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**ONE APPROACH TO DANCE AND DRAMA
IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL SETTING**

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ABSTRACT

This action research study provides in-depth look at a middle school dance and drama class, comprised of eighth grade students who attend for one 15-day related arts cycle. In this study, the teacher researcher focused on introducing drama and dance activities and studying the impact of these activities.

Within the study students participated in various dance and drama activities and lessons including improvisation, character development, scenes, vocabulary, costume drawings, dance combinations and choreography. The researcher explored the ideas of arts education experts including Charles Fowler, Jonothon Neelands, David Booth, Howard Gardner, Tony Goode, Viola Spolin, Phyllis Weikart and more. The researcher documented students' experiences by examining student journals, surveys, assignments and conducting interviews. The researcher discovered that when integrating the arts into a middle school setting, most students enjoyed participating in a wide array of drama and dance activities. Students learned that drama connects to in-school and out of school learning.

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RESEACHER STANCE

Since I was a young child I always loved to spin around, act, and create my own dances. I would perform for my stuffed animals in my bedroom. Dancing and acting allowed me to feel free and opened up the door to my imagination. My fourth grade teacher even allowed us to create a calculator with our bodies, each student playing a different number. It was exciting to get up and use movement to learn math. I will never forget that experience. I can remember in middle school having the opportunity to explore art, gym, cooking, sewing, woodshop and music. I always wondered why we did not have the opportunity to act and dance because I knew these were my strong areas. I wanted to show my teachers that I could be expressive and creative in my own way. I seemed to always choose the projects that included writing a script or making up a song with movement. I was never the strongest writer and always asked teachers if there were other options for projects that might include using my kinesthetic way of learning.

When I decided to go to college I knew my main focus was going to be education because of my love for learning and students, but I knew that I did not want to give up the dance that had become such an important part of my life. I found a college where I was able to study both elementary education and dance education. I took many education courses based on child development, curriculum and classroom management. My dance education consisted of dance history, anatomy, drama courses, and studio classes. I was so ecstatic to know I could

study both, but I had seemingly endless work ahead of me since I found myself enrolled in a five year program. My dance and drama college courses helped me to become a hands-on teacher who is not afraid to try new lessons and ideas. They helped me to take standard projects and create new activities designed to include all the multiple intelligences and to meet the needs of all my students by having activities that include writing, acting, dancing, and drawing.

I was fortunate enough to experience dance and drama in a middle school setting when I began student teaching during my senior year of college. I worked with a teacher for eight weeks and experienced the highs and lows of a teacher of the arts. Many students were open to learning acting and dancing, but there were always a few who seemed close minded about this experience. Many of these students had no prior background knowledge of dance and drama. They only knew what they saw on television or in the news. Once they were able to experience the arts for themselves, many changed their opinion and feelings about the class.

I found that I loved working with students in a classroom setting, whether it is an elementary classroom or a secondary arts related class. The first job I took was as a gifted resource teacher for sixth, seventh and eighth graders. The open-ended curriculum allowed me to use my creativity to incorporate acting and movement into the regular academic classes. I did this by working closely with a team of teachers who were willing to try out some of my ideas in their classroom.

I always made sure that the projects and lessons incorporated the Pennsylvania academic standards. I explored many team activities and allowed students to collaborate to create skits, scripts and dances.

Today, along with my gifted resource position I teach dance and drama to eighth grade middle school students. From both my college classes and my childhood experiences I knew that I wanted to integrate dance and drama into the middle school setting. I talked with my building principal and received permission to develop and implement a new program to foster appreciation of theatre and to provide opportunity for students to perform through an introduction to the basic concepts and skills of acting. Through viewing and participating in a variety of performance activities, students would enhance imagination, poise, and confidence. In such a class students could use the skills and knowledge obtained to appreciate and understand the purpose of theatre arts in school and in life outside of school. I want to give the students the best experience that I can in the short time I have with them. I try to expose the students to many forms of theatre and dance throughout the brief 15-day cycle that is now devoted to theatre and dance. I want them to play different characters, to write and perform short scenes, and to participate in improvisation activities, vocal warm-ups, and swing and jazz dance. Most importantly, I hope that the students will walk away with a better understanding of themselves through participation in the arts.

There are many reasons why theatre and dance should be brought into a school district. Theatre prepares students for life outside of school by helping students to refine and further develop their interpersonal skills (Bonwell 1991). It has the ability to affect students on a personal level by contributing to mental, emotional, and social growth. Theatre and dance give students the opportunity to voice their opinions, explore and make personal connections, and create solutions to problems. Theatre and dance explore various cultures through movement and role playing that help to break down damaging stereotypes that often happen in schools. Theatre asks students to be active participants and advocates for others, to be more aware of the people around them, and to work on communication within the classroom.

Not many public schools offer middle-level students the opportunity to integrate dance and drama into the school day. When I began teaching I knew that this was something I wanted to change for the students in my district. I began by writing the curriculum for the current 15-day rotation. The first seven days are spent exploring character development and improvisation, and the last eight days are spent learning swing, jazz and choreography. I go into all my classes wanting to give students the best experience of dance and drama that I can, because this may be the first and only opportunity students have to learn more about theatre and dance. I hope students will leave my class understanding character development, scene writing, still images, dance steps and new vocabulary words.

I want students to take the lessons learned in class and use them in real life situations and across the curriculum. I incorporate many of the Pennsylvania academic standards including: recognizing and using dance to move, perform, choreograph and improvise; interpreting works of art in the arts and humanities; and identifying vocabulary with the art form.

In my class students explore a variety of dance and drama structures and do things they may have never done before. I try to calm them when getting up in front of others while speaking or acting by making them feel as if they are in a safe place to explore new ideas. If students struggle in an individual activity I ask them if they would like assistance from a peer. Students know and are taught that they should respect one another by clapping and laughing at appropriate times. I talk about how this class is new for everyone, and students should not feel intimidated or have to worry that someone might make fun of them. I strive to create a non-threatening environment for the students to learn.

I was now ready to take on the challenge of rethinking my classroom practice by looking critically at the activities that I had built in the curriculum for this course and getting students' feedback. I would look for growth in my students and talk to them about what they enjoyed in class and what they would change. I set out to study the observed and reported experiences of students in a 15-day drama and dance curriculum of my own design. I wondered how my students would describe their experiences in this class and what activities they would find

most successful. To begin I reviewed literature that supports dance and drama instruction in school districts and the benefits of arts education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fowler (2002) notes that in comparison to teachers of academic subjects, arts educators must spend a great amount of time simply justifying the importance of the subjects they teach. The arts are not given the same curricular focus as math, science, language arts, and social studies. Why are the arts treated in this fashion when they have the potential to make a profound impact on the development of children? Fowler suggests that the purpose for American schooling is to prepare adolescents for the workplace. School systems are replacing arts related classes with more math, science and reading because of state and national testing. Teachers and administrators want students to score high in the academic areas so that the school is ranked high in the state. There is also pressure from parents to score high on the tests and for students to master reading, writing and arithmetic. The arts tend to go on the back burner in many districts and are seen as extras. Fowler states, “We will have to show them that the arts can serve our country and our youth in incredibly ways; ways that will enhance education, enhance life, and yes, enhance the ability of people to be productive citizens” (p. 9). Why is it important for school districts to include the arts and for teachers to integrate standards into their classroom? Fowler believes that, “Dance is a good way for students to develop a sense of themselves and a perspective on life” (p. 87). It is a way for students to express themselves and to communicate

with one another. Fowler also believes that drama and dance require strict discipline and concentration.

According to the National Arts Education facts and figures from 2002, students who are involved in the arts for at least three hours three times a week for one year are “four times more likely to be recognized for outstanding academic achievement, three times more likely to be elected to class officers in their school, four times more likely to participate in math and science competitions, three times more likely to achieve outstanding attendance and four times more likely to win writing and poetry contests (Americans for the Arts, 2002, ¶ 1) These statistics suggest that students involved in the arts tend to perform well in school, are critical thinkers, and develop skills that help them in and out of the classroom.

According to Elliot W. Eisner, a professor of education and art at Stanford University, the school curriculum is “a mind-altering device” and therefore, “we need to exploit the power of curriculum to optimize whatever potential intelligences individuals possess” (p. 41). Eisner supports psychologist Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, noting that a strong academic core should be coupled with dance, drama, music or art. Using Gardner’s theory, teachers encourage students to learn new material by using their individual strengths. For example, in learning about the Civil War, students might use resources such as pictures books, poems, movies, skits, maps, or music to tap into students’ bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical,

musical-rhythmic, naturalist, verbal and spatial intelligence (Pearson 1998). By broadening the variety of resources and providing multiple opportunities for students to experience the curriculum, teachers help students learn how to experience this topic in different ways.

One way to support students' multiple intelligences in the classroom is through drama structures. Jonothan Neelands and Tony Goode, recognized authorities in the field of drama education and authors of *Structuring Drama Work* see theatre as the "direct experience shared when people imagine and behave as if they were other than themselves in some other place and at some other time" (p. 1). Neelands and Goode provide a wide array of activities that help teachers and students learn by using the following conventions that are broken into four categories:

1. Context Building Action- a convention that acts as the setting or helps characters to be fully developed.
2. Narrative Action- discusses the story or play and helps to make sure the story is told in the correct sequence.
3. Poetic Action- interprets the language of a poem and the meaning behind it.
4. Reflective Action- helps students look at their character in depth and reflect on how the character would feel, speak and act.

Neelands and Goode provide a wide array of drama structures that correspond to one or more of these conventions throughout their text. Teachers might use the context building convention, for example, to have students write diaries, journals, letters or messages as a means of reflecting on an experience a character has in a story. Or after reading a story a teacher might have a student chose a character to reflect on and write a short entry as if he or she were that character.

A narrative convention might be used during a group activity called *hot-seating*. This is where students question and interview each other while playing the role of a character in the story. This could be held as a court trial, talk show or as a newscast. Questions might pertain to the relationships the character might have with others, his or her motivation and attitudes, and the sequence of events in the story. An example would be placing the three pigs and the big bad wolf on trial to find out what really happened during the story. The students can create their own interpretations and answers to the questions that they are asked.

Neelands and Goode explain both poetic action and reflective action in their book as well. Poetic action is used when teachers take a story that has been told over and over again and they add a new twist or perspective to the plot. Here the teacher looks for symbolism and creativity. Reflective actions look at what the characters in a story are thinking and analyze and reflect on the role that they play in a story or skit.

The conventions that Neelands and Goode provide are broken up into a description of the activity, the cultural connection, the learning opportunities or objectives and an example to get the teacher started. Neelands and Goode provide a practical handbook of drama structures that is perfect for both the first year teacher of drama and the experienced drama teacher.

Another useful tool for a drama classroom is in *Story Drama*, where University of Toronto professor David Booth presents “improvised role play based on story” (p. 12). Booth stresses that story drama can be taught by any teacher, even if it is only used for a brief lesson. Booth works with teachers by going into their classroom and teaching story drama to both the teacher and the students. Booth guides teachers through the story drama process. As children grow they begin to role play different characters. While telling a story in class, the children might begin to role play what might happen in the setting of a castle or a forest. As the teacher reads the story, he or she stops and asks the children questions about the characters’ feelings. Booth states, “drama tells me what a child has taken from a story, so that I can help him examine and explore the possibilities of what has been read, heard or viewed” (p. 19). Teachers need to begin by learning how to role play different characters themselves. This does not take much acting on the part of the teacher. When playing the role of a character in a story Booth suggests finding a specific chair to sit in when role playing or standing at a specific area in the room, which will help the children understand

the conventions of role play. The teacher should structure the lesson so that the students ask questions about the story or the character rather than the teacher leading the discussions. Both Booth and his former student and a drama-in-education expert in his own right, Larry Swartz believe that it is important for students to learn how to take on the role of a character in support of their learning.

Larry Swartz wrote *Drama Themes* with the purpose of giving teachers strategies for introducing students to drama structures. He built upon Booth's concept of story drama believing that "literature can be the focus and springboard of drama explorations, and that themes provide a hook in the classroom for making connections to story and to fellow class members" (p .9). Swartz also uses literature and drama to engage students in questioning and sharing of ideas. Swartz's book is broken up into the following themes: humor, mystery, fantasy, animals, relationships, folklore, community, the past, the future, and multiculturalism. The examples from his book can be used with all grade levels and can be modified to support particular curricula.

