedagogy, students' skills in oral and written language will increase. In general, students will understand literature at a deeper level when implementing dramatic strategies. Reenactments of text and role-playing will aid in comprehension at all grade levels more so than traditional reading instruction. For ESL students, dramatic activities will optimize language learning. Creative dramatics will also empower students to take more responsibility for their learning. Creative dramatics, in general, can be used as an effective tool for exploring problems in society. Dramatics can also be used to increase empathy and humanistic values in students, as well as inspire activism. Improvisational techniques seem to increase the self-confidence of all learners. Teachers' assuming of roles and students' learning of directing skills will promote learning when teaching creative dramatics.

Implications for other content areas may include effectiveness of teacher modeling and student empowerment. Strong art programs seem to bestow students with multiple benefits if supported well.

In the next chapter, connections will be made between the history and the current findings regarding this question. The major findings from the literature review will be presented. Recommendations for practice and further research will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

Introduction

How can creative dramatics promote learning across the curriculum? Through the review of the literature in the previous chapter, this paper has provided findings that show how dramatics can be used as a useful tool to increase learning through such techniques as acting, movement, script writing, improvisational exercises, technical theater and role playing.

Arts education is no longer for the privileged alone. However, the wide implementation of creative dramatics across the curriculum is not practiced. Progressive educators continue to argue for a place for dramatics in our schools.

In the next section, the major findings from the literature review will be presented. Recommendations for practice and further research will be than be discussed in subsequent sections.

Summary of Findings

The studies showed that students received benefits from integrated arts instruction. These included gains in students' understanding of the curriculum, self-confidence, risk-taking, tolerance, and cooperation skills (Betts & McCammon, 1999; Schneider, 2000).

When working cooperatively, students working in groups while utilizing creative dramatics were more likely to be engaged as their group members' enthusiasm increased. Dramatic performance used as an assessment was also noted as increasing student enthusiasm and decreasing anxiety (Morris, 1992). Students also generally had a better understanding of the content areas when dramatic arts were integrated into those content areas. By giving students an opportunity to learn in a variety of different ways, an integrated arts curriculum allowed the students a better chance to comprehend what they are learning. (Melnick & Schubert, 1997).

When implementing creative dramatics for the use of developing oral and written skills, increases in scholastic achievement and self-esteem were noted (Horn, 1992). Creative dramatics specifically enhanced the reading comprehension skills of students more than more traditional methods were able to (Androes, McMahon, Parks & Rose, 2000). Students that chose to dramatize their projects had deeper understanding of literature. Their interpretations went beyond the basic story elements of the other students (Siddall, 1999).

Drama supported the development of critical thinking. Students were more likely to think critically when allowed to play and express their ideas (Ferguson & Montgomerie, 1999).

When using theater to teach social skills, students developed positive classroom environments, but had few gains in empathy in other situations. The development of social skills when using creative dramatics was inconclusive (Danielson, 1992).

Student self-esteem rose as a result of being involved in creative dramatics. There were, however, types of students who were more likely to see gains than others (Ward, 1994).

Classroom Implications

According to these findings, teachers can implement creative dramatics in a variety of ways within their classrooms across the curriculum. One of the most useful teaching strategies is to use improvisational activities. Creative dramatics are especially successful if teachers and administrators actively support a strong arts culture in their schools. For example, arts specialists can be hired both to teach students and to train teachers.

Creative dramatics, by its nature, is based upon a collective approach and can be used to teach students cooperative group skills, to include the use of role-taking to enhance students' leadership and collaborative skills. The production of plays is particularly conducive to collaboration. Allowing the students training and opportunities for the role of directing further enhances learning in this area. In addition, collaborative group work using play production promotes conceptual learning as students learn to teach their peers.

Creative dramatics can be particularly useful in the English classroom. Teachers can design dramatic activities for reading comprehension, literature analysis, and the development of written skills. This is especially true when the activities, reading strategies and texts are choice-based. Examples of ways that teachers can aid in more meaningful responses to literature include teacher read-alouds, discussions around books, and activities that allow students to respond to literature by re-enacting it. Student learning is enhanced when they create and produce performances that deal with text. An example of a well-planned unit would include different strategies for assessment such as performances, diaries, essays, and letters. Technical theater and the viewing and critiquing of theatrical events are other ways creative dramatics can be used to enhance oral and written skills.

Young children learn best through play and when they are allowed to express their ideas creatively. Recommended strategies include allowing students to choose their own creative processes, dramatic interpretations, and role-playing different characters and situations. One example would be allowing students to pick any character they wished to meet in a book and then enact that character. Another would be to have students create an improvisational story of a book that contained only illustrations. Further, students can recreate environments from texts within their classrooms and emulate the actions of the characters.

Teachers can use creative dramatics to develop positive, equitable and empathetic classroom environments. Teachers can also use dramatics to help students understand societal problems such as oppression. Drama activities can be made available to all students as an addition to other teaching strategies in order to ensure that curriculum is varied and promotes learning for a diverse populace.

Implications for Further Research

Historically, drama was considered an activity for the wealthy. This is no longer true. In all schools and across the curriculum, drama has the ability to reach children of all cultures and classes. Many educators have been trying to get more arts in the schools for decades. This effort could be supported by additional research that can convincingly demonstrate the value of theater in interdisciplinary studies. Research is needed that can help inform the educational community about ways of integrating drama in ways that reach out to students from all cultures and from all socio-economic backgrounds. More research should also be

done on the importance of inclusion in the curriculum, both as a separate subject and within other subjects. Future research should also be conducted that will help inform teachers to use drama effectively across the curriculum.

Final Thoughts

Creative dramatics can be an integral part of every child's education and in every content area. Although I hope that drama programs surge instead of decline, it is certain that drama can have a valuable place across the curriculum. Communities and schools must work together for the blessings we receive from theater. After all, learning, living, and most definitely teaching **are** creative dramatics.

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