An example of an activity based on the theme of humor is a rhyme interpretation. Here Swartz suggests that the teacher choose a popular rhyme like Miss Muffet. During this drama theme the teacher will ask the students to think about what frightened Miss Muffet away, how she dealt with her problem, or who helped her out during the situation. These are not questions that would typically be answered during the story, so this dramatization invites students to think out of

the box, add humor to the story, and use their imagination by role playing specific characters. An example of a fantasy activity would be to ask students to imagine that they have been chosen to travel to the moon. Teachers would give the students a list of items they are allowed to bring with them on the trip and have them number them according to importance. The students will then work with a small group and share their list. The small group would have to choose the top five items that they would like to bring along. Students discover that they have to work together and must decide what items should be left behind and which ones they will need to survive. In his text, Swartz provides an introduction, games, dramatic activities, extended improvisation, and assessments.

Another expert in the study of drama in education is Betty Jane Wagner who wrote a book titled, *Dorothy Heathcote: Drama as a Learning Medium* as a way to help educators understand Heathcote's techniques and methods for using Heathcote's approach to drama. Her theory is to learn through drama and to "bring out what children already know but do not yet know they know" (p. 1). Heathcote places more emphasis on solving a problem or living through a historical moment or single event. Heathcote's theory is to take an example from life and explore it through drama. She suggests that instead of trying to find materials for their classroom, all teachers need to do is look at the moments and experiences in their own lives. Her book is laid out to help a drama educator improve his or her strategies and give examples that can be used in a classroom.

Heathcote suggests that teachers use the *mantle of the expert approach* to help students learn. For example, teachers would have students act out the character in a story and then reflect on what they did by talking and writing as that character. To do this Heathcote constantly changes from fiction to reality, from playing a character to not playing a character. Tasks are assigned by the teacher and students work in small groups to make decisions or find solutions to a problem. Gavin Bolton (1995) suggests that teachers should follow the guidelines below to begin using the *mantle of the expert approach*:

1. The teacher should present the lesson using lecture and visual cues.
2. Allow the students to see you switch in and out of role, this may include a simple action or movement
3. Give the small group the space to work on their own.
4. The teacher should be dependent on the students for their opinions and answers but still maintain order and make sense of the task when needed.

(Bolton 1995)

Viola Spolin, a theatre expert, created a book entitled *Theatre Games for the Classroom* to help students with performance skills and to understand how to play a specific character. Spolin states, “The book was written to provide students with theatre experiences and to help them become responsive to their fellow players, able to create an environment through behavior and to transform ordinary objects into extraordinary ones” (preface). From this book Spolin wants

students to learn how to story tell and how to analyze characters. To help define characters Viola gives the following example in her book: Students are broken up into teams of five or six and they chose which person will go first. This person thinks of an occupation and a person that plays a role in that occupation, for example a doctor. The first person enters the scene playing the doctor while the other team members figure out who they will play relating to the same occupation. The next team member may enter as the nurse, while the next person may enter as the patient. The purpose of this activity is for students to understand the behavior and characteristics of the person they are playing.

To play a character in a scene, students need to learn how to use improvisation. Philip Bernardi a published playwright and high school acting teacher, wrote a book called *Improvisation Starters*. He believes that lines for a play should not just be memorized and acted out. He states, “A play is a reflection of life regardless of what form of theatre you are dealing with” (p. 9). He says that good playwrights leave out what is dull and obvious and leave that up to the actor to add into the play. Without learning improvisation students/actors would have a hard time learning how to add in the extra gestures, facial expressions and intensity. This book contains conflicts for characters to play. To begin teachers are told to have only chairs on the stage, assign each character a role from the book and tell each player his or her objective for the scene. The teacher should then have the students reflect on what was performed

with the audience. This book makes it easy for drama teachers to help students understand the importance of improvisation and it gives nine hundred ideas and situations to be used in the classroom.

Dance has grown and made its way into schools and classrooms. At a local level Mary Ellen Lehman, a former art teacher at a public school in the Allentown School District, is at times the language arts, social studies, science and math teacher. She believes that integrating art into the core academic subjects is more likely to lead to meaningful learning than if the core subjects stood alone. Art as a Way of Learning was developed in 1991 through a partnership between local businesses including Northampton Community College and Binney & Smith. This partnership helped to educate teachers on how to incorporate art into other areas so that students would better understand the material taught at school. According to Northampton Community College's research "when teachers incorporate art in their classrooms, their students not only comprehend and remember more, they also improve their creative thinking and problem-solving skills" (Lehigh Valley Magazine, March/April 2000, 47). The program is modified for each school district's needs and is held for preschool through sixth grade. Also as a part of this program Bethlehem dancer Barbara Pearson worked with a fourth grade classroom in the Northwestern Lehigh School District. Pearson worked hand in hand with the classroom teacher to help the students understand weather concepts by having students use their bodies to create air

particles. Pearson had students creating movement to music and had them create hurricanes and thunderstorms using their bodies. The teacher noted that students who participated in this arts integration program scored higher on the chapter test than those students who learned only from the text book. This local art integration program shows that it is possible for the arts to be integrated into public school systems and with a little help from experts teachers can slowly add drama and dance into their classrooms.

Rudolph Laban, a dancer, movement theorist and choreographer also agrees that students who participate in movement exercises are more expressive, and creative. Laban's Movement Analysis Theory deals with the expression of the body and explores using all the body parts to create movement and connecting the movements to create a sequence or dance. He believes in the four factors of space, weight, time and flow of the body. To learn these four factors students can be taught to choreograph short dance pieces using space (kneeling, sitting, standing, and jumping), weight changes from one foot to the other, counting the beat of the music, and creating movement that flows to the music. Drama and dance teachers can take Laban's four factors and translate them into teaching students jazz and swing dances because both of these styles use the changing of weight and space, especially when dancing with partners for swing dance and keeping the beat of the music. An extension of the Laban movement was developed by Irmgard Bartenieff, who suggests that the following six exercises

should be used to enhance body awareness either by lying on the floor or in conjunction with running, jumping and choreographing a dance. The basic six are: thigh lift, forward pelvic shift, lateral pelvic shift, lateral condensing, knee drop and arm circles. Bartenieff states, “These fundamentals are currently being used by dancers, actors, athletes, and anyone interested in improving ease, efficiency and the quality of their movement” (Sandlos, 1999, ¶12) She suggests that dance teachers use these six fundamentals during warm up exercises and stretches.

Another approach to dance in the classroom is teaching rhythmic movement advocated by Somatics expert Phyllis Weikart. The Weikart system was established and geared at teaching rhythmic movement to the beat of the music using straws, cans, sticks and the human body. She wants students to be aware of beats and basic timing of music by moving to music while sitting, standing and jumping, and to use their whole body to change weight. Weikart states, “The goal is to have the students move accurately and comfortably, using locomotor and nonlocomotor movements, in response to the music itself and not to copy the teacher or other students’ movements (Williams, 2005, ¶11).

Weikart’s study comes with books and recordings for teachers to use in their classroom. Weikart suggests that teachers start off with symmetrical movement to keep the beat. For example, teachers should start off having students clap their hands, or pat their thighs at the same time. As the students’ improve, the beat

should be transferred to specific steps that will lead into a combination of movements or choreography. Weikart has reported through her studies that:

1. By age seven rhythmic competency is possible and if children are able to get this early it will help with sports, posture, dance, and basic movement.
2. If you don't learn rhythm until age 15-19 you will not be able to do the same movements as a seven year old.
3. Childhood movement and rhythmic skills can contribute to better posture, and a better mover.

She suggests that teachers make dance lessons short, enjoyable, full of fun music, and intended for students to be successful from the beginning until the end.

All of these experts' ideas have helped me to form my dance and drama curriculum into a sequence of what I hope are effective lessons carried out during a 15-day cycle. My story begins with a background of the school that I teach in and the number of students participating in my study. Throughout the document you will see the growth of my students and the specific activities that I teach in my class. Students are interviewed, surveyed and observed to yield my findings.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

I officially began my data collection after receiving approval from the Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB). After the committee carefully read and reviewed the proposal, it was approved. I collected data in my classroom from September 7, 2004 through December 20, 2004.

Before beginning an action research study Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) suggest obtaining permission from administrators, parents and students. I received oral and written permission from my principal and students at school. I gave each student a consent form that we read together in class. The form included procedures that were going to be taken to ensure that students' names and identities would be kept confidential. The form also stated that the study would not affect the course grade in any way. Telephone numbers were listed so that if questions arose at any time I could be contacted. I sent consent forms home with students for them to obtain parent/guardian signatures that allowed the students to participate in my research study. (See appendixes B & C for consent forms.)

Since my research study involved looking at three groups of students, I anticipated that not all the consent forms would be returned. Eight of 57 students did not return the forms with signatures. All students, including the eight not taking part in my study understood that they would still be participating in all the activities and projects in my dance and drama class. I explained to the students

that I would use data in my study only from students who returned their forms, but that everyone would be expected to participate in the daily class work, whether they were participants in the study or not. Forty nine students served as research study participants.

During this study I kept a field log in which I recorded chronological notes of my observations and thoughts, as I documented activities that occurred within the classroom each week. I used brackets to separate how I felt from what I observed. A field log composed by recording notes about research observations is a critical, common data collection tool used by many action researchers (Arhar, Holly and Kasten, 2001).

I met with three different groups of students from September to December for 15 days each, and I wrote a total of 30 participant observation entries throughout the duration of my study. A participant observation is an observation made by the researcher engaging in varying degrees with the observed persons or activity (Arhar, Holly and Kasten, 2001).

I used anecdotal notes taken during class as the basis for log entries. I used a clipboard with a chart attached to it that included three columns. The columns were labeled students' actions and reactions, students' comments, and activities both positive and negative. I would simply write down phrases as students were doing assignments and working with one another. After class was over I would take some time to include my personal reactions to activities and to comment

upon what students said and did. I numbered each line of my field log and had a large left-hand margin so that I could write reflective commentary and add codes to my log throughout the data collection process (Ely, 1991). The participant observations became the heart of my study. They provided me with information about myself and my students that would help me to write this document.

I administered student surveys at the end of each 15-day cycle to gather specific information about students' feelings about the class, about themselves as actors and dancers and the activities they participated in during the course. MacLean and Mohr (1999) state that, "survey data can show you the scope of your questions and tune you in to the general understandings of your students" (p. 42). The first question I asked was to help me understand what students could take from my related arts class and apply to their life. The second question focused on having the students reflect on how they changed from the first day of class to the last. The last three questions asked students to examine the activities that we participated in during class and note which ones were most successful and identify which ones might be changed. The information from these surveys gave me insight about how the students felt and what they learned from their experience with the arts in my class.

I also conducted individual and group interviews with students while other students were reviewing scenes and dances. (See appendix D for the survey questions.) The interviews were informal in nature, and I tried not to provide

interpretations during interviews as Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) suggest. I used group interviews when I wanted to get feedback from students whom I suspected might feel uncomfortable talking one on one. One-on-one interviews gave me the opportunity to acquire additional explication of ideas discussed during group interviews. Both types of interviews asked students to identify what activities worked and didn't work for them, as well as students' feelings about class structure. MacLean and Mohr (1999) explain that, "students are often very helpful and honest in interviews, if they believe you are able to listen and to, occasionally hear a difficult message" (p 46). Before the interviews I told the students that I wanted them to be completely open and honest with me about the way they felt about the class and the activities that we did. I told them that I wanted to make this class the best it could be and by being honest they would help to modify existing curriculum and help to create new opportunities for students taking the course in the future. I assured the students that I was listening to them, and if time was running short in class that they could always talk to me at a later time that day or during the next class meeting. I wanted to gain the students' trust, and I wanted them to feel comfortable with the interview and with me. (See appendix E for interview questions)

I collected and examined student journals, costume drawings and blocking assignments during the study. Within these works I looked for the students' understanding of the material that was taught, creativity, and artistic expression.

Students stored these works in a folder during class. I responded to student journals by asking questions and making comments and connections to their work. Students' drawings were displayed in class and evaluated at the end of each 15-day cycle.

I began to use the data that I collected to tell my story about the dance and drama class. I used a variety of narrative forms to do so, including pastiches and poems. According to Ely (1991), a pastiche is a way of expressing multiple tellings in a layout that emphasizes ambiguity and uncertainty.

MY JOURNEY THROUGH MIDDLE SCHOOL DRAMA & DANCE

The Setting and the Participants

The participants in my research study are eighth grade students who take part in a 15-day related arts cycle focused on dance and drama. After the cycle ends, students move to their next experience in gym, art, materials handling, family consumer science, modular technology, music, or health.

For my research study I looked at three separate classes that each met for 15 days. The first group consisted of five girls and fourteen boys; the second and third groups each had eleven girls and seven boys. The computer randomly places students on my class list, so I have no way of balancing participants by gender. The specific interests of each class encourage me to adjust some of my lesson plans to better fit the groups that I have. For example, in a class with significantly more boys than girls, we might work on a baseball dance done originally by choreographer Bob Fosse instead of swing dancing with partners.

Our school consists of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students with a total school population of 580. It is located in a rural setting, and many students attending this school come from socially and economically affluent backgrounds. Within the district there is strong parental involvement and participation in the students' education. The middle school was built six years ago and is already undergoing construction renovations intended to provide additional classroom and office space.

The Story Begins

Taking a close look at the students in my class you clearly see a wide variety of students, including those considered on grade level, gifted students, and a few emotional support or IEP students with instructional aides. I like to see the students work together in my class because most of each student's day is spent homogeneously grouped with peers of supposedly similar ability. I love to see the blending of ideas as students heterogeneously grouped within my drama and dance class work together with one another.

Because this is a brand new class for everyone, there is often some tension on the first day of class. Students tend to enter the class quietly, and they sit and wait for directions, so I try to break the silence with drama icebreakers. As students entered my class on the first day of school in September, I had eighteen chairs pre-arranged in a circle, and I greeted them with a hello as they entered. I recognized many of the students from seeing them in the hall but didn't know most of their names. Students and I found ourselves using the cafeteria space as our meeting place because the stage area, which will become my new classroom, was not yet complete. The district had been adding new classrooms all summer as part of the ongoing construction in our district.

Campfire

We began class with a new activity titled "Campfire." I asked the students if they could tell me when acting or theatre started. I had to stop mid sentence as

the cafeteria aides pushed a large cart of lunch trays across the food bar. After the trays passed by us, I told the students that we would all have to speak up because of the space being so large and with so much else going on. I told them that the space was temporary and we would be moving to the stage as soon as it was complete. Charlie raised his hand to answer my initial question and said, “Theatre started back in the old times when people wore Greek masks and performed outside. Am I loud enough Ms. Hausman?”

I said, “Yes, plenty loud, thanks.” I said. “Good answer, but think back even earlier.”

Mark said, “Back in pre-historic times when people tried to tell stories but couldn’t speak, they just grunted.”

Everyone in the class smiled and laughed at Mark’s answer and I told him that he was correct and that I wanted to explore the pre-historic time in more detail. I asked for volunteers to act out a short scene to explore how people made sounds and grunts to communicate. I noticed many smiles from the kids and realized that this was a good activity to begin the class. Four students played the roles of pre-historic people using gestures and grunting noises to communicate ideas presented on the script that I handed them. The rest of the class played people around a fire waiting for the others to come back with animals that they had hunted. I could tell that the students liked this initial activity as I overheard comments of students saying that this class is pretty neat and seems like fun.

The campfire lesson allowed students to get up and act but it did not scare them away with too many lines of dialogue. I wanted them to feel comfortable so that they would be open to experience a wide array of dance and drama structures throughout the next 15 days.

Charades

As I walked into class the next day I knew that charades would be a good activity to do because it is a game that many students are familiar with and feel comfortable playing. I also knew that the cafeteria was not likely to get any quieter. I discussed with the students what pantomime and improvisation were before we began our lesson. Katie stood up and said she wanted to be first. I rifled through the pile of my character cards as I could see her looking over my shoulder and gave her a card that stated, "You are building a snowman with an imaginary friend. Pretend to talk to your friend as you build the snowman." She laughed and handed me the card as she stood there pondering what she was going to do. I asked if she was ready and she remarked, "Yup!" Her first body movement was to get down on the floor and begin pushing imaginary snow into a large snowball. She continued to build the snowman with her hands and her mouth moved as if she was talking to someone nearby. I could tell she was proud of her pantomime as the audience clapped with enthusiasm and easily identified what she was doing.

Students took turns going up on the stage and acting out what was on an index card that I gave them. At the end of each scene the student yelled, "Cut"

and the audience tried to explain what they had observed. I noticed that I had all of the students' attention during this activity. They were all engaged in either acting or trying to figure out what the others were doing. Seven of the students put their hands up right away while others were a little hesitant to volunteer. To wrap up class I decided to have a quick discussion about the activity that we had just completed. The students commented that they enjoyed the charades because they were able to get up and not worry about memorizing lines. They said that while it was fun, they also learned that acting wasn't as easy as they had initially thought. One student asked if we were going to continue with this tomorrow, and I explained that we would begin adding a specific setting to each scene, followed by the introduction of spoken dialogue on the third day of class.

Introducing My Study

I introduced my study to the students on day three by giving them some background information about how the dance and drama class in our school first began three years ago. I explained the intention and purpose of my research study as well. I tried to share as much information as I could with the students so that they understood why I was conducting an action research study. I had the students take some time and answer the following questions on a sheet of paper: *What is dance? What is drama? Describe why you think it is important to learn these art forms in middle school.* I collected the data from my classes and constructed the following pastiche that brought me to a deeper understanding of my study.

It is something new and exciting that I have never learned before.

I think it is important because it teaches you self-discipline and to participate with other people you usually don't hang out with in school.

I think it is important to learn in school to show a variety of skills and get comfortable in front of a class.

I think it is important because it can make you smarter.

So kids can get hand-eye coordination down and so they actually want to participate in a school activity.

You can discover your talent if you have one and get your energy into it when you usually can't in other classes and it is fun!

IT KEEPS YOU IN SHAPE.

It is important because students should have the possibility to learn the different types of dances and have a different way of getting physical education.

It lets us express our individuality and have an activity to do.

It broadens your horizons and allows you to express yourself and not worry what others think. Did I mention FUN!

After reading the students' responses and creating a pastiche, I have learned that my class opens up the door for students to learn to work with other students that they normally wouldn't have the opportunity to work with. My class keeps students in shape by dancing and movement, and it helps them to learn to speak in front of others, which is a life lesson in itself.

I discussed with the students that their participation in the research study was strictly voluntary. I also stressed that everyone in the class would be participating and doing the same activities and projects, but that I would be using data only from the students who returned their consent forms. I assured the students that their grades would not be affected by whether or not they opted to be part of the research study. In addition, I talked with them about how their identities would be masked by pseudonyms. Charlie, a popular and often humorous student remarked, “That is cool!”

I then shared the letter of consent that was being sent home for their parents to read and sign. We read through it together in class, and I answered the questions that the students had. Myla, who had been quiet to this point asked, “Do we all need to participate?”

I told the class that I would be pleased to have as many participate as were interested. Myla nodded her head and smiled.

Charlie raised his hand to say, “I will bring mine back right away. I can’t wait to be part of this study.”

I remarked, “Thanks Charlie, I am hoping everyone will bring the consent form back. I would love to have anyone participate in the study.”

Some students came back with questions from their parents, and I addressed their inquiries through email and phone conversations. One parent from the second group of students wanted me to ensure that her child’s grade would not

be affected by participation in the study. I reassured the parent of this typically straight A student that there would be no change in the grade regardless of the child's study participation. When I introduced my study to the third group of students I made sure to clarify questions about the grading process so that the students might be better equipped to answer such questions from their parents. As I mentioned earlier, after collecting all the consent forms I had a total of 49 participants in the study.

Understanding Vocabulary

The next day of the first cycle started out very quietly, with the students either very tired or just quiet and ready to learn. I began discussing some stage vocabulary that actors and dancers use that we could begin to use in class as well. I give the students a sheet in the beginning of class that has a list of 20 vocabulary terms. During class as I point out terms the students are to write down in their own words the definition.

We talked about the word "cue" and why it is important for an actor to know when to begin and end acting on stage. "Improvisation" was another word that we discussed. Chris knew exactly what the word meant, raising his hand and offering, "It is when you have to think on your feet and make something off the top of your head." I nodded and asked the students if they had ever heard of the word "still image." I wanted students to use their prior knowledge to be able to define this new term for themselves. Mark said, "A picture." Khris remarked,

“Something frozen in time.” The kids were on the right track as we prepared for our next activity. I felt that students understood the goals for the class and were ready to take the next step into still imaging.

I tried to choose words that we would use over and over again in class, attempting to give the words we learn a purpose as they are incorporated into our hands-on experiences. We learned words like *director*, *choreographer*, *props*, *scenery*, *costumes*, *wings*, and *stage crew*. I chose to introduce these words to the students because they are terms that are important for every actor/dancer to know. I opted to introduce some new vocabulary each day as the students participated in an activity related to the word. For example, I introduced the word *props* on the second day of the cycle when the activity for that day asked students to act out a specific character that was written on an index card using “props” to enhance the scene.

With each of the three classes, I paused at this point to find out what they thought about the vocabulary that I had integrated into our class so far. See page 34 for comments provided from all three groups during the first semester of this school year.

After collecting students’ comments and reflecting on what they said, I discovered that 82% of the students found that it was beneficial to them in some way. Of course, I believe that it is important for students to be exposed to new words and to be able to use them in class.

Students' Comments

“Yes, I liked learning it. I joined the play and now I know what the director does.”

“It was helpful to learn words like improvisation because we will use it out of class.”

“I did not like it, but it was helpful.”

“It was helpful because it gave me an idea of what the technical terms are for what we are doing.”

“No, I don't believe I will use it in the future”.

“I don't like drama and won't use the vocabulary.”

“The words were interesting to learn. I never heard of some of them.”

“The terms will help when I try out for the play.”

Students don't learn math without using math terms or read a story without learning new vocabulary, so why would I teach dance and drama and not use specific vocabulary? Many of my students go on to the high school and audition for the play, work in the costume shop and/or become stage crew members. I hope that the vocabulary learned in middle school can be utilized during students' high school arts elective courses and in the context of the school play. I will continue using key stage vocabulary, even if some students don't find it particularly beneficial. I know that in many instances in life students learn things they may not use again, but the more they know the more well rounded they will be. Having students use vocabulary in the middle school setting prepares the students to be wiser and more knowledgeable about the arts and to hopefully encourage them to support local art, dance, drama and music shows.

Still Images

Weinstein (2003) suggests that teachers develop different systems for assigning students to groups. She states, "In addition to deciding on the type and size of your groups, you must think carefully about the group composition" (p. 232). I learned from Weinstein that it is very important to group students with varying abilities together so that they can feed off of each others' strengths and help one another with their weaknesses. After reading her suggestions on grouping, I pre-placed a sticker inside students' folders and asked them to get out of their seats and find the person in the room who possessed the matching sticker.

I decided to do the sticker grouping so that the students would work with people they might not normally choose as their partner. I then told the students to sit with their partner so that I can give the directions. One group yelled out, “We have a group of three.”

“Yes, I know. That is because there is an odd number in the class.” I knew that this group could handle the added challenge posed by the three characters because I have seen them work together in their academic classes. I handed all the groups four purple cards with scenes written on them so that they could decide as a group which one they wanted to use for the activity. I allowed for this choice within the structure so that students had to work together to make a decision. I also wanted students to have control of what scene they performed. I didn’t want them forced into performing something they didn’t feel comfortable doing, or that they thought was boring.

As students worked to create still images of people in a restaurant arguing, people trying to convince others they saw a UFO, and two workers who found a treasure, I took some time to listen to the conversations that were going on in the class. I heard Sue, a soft spoken girl, say, “I like this activity because you do not have to create lines and speak in front of the class.”

MK remarked, “Josh, what would it really look like and feel like if I was afraid to go up on a high ladder?” I was so pleased to see these boys trying to place themselves in their characters’ shoes.

As I was walking to another group I heard Colten say, “Come on guys, focus. We need to make sure we get this done. We only have 7 minutes left.” Colton was trying to keep his group on task and seemed to be doing a good job of it.

Carol Weinstein, an expert in group work, explains in her book titled *Secondary Classroom Management* that designing cooperative groups can be challenging. I tried using her approach called *completely cooperative grouping*. This is where the students work towards the same goal and all take part in working to reach that goal. Different types of grouping are important for different types of classrooms. Trying new grouping methods and mixing students up during the class has seemed to work in my dance and drama classroom.

After students had finished preparing still images, they reported back to their seats so that we could view each group’s project. I explained to the students that we were going to open and close our eyes during the performances, so they would need to listen for my cues. I explained that we would be doing this so that we only see the still picture and not the actors moving from one image to another. Khris said, “Kind of like those books that you page through and the image moves and you turn the pages.” Others in the class nodded in agreement.

Sue said, “Are we going to take pictures of the images?”

“That is a great idea,” I responded, “but I don’t think that time will allow for it. I will be working with your language arts teacher when you study drama in your short stories and maybe we can take pictures during that project.”

Neelands states that, “Still Images allow for an economical and controlled form of expression as well as a sign to be interpreted by others” (p. 25). Still Images are important for students to learn because they allow students to break down a scene or story into small parts. Creating still images seemed to go smoothly with the first two groups of the semester. The third group had some trouble understanding that still image were essentially frozen pictures. As the students in this class were working, I noticed that some groups used movement and then froze the picture. I brought the entire group back together and showed an example using two students in class. Hal, a learning support student said, “I understand now!” Looking at the roster for this class I noticed that I had many learning support students in this class. I knew from now on I would need to explain directions more clearly and give better examples for the activities and projects.

During the 15 days each activity builds on the next. I start the students off simply with charades that they perform on their own and slowly move into working with small groups to establish a setting.

Mirror, Mirror

The next activity I introduced called “Mirror, Mirror” is important because it teaches students to concentrate on the other actor and to begin to tune out everything else that is going on in the room (Spolin, 2000). The students were better able to focus on each other once we moved to the stage instead of the large cafeteria.

Students had to follow each other’s slow movements by using gestures and facial expressions. I paired the students up and had them sit facing each other. I noticed right away that some people moved their seats back away from each other. Brendon remarked, “I feel too close, so I need to back up.” I told him that his comment was interesting, and it led us into another discussion about our society and how close we stand when we talk to others.

I took what Brendon said and began discussing other cultures and how ours was both similar and different. I had a student make a chart on the board to show the differences and similarities with Japanese, African, Hispanic and middle-class American cultures. We concluded that all four cultures enjoy music, language and holidays but are very different in the way those holidays are celebrated and used. Students’ smiles and quiet laughter suggested their enjoyment of this activity.

While mirroring Mike and Tom seemed to be moving a little fast with their hand motions and facial expressions, so I asked them to slow down. They are

both athletes and tend to always be moving fast with sports they play and with the work they do in school.

Portrait of Mike and Tom

Mike is an eighth grade student who has brown hair and blue eyes. He tends to speak fast and moves fast in the classroom as he does the halls. Tom is also an 8th grade student who has blonde hair and big brown eyes. Both boys are football stars at the school. As I begin to watch them mirror each other I see them giggle as Tom touches his finger to the tip of his own nose. Mike mirrors him by doing the same motion. Tom is moving his hands so fast that Mike is having a hard time keeping up with the gestures. I hear Mike say, "Slow down man." I notice that they switch roles and Mike begins slow with a steady hand but speeds up as if to challenge Tom.

After composing this portrait of Mike and Tom I reflected on my write up of them. I learned that on the football field, in the hall and in my class Mike and Tom seem to rush through movements and activities. I wanted to talk with them about taking more time and slowing themselves down. I learned that this class is important to them because they want a good grade to stay on the football team.

After doing an activity I like to ask students what they learned. Gina remarked, "I learned how to pay attention to other people and really concentrate." I was pleased with her comment. I told the students that the reason why we did

the mirror activity was to learn about pantomime, a form of acting without talking and to work on concentration.

The next natural step in acting is to begin to use the voice, so I decided to move onto a tongue twister exercise to get the students speaking. It also helps students in terms of articulation. The National Standards for Arts Education in Theatre designed guidelines to introduce teachers and students to multiple aspects of drama within an age appropriate framework along with the suggested progression of physical to vocal acting. These guidelines suggest that students be introduced to acting without speaking first so that they develop a sense of being comfortable playing another character. Once students have had the opportunity to explore pantomime the voice should be brought into the scene so that students can begin to speak like the character. I wanted students to challenge themselves to walk, talk and act like the true character. Most of the students seemed to like saying the tongue twister, except one student named Marie. She was a quiet student who kept to herself a lot. She tended to be very soft spoken when doing the exercise. I tried to make everyone comfortable while doing the activity by having the kids say the tongue twister together as a group. It taught the students to enunciate their words and to speak loud and clear. I began by having the class read the tongue twister all together. I then asked students to practice saying one line at a time as we went around the circle. I then had the students say the phrase, "Hi, how are you?" as we went around the circle. Each student had to say it

differently than the person who had gone before. It was interesting to hear the change in the students' voices and how the speed at which they spoke. (See appendix F for the tongue twister)

Costume Design

As we continued learning more about drama I wanted to ensure that students would learn not only about the important role of the actor but also be exposed to other jobs in theatre and dance. The Pennsylvania standards suggest that students should be able to identify and demonstrate a variety of arts elements and principles to produce and revise works of art. Examples include reading and writing scripts, designing sets and costumes and performing a dance. I asked students in small groups to brainstorm a list of different jobs in theatre and dance. I then had everyone come back into one circle and have a spokesperson from each group share the careers that they had talked about. All three groups that I had for the 1st quarter came up with similar rosters. Most included dancers, actors, stage crew, directors, choreographers, sound and light technicians, and make-up artists. I always added some professionals that students had never heard of or did not think to include on their lists, like theatre critics, box office managers, costume designers, interpreters for the deaf, and musicians.

I then went into some detail with the class about what a costume designer does and how he or she plays an especially important role in the theatre. I began to discuss the steps in creating a costume, including measurements, fabrics, cost,

etc. Students responded to my presentation with a positive attitude. One student said, “This sounds like a great job; I love picking out clothes and designing my friend’s wardrobe.” My objectives for this project were clearly written on the board and explained to the students.

1. Students would take on the role of a costume designer to create a final product.
2. Students would work cooperatively in a small group to choose a theme for their costume design.
3. Students would briefly explain to the class why they chose their costume, what their theme was, and what fabrics they would use if they were to continue with the next step in making the costume.

I then asked students to choose a group to work with and pick a theme for their costumes that they would design on paper. I provided students with sketches of the outline of a body in case they didn’t feel comfortable drawing it free hand. After the body was drawn each member in the group was to design a costume that went along with the theme of their group. Students chose the theme for their group after a brief discussion and brainstorming session with their group members. I gave some examples to get them started. I told them that students in the past had created Halloween costumes, beach wear, school uniforms, and fairytale themes. Students used colored pencils to add details to their pictures. As

they completed their work, students attached their costume designs to poster boards displayed on the stage.

Amy and Jen decided that their theme would be winter wonderland (See Figure 1. Winter Costumes). They gathered many blue and red colored pencils and began drawing. When asked why they chose their theme, Amy replied, “Jen and I ski all the time with the ski club here at school and with our family members. Everyone looks so bundled up and warm with layers of clothes. I thought this would be a great costume to draw since it is something we both like to do. The pictures represent us before heading down the slope.”

I was pleased to see that Amy and Jen took a theme from their life and used it to create their costume drawing. Their pictures turned out beautifully, and I was thrilled to hang them on the wall. These students took into account the colors they chose and made the drawing coordinate beautifully.



Figure 1. Winter Costumes

Figure 2 shows the work of Kyle, Jim, and Paul. While talking with the boys about their costumes they remarked, “We all play sports here at school. Kyle is a basketball player, Jim is a football player and Paul is a wrestler. We decided not to draw ourselves. Instead we took images we have seen on television and in magazines and created costumes.” Paul remarked, “I like this activity because I enjoy art and sports and this is a cool way to do both.”

Jim said, “I think it is cool how we can bring things we like to do like sports and do something with them in acting class.”

I was excited to hear Jim make a comment about how he was able to integrate his interest in sports into our class. One of my goals for this class is being able to tie real life situations and other activities into acting and dance.



Figure 2. Sports Costumes

Figure 3 is the work of Sam and Mike, who decided to do a Mexican theme. Both said they enjoy taking Spanish class here at the middle school and thought it would be fun to draw Mexican characters. Mike said, “It would be cool if we had time to make the costumes. I don’t know how mine would turn out, but I know it would be colorful.”

Sam said, “I like when classes in school allow us to learn more about things we are already interested in. I like how you gave us a choice rather than assigning us a theme.”



Figure 3. Mexican Costumes

Figure 4 is the work of Jason, Jay and Mark. When these three boys entered my class I was initially unsure about how motivated they would be to do the work. They seemed more interested in talking and socializing with the girls in class. Once they choose the group they wanted to work with I sat down with them to brainstorm some themes. Jason said, “How about a band theme?”



Figure 4. Punk Rocker Costumes

Jay remarked, “Be more specific. I know. How about punk rockers?” Jay turned to me as to get my approval. I said, “As long as all three of you agree on the same theme and can create three different costumes.” I had never seen those three boys work as quietly as they did that day. I was glad to see that they were

interested in learning and able to find a common theme that they all liked. I was impressed with the boys' work ethic and their final product.

My goal for the costume design activity was for students to experience a job in the theatre other than acting and dancing. After each group of students had completed with its drawing, I had them get up in front of the class and tell us their theme, the colors they used and what fabrics they would use if they were to make the costume. Next year I would like to incorporate the costume designs into improvisational and scripted scenes. I would have each set of students that created costumes write a script using characters they created. I would encourage students to find fabric and pieces of clothing at home to help them with the appearance of their costume.

Student Interviews

As students worked to complete their costume drawings, I interviewed interested individuals and groups of students. I asked for volunteers who would be willing to share their thoughts about their experiences in the dance and drama class. I was interested in finding out how students liked the class so far, if they had any experience in theatre or dance before coming into the class, and what they liked or disliked about both the structure of the class and the activities in which we had engaged to this point. I interviewed a total of ten students during the first semester. I chose students in the class that I knew would give me different responses to my questions. I always allowed all the students to provide

feedback to the activities and would take notes on their responses. Sometimes there were interruptions during the interviews because other students had questions about the costume drawings they were working on.

I have used my field log interview notes to create four brief playlets, representing the interviews of students who view the class from clearly different perspectives. After each interview I made brief comments on what I learned as a result of conducting each interview.

Acting is My Thing

Amy's Interview (1st group of students)

Both the teacher and student are seated on the cafeteria stage as the rest of the dance and drama class quietly works on their costume designs. The teacher holds a pencil and clipboard in her hand as she interviews the student.

Ms. Hausman: How did you feel about coming into this class?

Amy: I felt relaxed. I like acting and making movies. *(Amy crosses her feet in an Indian style manner)*

Ms. Hausman: Do you make movies with your friends or do you take acting classes?

Amy: I make movies at home with my sister. My sister and I usually make them in the summer using my dad's video camera.

Ms. Hausman: I would like to see one sometime if you would like to share it with me.

Amy: Sure. I can bring one in next week. You can keep it until you are done. *(Amy jumps off the stage and quickly grabs her assignment book to jot down a reminder to bring in the video tape)*

Ms. Hausman: Since you like to make movies, Amy, I would think that you feel comfortable getting up and acting in front of the class. *(Amy's nods her head, as in agreement with what I am saying)* What activities have stood out so far that you have enjoyed?

Amy: I really like the still images. I never did anything like that before. It was cool to act without moving and talking. I also like how you created our groups and I was able to work with someone new.

I wanted Amy to have time to work on her costume drawing, so I thanked her for talking with me and asked her to return to her group. I was pleased to learn that Amy had an interest in acting and created movies that she was willing to share with me. I was happy to hear she enjoyed the still imaging and way that I formed the groups. Her home acting experience seems to allow her to be more comfortable in class. When acting she is more relaxed and focuses on the character she is playing. I noted in my field notes that Amy enjoyed still imaging and that it was something new that she had never done before. I know that this class will help her to become a stronger performer because she is trying out new

ways of acting that she hasn't done at home. Still images allow students to break down the scene into small parts and freeze frames with their bodies. This type of acting also helps students to understand specific parts of the scene in more detail.

The Best Class This Year

Justin's Interview (2nd group of students)

Ms. Hausman: Justin, thanks for sitting down and talking with me. Can you tell me in your own words how drama plays a role in your life?

Justin: *(While doodling on a piece of paper)* I don't know if it does. This is the first time I have taken a class like this. I don't act out of this class. I have seen a play on Broadway.

Ms. Hausman: Really! What was it called?

Justin: *(Looking directly at the teacher)* I saw it awhile ago. I think it was called *Saigon*. *(Pondering)* Oh yeah, *Miss Saigon*. It was okay, I guess. My mom took me.

Ms. Hausman: So how do you like this class so far?

Justin: I enjoy it. It is the best related arts class this year. I don't like wood shop and gym. In here we get to be ourselves and work with our friends.

Ms. Hausman: What activities have you enjoyed participating in? *(The teacher is ready to write down any comments on her notepad that Justin may share)*

Justin: I liked the campfire activity because it was pre-historic and the still image and charades because you didn't have to talk.

Ms. Hausman: So do you like history class?

Justin: It is okay. I don't really like school all that much. I get bored.

Ms. Hausman: Have you felt bored in this class at all?

Justin: Not really. It seems to get better and better. I am looking forward to games from *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*

I have learned that Justin is a student that does not think very highly of school but feels comfortable in my dance and drama class. He feels as if he can be himself in class and likes to work with his friends. I made a note to make sure that I would continue to keep Justin interested in our class activities which, I hoped would motivate him to want to come to school to learn. Justin represents the experience of many of the students who walk through my door. I find that some eighth grade students are not especially motivated to come to school and learn what is taught in their academic classes. I try to get all the students motivated in my class by doing things they normally wouldn't have the opportunity to do in a regular classroom setting. My goals are to get students out of their chairs and

think on their feet. The drama and dance related arts segment allows for imagination, creativity and an open mind.

An Excellent Experience in 8th Grade
Lindsey's Interview (3rd group of students)

(The teacher and student are seated at a table facing each other. The teacher has a clip board in front of her.)

Ms. Hausman: How is class going so far? Do you enjoy dance and drama?

Lindsey: *(Showing excitement)* Yes! I love this class. I like how it is not as structured as other classes. In here you can get up and move around. *(Using her hands to create a circle shape in the air)* I like sitting in a circle rather than at desks. It is a great change in my day.

Ms. Hausman: So you said you liked the laidback nature of the class. Have you felt at any time during class that there wasn't enough structure or you were unclear on directions?

Lindsey: No. I like being able to have choices in this class. I liked how we were able to pick our groups for our costume drawings, and how you allowed us to pick the theme.

Ms. Hausman: Do you think this class should be offered for all middle school grade levels or just eighth grade?

Lindsey: I like the class for just eighth grade because I don't know if sixth and seventh are mature enough. (*Taking her pointer finger and pointing it up in the air*) But it would be cool to have this class for a longer period of time. So if the only way to do that would to have this class each year, then I change my mind and say yes, it would be good for all grade levels.

Ms. Hausman: I know we haven't finished the class yet, but you know what activities are ahead of you in the next few days. If I were to offer this in sixth and seventh grade, what activities or topics do you think I should teach?

Lindsey: I think it would be neat to work on the light board and sound board. It would also be cool to take a trip up to the high school and use their equipment. I would also love to see a Broadway show or a local play.

Ms. Hausman: Thanks for the ideas and comments, Lindsey. This will help me as I propose changes to our drama and dance program. Please head back to your group and continue to work on your costume drawing.

I felt great after interviewing Lindsey. She made me consider additions to our curriculum that I had not thought about before. I would love to have the high school students who run the sound and light board work with the middle school students during a class period or after school. I also will consider Lindsey's comment about going to see a local play or even a Broadway show. If I continue to teach this class for strictly 8th grade students, I could plan a trip to New York for all 8th grade students who are interested in seeing a show. It was an eye opener for me to hear that one of my students is interested in taking what she learned

from my class and expanding it by going to see a live show. I will make sure to get brochures for Lindsey that has all the local plays listed so that she may go the performances.

Not Interested in Learning Drama & Dance

T.J.'s interview (3rd group of students)

The teacher sits at the table with T.J., She is holding a clipboard in her hand. T.J. sits slouched over the table.

Ms. Hausman: T.J, how do you like this class so far?

T.J.: I don't like acting and I am not looking forward to the dancing. It is all boring to me. I don't really like school in general. I like playing video games at home and sleeping.

Ms. Hausman: I am surprised to hear that you don't like school. You participate in many of the drama activities. Is there one activity from this class that you liked or learned something from?

T.J.: I kind of liked the charades. I learned it was not very easy to act without using words. The reason I participate is because I don't want a bad grade. Just because I don't like school, doesn't mean I don't get good grades.

Ms. Hausman: I am glad you are doing well in my class. I want you to learn from the activities that I teach. Why do you think that we offer this class in the middle school?

T.J.: Because you have to. No, because you like it and you want to teach us about the arts. I guess it is important to know a little bit about dance and drama in case you want to do it in the future, but I know I don't want to.

Ms. Hausman: You told me you learned something from my class, and that is all that I wanted. I don't expect to turn everyone into actors or dancers; I just want to expose everyone to the arts so that they can learn something new and maybe use it in the future. T.J., thanks for talking with me. I would like you to return to your costume design with your group.

This interview opened up my eyes and made me realize not everyone is going to enjoy my class; in fact some students may not even enjoy school, but I hope to teach each and everyone something new. I never realized that T.J. didn't like school; he seemed to be doing well in my class and participated a lot of the time. I am glad to know he does care enough about school to do well. I made a note to encourage T.J. to participate in activities, to make him feel comfortable, and to make sure he was in a non-threatening environment.

The students completed their costume designs within their groups and presented them to the class. I was impressed with the students' artwork, colors, and themes that they came up with. I collected all the costume drawings, grouped them on a poster board with their theme written at the top, and hung them in the classroom. Students were excited to see their work displayed on the walls. I was proud of the students' work and wanted to share their drawings with the art teacher. She was impressed to see such great ideas and beautiful designs.

I wanted to continue with acting and teach the students the importance of improvisation. This is where next year I would like to incorporate the costume designs into scripts. To improvise is to think on your feet and act spontaneously. It is important for actors to make up lines and think on their feet so that they become stronger actors. To make this activity fun, I refer to the television show *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*

Whose Line Is It Anyway?

Students often ask me about playing games from the popular television program *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* On the first day of class, I always tell them that it's not as easy as it might look to jump into playing improvisation games without ever doing anything else first to prepare. The students tend to think that the games look easy and that they will be able to play the characters without any problems. I had Lindsey explain to the class what the show was all about for the students who had never seen it before. She said, "It is a show where four people act out different characters during games that they play. For example, in the game questions only, all four are given a scene to act out. Two people begin by talking in only questions. They are supposed to stay on the topic they are given but can only ask a question and answer with a question." I gave the following example to the class:

Scene: Grocery store

Actor 1: Do you need help finding something today sir?

Actor 2: Can you please tell me where the mustard is?

Actor 1: Did you see how much the price increased on mustard?

Actor 2: Do you know why?

If an actor says a statement, then his or her team member steps in and takes over where he or she left off. I decided to try this game with the class since I knew the students had experience in charades, still images and speaking using a tongue twister. I knew that students could create short clips of dialogue on their own since I saw them talking out their still images as they worked. The natural progression is to have students begin working with a partner in a skit. The Pennsylvania standards suggest teaching pantomime before moving onto more difficult scenes using scripts. I wanted students to learn how to think quickly and begin using more expression in their voice with the questions that they ask.

Many hands flew up as I asked for volunteers to try out the game. I chose four people and had the audience members brainstorm a setting for the actors. T.J. shouted out an amusement park. The scene began and the actors started out strong but then kept saying statements. They began sentences with the words okay, yes, I don't know, etc. Of the three groups of classes that I had for the first semester, the 2nd group did the best work with this activity, perhaps because I did something a little different with this group. After giving the actors the scene I gave those

students about two minutes to brainstorm some questions, in their head. I did this because I noticed the first group had trouble thinking quickly. I had thought to myself, if I would have only given them a little time to think about the questions they may have done better. When the third group entered the class I wanted to go back to the original way I planned the activity and compare them with the first two groups. They seemed to not do as well as the group that I gave the two minute thinking time. I came to the conclusion that most of the students are new actors, and all of the groups should be given the extra two minutes to brainstorm some questions. This thinking process would help for future improvisation games that would follow. Using this scaffolding device helped students feel more comfortable on the stage as well as have better questions when they were performing.

Some of the other games that we played from *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* were the party game, helping hands, and lines from a hat. All three games include improvisation. After taking a quick survey on which game the students liked the best, all three groups voted on lines from a hat. This game is where I ask each member of the class to think of a line from a movie, play, commercial, or a phrase that they use with their friends. I give each student a slip of paper and they write the line on the sheet. I tell the students not to share the line with the person sitting next to them because you never know who is going to get your line from the hat. I collect each line, reading it before I place it in my hat. I immediately ask students

to re-write those not legible and those that I feel may be inappropriate for class.

After all the lines are collected I ask for two volunteers to come up to the front of the room. I give them a scene from my book and tell them they will need to make up the lines as they go. I hand them the hat and have them pick out three lines and place them in their pocket. In the middle of the scene the students are to pull one line at a time out of their pocket and say it. The line will probably make no sense in the scene, but the other actor needs to respond to what was said. The objectives for this activity are for students to be able to think on their feet, improvise lines for a given scene and utilize props that make sense in the scene. My goal is for students to use their imagination and create and add lines to the scene that may not make sense at first but can be changed into having a meaning.

This activity seemed to work very well with the classes because I used the lines in the hat as a scaffolding device for improvisation. The lines guided what the actor would say and what the other actor would respond to.

All three groups of students enjoyed this activity. I had so many students wanting to volunteer that I had to continue with a new set of the lines the next day in class. I like to do this activity because it teaches the students how to think on their feet and speak in front of their class. I asked some students why they liked this activity and Mike said, "I was able to make up the lines and it made me feel part of the scene even if I was acting in front of the class."

Josh said, “It was funny. It really made me think, I thought it would be easy but it was pretty hard.”

Jen remarked, “I liked getting up and not knowing what the other person was going to say or what line they would pull out of their pocket. It made me think on my feet.”

Many students find it difficult to get in front of their peers and speak, but when they do so in the form of a game the students don’t realize that they are experiencing a form of public speaking. I began to see that the students spoke louder and clearer, made eye contact with one another and used props that made sense in the scene.

Scene Writing

As the class continues through our introduction to drama I have the students work in groups of three to write their own dialogue to a scene that I assign. This activity occurs at this point to teach the students how to write their own words for a scene. I teach the students how to read and write a script before they use one for their final grade.

One of our district goals is to include reading and writing throughout the curriculum. I decided to tie writing into the dance/drama class by having the student write their own script, add props and perform it in front of an audience. Each scene has three characters, and I ask the students to create and write the lines that they come up with on index cards. Each person in the group needs to have 8-

10 lines in the scene. Students are encouraged to use humor and props. This activity is not graded but rather is practice for the graded scene that they will be doing the following day.

As I walked around the room I noticed that T.J., Jason and Anthony were having trouble creating their lines. As I glanced over their shoulders, I noticed that they had written two lines each. I sat down and read the scene that was on the card. It stated: *Two brothers are out to lunch and are in a hurry to get served. It is the waiters second day on the job and he/she is taking their time getting their food. The brothers get angry and demand another waiter.*

I sat down with the boys at the table and asked them to decide who they wanted to play. T.J. said, "I will be the waiter."

Jason and Anthony remarked, "I guess we will be the brothers."

I said, "I want you guys to put yourselves in the shoes of these boys and write down what you think they would say to one another. Brainstorm a little and then begin writing."

I walked away and observed that everyone else seemed to be on track either writing their scripts or standing over at the prop closet with the door wide open searching for props to add to their scene. I told the students that they had 15 more minutes to work and when they were complete and ready to perform to come have a seat in the circle so I knew they were ready to go.

Students began sitting in the circle group by group as I was moving furniture around to give them space to act. Each group took turns showing their scene to the rest of the class. I reminded students about using their voice, space, facial expressions, gestures and props. I explained that these were all things that would be graded on the next scene that they would begin the next day.

Most of the students met the goals for this activity, but some were still not where I needed them to be. One group in particular was not using any facial expressions or gestures. They were very loud and clear, but very boring to watch. I asked the audience to give them feedback on their performance. Chuck said, “You need to be more alive, get into it more.”

Justin said, “Relax, just get into the character.”

At this point I felt that this group of students needed to take a step back before moving on to the next day’s graded scene. I decided to have the entire class stand up and form a circle. I pulled out a pile of index cards that had characters’ names written on them. I told the students that I was going to ask for a volunteer to come and pick a card. After reading the card I wanted students to think about how the person on the card might walk, talk and act. Once students had these three things identified, I wanted them to make their way around the circle walking, talking and acting like the character. The second time around the circle they were to stop at someone in the class. Jay picked the card that had the words Mr. Potato Head on it. He wobbled his way around the circle saying, “Please

don't pull my ear off. Oh no, there goes my arm. Have you seen my friend Andy or Woody?" Everyone giggled at he made his way around the strangely shaped circle. He stopped at Kyra, and she guessed who he was. She then picked a card and the game continued. I noticed that the students were doing a better job with this activity than they were with the scene where they had to create their lines. For the second and third group of students that entered the class I did the circle activity as a warm-up which led into the script writing. The students in the second and third group did much better than the first group. When it came to playing and staying in character I believe it was the circle warm up activity that led to their success.

I was pleased with the students' work because they began to understand the concept of playing a character and knew that they were ready to move to the next lesson. Students had worked on improvising, using props, and character development. They were now ready to choose a partner to practice and perform the graded three minute scene. My goal for this activity was for students to create a character in every way that they could.

I allowed the students to pick their groups for this activity, and I told them that they should choose their partners wisely because each person would be graded individually, but to be successful they'd need to have a partner willing to work hard and practice their lines. I handed out rubrics at this time and reviewed them with the students. (See appendix G) I then handed out a blue and green book

to each group of partners. The first assignment was to read through the twenty scenes and write their first and second choice on the board alongside of their name. All the scenes include humor and were written specifically for middle school students. Some of the titles are: “Boy Crazy,” “Guess What’s for Lunch,” “Kissing Contest,” “ Driving Lesson,” “ Talent Show,” “ Housework” and “Stupid Looks” (Allen, 1998). Students laughed as they heard the titles of the scenes. Immediately many of the boys asked if they could play the role of a girl, and I responded, “Sure, as long as you are believable as that character. Think about how a girl talks, walks, speaks and acts.” After everyone had signed up for a scene I allowed the students to find a space in the room to work. For this activity we used the stage space and cafeteria space so that the students have enough room to move around and act. I ask the custodian to turn on the stage lights so that the students could take turns practicing in the spot light. The students had the entire class to practice the scene with their partner. I walked around and made sure the students were on task, answered questions that may arose and made sure they were following their rubric.

As I looked around the room as students were working I noticed that all were on track but one group. Phil and Scot had trouble reading through the lines. I quickly went back to my attendance sheet and noticed that I marked a star by their name indicating that they have an IEP that states that they are performing below grade level in reading. I made my way over to them and asked if they wanted me

to help them with any words. They didn't seem embarrassed since they were not with the entire class at this time. I sat with them and discussed some of the harder words in the scene with them. They said, "Thanks for helping us. Sometimes we struggle with some words. You made us feel like we can do it."

Phil said, "I am not afraid to read this in front of the class." I felt a sigh of relief and said, "Boys you should never feel embarrassed to read in front of the class, some of us are better readers than others, just like some of us are better actors with practice."

They both smiled and continued to finish reading through their scene. I noted in my field log that these boys took reading, something that they always struggled with and turned it into a positive experience.

Within 15 minutes, students began to go to the prop closet to retrieve hats, glasses, plates, wallets, and other props. I reminded students that when they were done with the props to make sure they went back in the closet neatly so that the next person would be able to find what they needed. Class was coming to an end, and I told students to place their rubrics in their folder and to be ready to perform the next day. I made sure to tell students to bring in props from home, and I reminded them that tomorrow would be our last day of acting and that we would then begin the dance portion of this class. Some students were happy, as others sighed.

I was pleased to see that the students spent their time wisely during class. I could see that they referred to the rubric when working with their partner. I wanted students to begin to put everything together that they had learned over the past seven days of class. I specifically look for the following things:

1. Is the student's voice loud and clear, and do students enunciate their words?
2. Are they using props to enhance the performance, and do the props make sense in the scene?
3. Are they using the entire stage space when acting, or are they standing in one spot the entire time?
4. Are they reading from their script, or are they making eye contact with the other actor and the audience?

Scene Performance

Students entered the classroom with props in their hands that they brought from home, while others immediately asked if they could be excused to change into their costume for their scene. I was excited to hear the students had spent some time at home the night before to prepare for the day's performance. I had the custodian turn on all the stage lights and turn off the overhead light in the cafeteria so that the lights would be on the actors. I allowed the students to review their scripts with their partner for the first 10 minutes of class as others were changing and getting set up.

As everyone finished up their run through, I asked the students to have a seat in the cafeteria facing the stage. Students took their rubric out of their folders and made sure their name and title of the scene were written clearly at the top of the page. As each group performed I would be grading them and making comments on the rubric that would be handed back to the students the next day.

The first two boys to perform were Kyle and Jason, both particularly strong actors. They decided to do the scene titled "Boy Crazy." As they were getting ready to perform, I noted the necklaces, purses and wigs that they had brought in from home. They were also wearing jeans and a plain white T-shirt. I asked for their rubrics and then gave them the cue *1, 2, 3, action* to begin. They both spoke loud and clear and used great facial expressions and gestures throughout the performance. When they were complete Kyle yelled, "cut." I asked the audience to give the actors feedback on their performance. Andy said, "Nice work. You were very funny to watch, especially dressed up like girls."

Nina remarked, "You could have moved around more on stage, but you had great facial expressions and gestures throughout the entire performance."

Mike said, "It was good. You never hesitated with your lines, so you must have practiced it a lot."

I was impressed with both the boys' performance and with the students' thoughtful comments. I could tell from the students' comments that they were using what they learned in previous activities to give feedback to the actors. Each

group took their turn to act out their scene in front of the others. Everyone seemed to be successful with this assignment. Overall, the groups spoke loud and clear and used the entire space that was provided. I like the props that students added, which made the scenes entertaining to watch. If I had more time with the students I would work on having them learn their lines without looking at the scripts so often. Most students tended not to look at the audience. I would also like to work on expression of the voice a little bit more. I need to create another activity that has students use expressive words.

I took my time adding comments to the rubrics so that students would have my feedback about their performance. I told the students that we were going to transition into swing dance the next day. I asked them to wear comfortable clothing and sneakers.

Swing Dance

I could feel the excitement and energy on the stage as the students walked into class. I began by playing a song from Benny Goodman, titled “Sing, Sing, Sing” and asked the students if they recognized the tune.

Hands flew up and Jay answered, “It is the song from the Chips Ahoy commercial.”

“Yes!” I replied.

Jess said, “It is the song we danced to in our recital last year.”

I told the students the name of the song and the artist.

The first step I taught the students was a simple swing step where you change your weight from one foot to the next. I then asked the students to partner up. Usually this works out well; today there was an odd number so I had Jess as my partner. She didn't seem to mind as she eagerly ran up to the front of the stage with me. I asked everyone to snap their fingers and move their arms. I began to teach the students steps and then play the music so that they could put the dance to a beat. I noticed that some students had trouble keeping the beat so I stopped the music and taught the step again. I have found that it is often easier for those students who play an instrument or participate in a sport to keep a beat to the music.

I talked with the students about jumps and turns as each person took his or her turn going across the floor. All the guys were excited about jumping. None of them held back; all wanted to give it a try. Both Jess and Julie were hesitating about trying the turns, but I told them I would go with them. The next thing I knew they took off into the air. They didn't jump very high, but I was glad to see they made the attempt.

The objectives for this class were to have the students experience movement by jumping, turning, and keeping a beat. As students began to feel more comfortable with the movement, I added in a few more difficult steps including a shoulder roll, pivot turn, jazz square and a grapevine step. The

students were picking up the movement quickly and seemed ready to create a short combination.

I ended class with a short tape of *Dance Fever* that was shown on TV a few months ago. I wanted the students to experience different forms of tap and jazz and to see an entire dance put together with music. I asked the students to be the judges of the two dances. I wanted to know which group they would give the 100,000 dollars to and why. Maggie said, "I like the tap. They were in unison and you can tell they practiced."

Chris replied, "I like the jazz piece because it was unique. They had tons of turns and jumps and I liked how they all did their own thing and then came together at the end rather than be in unison the entire dance."

After talking with the students they concluded that it was good to see an entire dance put together to music and that they would like to see another one. I told them that I would be showing the movie *Stomp* at the end of class, so that they could analyze both dancing and acting.

We were now ready to move into creating short combination to a piece of music. One of my goals was to have the students work with props in a purposeful way. I passed out black top hats to each student. I asked the students to make a straight line against the wall and had them count off in fours. Each group was then given a short piece of swing music. I told them that the goal for this activity was to use the props in eight different ways. Each group member needed to

participate, but everyone needed to be doing the same movement at the same time. After the movement was created, each group would show the class their combination.

All the groups seemed engaged in the task, but some were unsure about the way to use the props. I made my way to each group, looking at what they put together and helping them where they were stuck. The students were excited to put the movement to music and perform for the class. Each group took their turn getting up and performing. I observed many smiles and excitement in their body language. Each group chose to use the hats in different ways: some twirled them on their finger; others flipped it in the air and others used it to cover their face. Since the students did such a nice job with this activity I wanted to give them an opportunity to choreograph a longer dance to their own music. I think that is it important for students to learn to work in a small group and to make choices. I knew that the students could be creative and wanted to see how they would incorporate movement into a sequence of steps utilizing music. I asked students to bring in musical selections that they might want to use for their choreography. I also reminded them that their selection must be appropriate for school.

Choreography

Since the students had a taste of choreography from the day before I knew this would be an easy transition. I handed out index cards and told the students that the next two days would be spent working on group choreography. I said,

“Please place your name on the front of the card and the name of students that you would like to work with on the back. You must have a group of no less than two classmates and no more than five.” I collected the cards and continued my introduction. As students were getting the music they brought in, I was grouping the students together using the index cards. These cards allow me to move around students that usually get left out of a group. As I was working, Jen walked over to me and said, “This is cool that we get to choose our own music. You treat us like adults and hope that we make good choices when we bring in the music.” I knew that giving Jen and the others a sense of ownership, they would in turn, feel more confident. I want the students to be able to bring in their own music so that they see I am treating them with respect and recognize their ability to make good choices.

Once I announced the final groups I handed out rubrics to each individual student (See appendix H for dance rubric.) After reviewing the rubric and answering questions, I got out CD players and told them that they had 10 minutes to choose a song and then the rest of time needed to be spent on choreography. As students were working I walked around to make sure groups were on task and understood what they needed to do. I helped some groups with counting the beat of the music, while others needed guidance with dance steps. I saw a lot of creativity as I glanced around the open space on the stage and in the cafeteria. I saw one group using basketballs and chairs and another using scarves as a prop.

Some of the groups of boys struggled with getting started. It was easy for them to pick a piece of music, but they had difficulty getting up and moving. I reminded them of some of the leaps and turns that we did the first day that I introduced dance.

As the students worked in their groups I made my way around to make sure the students understand how to count the beats of the music. I reminded the students that they would use the next day's class to work as a group, and the last day of the cycle would be spent video taping their performance of their choreography.

I decided to spend the last 15 minutes of class showing the students the clips from the movie *Stomp*, so that they could incorporate movement and ideas they saw in the movie into the dance they were choreographing. This video is an example of dancers, actors, and musicians showing how they take the ordinary objects such as garbage cans, brooms, buckets and basketballs to create movement and music. I saw *Stomp* performed live a few years ago at a local university and was impressed by their creativity and use of objects and sounds. I decided to show my dance and drama class this tape to open up their eyes to new and unusual forms of dance. As the students were viewing the tape, I heard some astonished whispers. One student remarked, "This is like nothing I have ever seen before."

Another said, "I want to see them live."

As the bell was about to ring I asked the students to quickly give me a thumbs or down about the tape. Out of each class all but a few students gave it thumbs up.

The Final Product

As the students entered the room, I could see the excitement on their faces. Immediately one group of girls came to me and asked if they could change for their performance. I began to set up the video camera as the students reviewed the dances with their groups.

As soon as all the students were ready to go I asked for volunteers to show the choreography that they had been working on for the past two days. Alexis, Jen, and Ashley were the first to volunteer. They wore blue jeans and white T-shirts and held basketballs in their hands. They began the dance with a simple bouncing of the basketballs and then the music started. They had worked on a sports theme with music you might hear at a basketball game during half time. They smiled, did turns and jumps and created unique formations rather than just standing in a straight line. Everyone applauded and the next group took the stage.

This group was dressed up with black capes and a white glove on one hand. As Michael Jackson's "Thriller" began to play, the audience smiled. The five boys began with simple arm movements that they created and then began to leap off of the stage. They continued to do weave in and out of each other, sliding

to the floor and spinning in a circle. It was an entertaining and unique dance to watch because of the movements and music that they used.

Each group took their turn performing their choreography. Once all the groups were complete we went back on the stage and viewed the video tape of the dances. Some students covered their eyes as they saw themselves on the television, and others laughed and smiled at their group.

Since this was the last day that I would meet with the students I administered a quick survey question which stated, *how have you changed from the first day of this class to the last?* I asked students to be detailed and specific with their responses. I gave the participants approximately ten minutes to complete the question. I created the pastiche below of the students' comments to my question.

The creation of this pastiche suggested to me that students had grown as actors and dancers. The most enlightening part of the pastiche for me was that I discovered how the students evolved and grew during the short 15-day cycle. The students were open and honest when answering the questions. In my opinion dance and drama is like friendship, it comes and goes in people's lives and sometimes stays close forever.

PASTICHE

How have students changed from the first day of this class compared to the last?

On the first day I volunteered for things, but when I got up in front of the class I wasn't sure what to do. Now, I can think on my feet better and be more creative.

I learned that it takes a lot of practice to get something accomplished.

I was scared in the beginning and shy. Now I don't care if I look like a fool.

At first I didn't like to dance, but then we were able to bring in our own music and make up our own steps. I learned how to dance!

I loosened up. I was always shy to do things in front of people but I learned that it is not a big deal.

I learned that dance is a sport and takes lots of energy.

I changed by being more outgoing and more open.

I know how to dance (kind of) and I am better at acting.

I am still a nutty 13 years old but now I know how to dance and act!

I am not afraid anymore. I'm not shy. I give my opinions.

I no longer freeze up in front of a crowd when performing.

I learned vocabulary that I never knew before. I never knew how to swing dance. Now I am really good!

I changed from being shy on the first day to not being shy. I liked how you gave me a nickname. It was funny and you made me feel more comfortable.

I have more background in dancing and what goes into making up your own steps.

DATA ANALYSIS

According to Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Azul (1997), analysis is “emergent and ongoing” (p. 164). My research on this topic will continue as long as I teach this course. I am constantly revising and attempting to improve the course year after year. As I conducted my research, I wrote analytic memos to note my reflections of students’ behaviors and comments. I would record what was going well and what could be changed for the next group. Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) define an analytic memo as “a memo to yourself about what you see emerging” (p. 187).

As I was taking field notes I began to use the coding process. Coding is a form of labeling the data in the field log (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Azul, 1997). I would take time and re-read the entries that I wrote, and write one or two word descriptions in the margins. For example, if the paragraph was about swing dance and how the students were excited, I would place the words dance and excitement in the margins.

As my research was coming to an end, I took the codes and put them into categories and sub-categories, or bins (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Azul, 1997). I used a graphic organizer called a web to help me organize and see the relationships and patterns within the data. I then wrote theme statements describing the relationships within the data (Ely, Vinz, Downing, Azul, 1997). I

then took theme statements and used them as an outline to form my core findings for my research study.

During my study I collected data from students' journals and surveys. I created tables and pastiches showing the students' comments from these surveys. I analyzed the data and related it back to the theme statements that I wrote for the study. I created pastiches and a portrait of a student to help understand the perspectives of individual students.

I collected student work throughout the study which I shared during my telling of the story. I reviewed the pieces to see how they related to the question I am studying.

FINDINGS

MacLean and Mohr (1999) suggest that teacher action researchers keep track of the teaching process and students' reactions to that process. They challenge teachers to collect and analyze data, organize it into findings and then consider the implications of those findings. Organizing the findings is one process; considering and then acting upon the research implications are another process. After completing my research study I created theme statements from recurring events. I also analyzed the surveys from all three classes and created a chart that shows the percentage of students who reported enjoying their participation. I also examined selected interview transcripts to help me better understand my class.

One of the major themes revealed through the process of my research study was that *the participation in a dance and drama class is meaningful to most students, who are able to make real life connections to their dance and drama classroom experience*. One of my key instructional goals was to teach students how to improvise and think on their feet. According to Fowler (1996) drama invites children to imitate the actions and character traits of people around them. Creating these characters enhances cooperation, communication, spontaneity and social awareness. Students can use the tool of improvisation in real life situations. By participating in the *Whose Line Is It?* games students learned how to communicate with others and how to improvise. On the next page, Table 1 shows

the number of students out of 49 and the corresponding percentage who enjoyed participating in each major activity.

Table 1. Student Survey Results

Activity	group 1 n=15	group 2 n=17	group 3 n=17	total n=49	total percentage of students
Campfire	13	14	13	40	82%
Charades	15	14	15	44	90%
Dating Game	12	15	11	38	77%
Still Images	14	14	14	42	86%
Mirror, Mirror	5	6	4	15	31%
Costume Drawing	10	8	12	30	61%
Dance Choreography	14	15	16	45	92%
Swing Dance	14	16	15	45	92%
Watching Stomp	12	17	15	44	89%
Whose Line Is It?	14	15	14	43	88%
Vocabulary	13	13	14	40	82%

35 out of the 49 students responded that the drama activities helped them to think spontaneously. The remaining students explained through informal discussions that they already knew how to speak in public and how to improvise, but that this class helped to reinforce what they already knew how to do. Students seemed interested in the dance portion of the class and showed interest in going to plays, musicals and other performances in the local area. This showed me that students were interested in taking what was taught in class into the world outside of school.

I agree with Fowler (1996), who explains how “the arts nurture students into different modes of reasoning and divergent thinking” (p. 42). He states “that unlike many other subjects in school, the arts do not always demand correct responses” (p. 43). The improvisation activities allowed students to create their own dialogue, bring in costumes and props from home, create a character by giving him/her a personality and making lines up off the top of their head. One student went into detail on her survey about how she was in science class giving a presentation and forgot a note card in her locker. She explained how she didn’t panic; instead she calmly remembered key words from her notes as she continued to give her speech. She explained how drama and dance helped her to relax in front of an audience. Another student told how she learned to relax in front of her peers and begin to take the inevitable stresses of school less seriously. After her 15-day dance and drama rotation was over, she explained that as a result of this

experience she now wanted to begin to volunteer more in her academic classes. She felt that since she had experienced a non-threatening environment in dance and drama she would be able to speak up and volunteer without feeling intimidated by others in her academic classes.

Students commented during our class discussion on how specific drama structures led the class to conversations about other academic subjects. For example, the mirror, mirror activity that we did in the beginning of the 15-day cycle led to a discussion about cultures around the world. I never expected the activity to take that turn but was happy to integrate a social studies lesson into that particular class period. Gardner's theory (1996) suggests that a balanced curriculum consists of fields of core academic classes coupled with dance, drama, music or art. Instead of integrating drama into social studies class, I integrated social studies into a drama class. This taught students that related arts classes are not meant to be separate from their academics; rather they are there to build on the lessons taught in math, science, language arts and social studies.

From the survey I learned that *feedback from students is important for a successful dance and drama program*. Students respond best to those activities in which they understand the intended purpose or goal and have clear directions. The survey numbers show that the mirror, mirror activity was not liked by most of the students. Students commented on the survey that they didn't like the activity because they felt it had no purpose. Their response led me to wonder if I had

adequately explained the goal of this activity. As I reviewed my participant observation entry for that day's activities, I noticed that I did not explain in detail why we were doing the mirroring exercise. I now realize that for students to value an activity they need to understand at least some of the goals and objectives I have set. I will need to adjust the introduction to this lesson for future classes. My goal for this activity was for students to concentrate on the other actor while tuning out everything else that was going on in the room. I may adjust the mirror, mirror activity by having students watch one another do the movement and provide feedback to one another, or replace it with partner charades because of the strong positive response from the individual charades. Keeping the same goal in mind from the mirror, mirror activity I will now have students work in pairs so that they will need to concentrate on one another and work together to act out the charade. I will make this change to the curriculum as I continue to teach my class throughout the rest of this school year.

Table 1 suggests that students enjoy most of the drama and dance activities that I teach in class. I attempted to create a wide variety of meaningful lessons based on the Pennsylvania National Standards for the Arts and Humanities. The survey shows that most students enjoy participating in drama games that allow for creativity and improvisation. Forty-three out of the forty-nine students stated they liked watching and participating in the games from *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* They stated that they felt confident playing a character

for the games because I used similar but easier activities to prepare the students for the characters they were going to play.

Students appreciate the opportunity to have meaningful choices throughout the class. Forty-five of the forty-nine students enjoyed choreographing a dance. Through my observations and survey questions I knew that students were interested in exploring movement and challenging themselves to find music to fit their choreography. Many students commented in their surveys and interviews that they liked being able to bring in music from home because this choice allowed them to take more ownership of their work. They commented that they liked using songs that fit their style of music and movement.

Sometimes it is difficult to expand and connect lessons to other themes in a short 15-day cycle. I was surprised to see some of the results from the survey. An activity that surprised me was the costume design project. Students made it clear that they felt rushed and didn't have enough time to complete their design. With the short amount of time that I have with the students, I may find it difficult to give them extra class time to work on their costumes, so there is no reason why I couldn't let the students work on the costume drawing at home. Next year I may try to take the costume designs and have the students create scenes using improvisation. This way they would be creating characters that they would later play. Through my analysis of my data I learned that *using the multiple intelligences to structure the class allowed for individual success.* By observing

Jason, Jay and Mark, all of whom seemed unmotivated at the beginning of the class, I realized that the punk rocker theme that they had in common allowed them to work quietly together and create outstanding costume drawings. They succeed in my class because they were able to use their visual-spatial intelligence. I try to use all the multiple intelligences in my class to meet the needs of everyone that walks through my door.

While students were working on their costume drawings I was able to sit down and interview specific students about activities and the structure of the class. The interview that really opened my eyes was with a student named T.J. Talking with him helped me to realize that not everyone is going to enjoy my class; in fact I had never thought about the fact that some students enrolled in my dance and drama course might not even enjoy school. I discovered this theme through the interviews and analysis of my data that *I cannot make everyone appreciate the arts like I do, but I can give the students the best experience that I know how*. When I discovered that T.J was volunteering in my class and participating just so he would get a good grade I made every effort to make him feel comfortable in the class so that he would be successful in his own way. I had to accept that T.J. was not going to love the arts and would probably never act or dance again, but I knew I needed him to make him as comfortable as I could for the remainder of the cycle because I wanted him to continue to participate and not decide to shut down for the remainder of the class. I learned through other

interviews that there was a desire for students to want to see live theatre. By giving students a basic background of theatre encourages them to go out into society to view and participate in the arts. I didn't realize that I could turn someone on to liking theatre in such a short amount of time.

The pastiche that I wrote about how students have changed from the first day to the last allowed me to create the theme that *students can grow and change from a short experience in a drama and dance class*. From the pastiche I have learned that students who were initially scared or afraid of acting in the beginning of class seemed open and more willing to participate at the end because of the non-threatening environment. I learned that having a sense of community in the classroom allows students to put down their guard and be themselves. Some students made comments about how they loosened up and no longer freeze up when speaking in front of their peers. Others commented about how they learned that acting is not as easy as it looks and that you have to practice and develop characters to be a good actor.

As I look back to when I initially began my study, I am amazed how students have grown into actors and dancers in the short amount of time that I have them. They have learned to participate and enjoy the arts in a way they have never done before. I learned that my teaching and curriculum is strong but needs to be adjusted in some ways to better meet the needs and wants of my students. When looking at the survey from my students I notice that the mirror, mirror

activity was not liked by most students, even though it provided a discussion about different cultures. I will make a slight change to this activity by making sure my goals are clear to the students. I will explain that this is a reflection game and the idea is to spontaneously reflect what you see and not think about it. The students may have been a bit bored with just mimicking each others movements. I will take this activity a step further and as Viola Spolin says, “Do not initiate the movement, follow the initiator, follow the follower” (p. 72). During this extension of the mirror, mirror activity students sit facing one another and one begins moving and the other student can pick up the movement at any time. The teacher should not be able to tell who is the leader and who is the follower.

Even though my study is complete I will continue to ask students for their opinions on the class activities through informal interviews and a short survey at the end of class. This will help me to continue to be a teacher researcher and keep my lessons alive and changing. Since the students enjoyed improvisation so much I am going to try and have a improvisation night at school where parents and students can work together to act spontaneously. Since the students enjoyed participating in and choreographing a dance I will try and have the students put together a small dance concert each quarter. This would allow three groups of students to showcase their work to the entire school instead of just for their class. This would be an optional activity and would not be part of the grading policy for

my class. This would hopefully open up teachers, administrators and students' eyes to the importance of dance in the middle school. The students in my class seemed to be motivated to learn and took ownership in their work. I want to continue to motivate students to express themselves through the arts. I look forward to continuing my dance and drama journey each 15-day cycle and each school year. Cole and Knowles (2000) state, "Educators and other researchers have much to learn from students. As equal participants in the teaching-learning process, students can inform teachers in helpful and meaningful ways (p. 95). I am sure that I will continue to meet challenges with each group that enters the room and acts and dances on my stage. But, I know that each and every student will help me to shape and transform the class into the best that it can be. I will continue to interview and survey students so that this class will continue to develop day by day, cycle by cycle, and year by year.

ACTION RESEARCH- THE CYCLE CONTINUES

Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) state, “Action research implies an orientation to research, a form of professional practice, a research process, and, for teachers, a reflective way of teaching” (p. 15). I have explored the process of teacher reflection by taking a deeper look at my eighth grade dance and drama class. My research endeavor provided me with a great amount of insight about my students, myself, and my teaching. I have learned about the appreciation students have for the arts and what activities were successful and which one were not. Where do I go from here?

First, I will revise my existing curriculum this summer. I plan on teaching the same course for eighth grade students next year but there will be a slight change with the class size and amount of time I teach the students. Instead of the 15-day cycle, we may be moving to a 22-day related arts cycle. Also, the class size will likely be increased from 18 students to 28 students per class, requiring curricular change. Based on my study I plan to allow more time to teach swing dance. Since 92% of the students enjoyed this style of dance I will choreograph a number that is based off of the Broadway show *Fosse*. Bob Fosse once choreographed a great swing piece that I will re-create to teach the students. I will also allow students to work on their group choreography for a longer period of time, which will help those students who felt rushed.

Since I had positive feedback on the swing dance I will take another step and add a ballet and tap component. The ballet would consist of teaching the students how to properly stretch and how to work on balance. I would discuss with the students the difference between the dance forms. The tap component would help with rhythm and getting students to keep a beat. I do think that the students would enjoy learning tap, but I am not sure how many students have tap shoes. I may be able to turn to my budget and order different size tap shoes that the students can share and keep in my room. Since both swing and tap dance are upbeat and fun I am sure that the students will enjoy learning tap.

While teaching the costume drawing lesson I noticed students seemed to run out of time while trying to complete their work. Not only would I like to give the students more time to work, I would also like to expand on the costume lesson. I would bring in different types of fabrics to show what the costumes could be made out of and I would bring in examples of dance costumes that I have collected throughout the years. I would have students pick and cut out fabrics that they would use on their costume and create a display board to present to the class.

Because of the increase in class size I will need to look at adjusting some of my lesson plans. Immediately, I think about the scenes that the students perform. If I continue having students work with one partner on a scene the performances will take a long time. This summer I will order scenes from my drama catalogs that have three or four characters performing at the same time.

Doing this will help in two ways; first it will shorten the amount of performance time and second it will allow students to have a choice of how many people they want to work with.

Another aspect of the class that I will need to look at is the stage space. I do not think that there is enough room for 28 students to spread out and work on scenes or dances. I will need to talk with the administrators and custodians about allowing us to use the cafeteria space along with the stage space during those days that the students need more room.

After reading about Tony Goode and Jonothan Neelands I would like to incorporate journal or diary entries into my acting class. I will have the students reflect on the characters that they play and write entries as if they were that character. I will respond to some of the entries and students will respond to each others' writing samples. This will be used as a way to see if the students truly understand the character that they were acting out during a scene. I will use Heathcote's idea, mantle of the expert, to have students participate in a hot-seating activity. Heathcote explains that the mantle of the expert is when students take over the role of an expert during a drama activity. Hot-seating will allow students to read a drama article and then be questioned about it as if they were the expert on what they just read.

After reviewing my literature and action research I would like to continue to try to incorporate drama into the academic classes. I want students to continue

to see the connections between the arts and academics. My first step will be to talk with the language arts teachers in my building because they seem very flexible and open to new ideas. Since the still images seemed to work in my related arts class and 86% of the students responded that they liked it, this will be the first activity I will integrate into the language arts classroom. My work day allows me to be flexible since my main job at the middle school is to serve as the gifted resource teacher. I will take time each week to work with different grade levels and incorporate still images into stories that they are currently reading. I will then continue my journey step by step working with science and social studies teachers in incorporating the arts into their subject areas. Again, Neelands and Goode refer to many practical drama structures for any teacher to use. I will try to incorporate hot-seating and still images into the language arts classroom to introduce drama to the regular classroom teacher. I feel that it is important to promote the arts in academic classes so students see the connections across the curriculum.

Finally, I was asked to serve on the fine arts task force along with two parents, students and administrators from my school district for the remainder of the school year. I will share my knowledge from my study and findings with the committee in the hopes to continue a strong arts program in our district.

After exploring this action research at the middle school level, I feel confident that my program is successful and most students are benefiting from my

class. As I reflect upon what I have learned from this study, I see that I have already made changes in the current curriculum to better fit the needs of my students. Since my class is on a 15-day rotation I am able to make changes with each new group that walks through the door. Dance and drama are quickly evolving in school districts and charter schools throughout the United States. I hope that administrators and school boards see the impact that the arts have in education and continue to help them grow into more and more schools. I know that this research has helped me become a better student and teacher. I will continue to share my knowledge and love for dance and drama with students in the hope that they walk away with a positive arts experience.

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APPENDIXES A – H

Appendix A: Summary of 8th grade Arts and Humanities Standards (PA Department of Education)

- ❖ 9.1 Production, Performance, and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts
- ❖ 9.2 Historical and Cultural Contexts
- ❖ 9.3 Critical Response
- ❖ 9.4 Aesthetic Response

9.1.8

A. Know and use the elements and principals of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities.

- **Elements**
 1. **Dance: energy/force, space, time**
 2. **Theatre: scenario, scripts/text**
- **Principles**
 1. **Dance: choreography, form, improvisation, style, technique**
 2. **Theatre: collaboration, emphasis, focus, rhythm, style, voice**

B. Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principals to produce, review, and revise original works in the arts.

- **Dance: move, perform, create, choreograph, improvise**
- **Theatre: read scripts, interpret, improvise**

C. Identify and use vocabulary within each of the art forms.

D. Demonstrate knowledge of at least two styles within each art form through performance.

E. Know where arts events, performances and exhibitions occur and how to gain admission.

9.2.8

A. Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective.

B. Identify, describe, and analyze dance and theatre.

9.3.8

A. Know and use the critical process of the examination of works in the arts and humanities.

- **Compare and contrast**
- **Analyze**
- **Interpret**

B. Use vocabulary within the dance and theatre forms of art.

APPENDIX B: Principal Consent Form

Dear Principal,

I am currently completing courses towards a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses will help me stay in touch with the most effective methods of teaching in order to provide the best learning experience for students.

Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. The focus of my research is to learn more about the activities in my dance and drama class and how I can improve them to enhance the entire program. I will be looking at how students are impacted by dance and drama in the middle school setting and their appreciation for the arts after taking this course. This study will allow me to reflect on my teaching and make changes as needed.

As part of my study, I will be observing and reflecting on how students work on drama structures. I will be collecting samples of students' work that they have shared in class. I will be interviewing students about drama activities and how this class has changed them. Finally, I will be handing out a survey about the drama and dance class for the students to reflect and respond to.

All the students in my class will be involved with the drama and dance activities as part of my regular curriculum. All students will be interviewed and will take surveys. Data will be used in the write-up of my study only if I have your informed consent via the form below. Participation in this study will not affect any student's grade and students may withdraw from the study at any time.

All of the students' names will be kept confidential. The student's name, faculty member, cooperating teacher, nor cooperating institution will appear in any written report or publication of the findings. Minor details of the student's writing may be altered to ensure confidentiality. All research materials will be secured in a protected location, and data will be destroyed at the end of this study.

My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at (610) 861-1482 or e-mail at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about my in-class project, please feel free to contact me at school or email me at greatteacher.edu. If not, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you for your cooperation with my study.

Sincerely,

Frances Hausman

Please sign and return this consent form.

I attest that I have read the above information about the study and agree to allow Frances Hausman to go forward with her action research on dance and drama in the middle school.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Parent Consent Form

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently completing courses towards a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses will help me stay in touch with the most effective methods of teaching in order to provide the best learning experience for your child.

Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. The focus of my research for the spring semester is to learn more about the positive activities in my dance and drama class and how I can improve the activities to enhance the entire program. This study will allow me to reflect on my teaching and the ways my students are taking in the information from my class. Since this is the first year for this program, I want to get the students input on what activities they thought were successful and why.

As part of my study I will be observing and reflecting on how students work on drama structures. I will be collecting samples of student's work that they have shared in class. I will be interviewing interested students about their feeling about drama activities and how the introduction of drama has changed them. Finally, I will be handing out a survey about the drama and dance class for the students to reflect and respond to.

All the students in my class will be involved with the drama and dance activities as part of my regular curriculum. However, participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not affect your child's grade in any way. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time. If your child chooses to be interviewed on audiotape, he/she has the right to listen to the tape and to request that all or any portion of it be destroyed if he/she wishes.

All of the student's names will be kept confidential. Neither your child's name, not the name of any student, faculty member, cooperating teacher, nor cooperating institution will appear in any written report or publication of the findings. Minor details of the student's writing may be altered to ensure confidentiality. All research materials will be secured in a protected location, and audiotapes will be erased at the end of the study.

My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at (610) 861-1482 or e-mail at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about my in-class project, please feel free to contact me at school or email me at greatteacher.edu if not, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you for your cooperation with my study.

Sincerely,

Frances Hausman

I attest that I am the student's legally authorized representative and that I read and understand this consent form, and received a copy.

Legal representative signature: _____

APPENDIX D: Survey

Name: _____ (optional)

1. What three things can you take from this class and apply to other classes or your real life?
2. How have you changed from the first day of this class compared to the last? Please give examples.
3. Name 2-4 activities that you enjoyed doing in this class and tell me why you liked them and what you learned. (See attached list for names of activities that we have completed)
4. Are there any activities that you didn't like participating in? Why?
5. If you were the teacher what would you add or take away from the class?

APPENDIX E: Interview Questions

The following is a list of potential interview questions for my one-on-one interviews. I do realize that once I begin the interview I may have to add new questions, alter them, or discard them. These questions may be asked in class while other students are working in small groups or I may ask students to stay after school for a few minutes to interview with me.

1. How did you feel coming into this class? Did you have an open mind or reservations?
2. How do you feel about getting up in front of the class and acting out a scene?
3. How do you feel about the group choreography you did in class?
4. Which activities stood out in class? Why did you like them?
5. How does drama play a part in your life?
6. Do you think this class should be offered 6th-8th grade and why?
7. Did you like learning new vocabulary in this class? Explain your answer.
8. How would you describe this class to a friend?
9. Do you like the laid back nature of this class or do you need more structure?
10. Describe yourself as a dancer or actor.

APPENDIX F: Tongue Twister

**City Center Acting
Company
Tongue Twister**

Give me the gift of a grip top sock
A clip drape ship shape tip top sock
Not your spiv slick slapstick slip shod stock
But a plastic elastic grip top sock
None of your fantastic slack swap slob
From a slap dash flash cash haberdash shop
Not a knick knack knitlock knock kneed knickerbocker sock
With a mock shot blob mottled trick ticker tock clock
Not a rucked up puckered up flop top sock
Nor a super sheer seersucker pukka sack smock sock
Not a spot speckled frog freckled cheap shiek's sock
Off a hodge podge moss blotched scotch block
Nothing slip shod drip drop flip flop or glip glop
Tip me to a tip top grip top sock.

APPENDIX G: Scene Rubric

Name _____

Scene _____

Grade _____

Rubric for Scene Performance

15 points

	3	2	1
Voice	Actor projects voice and is able to be heard. Actor changes their voice for different emotions.	Actor projects voice during parts of the scene. Some change in voice occurs.	Actor is hard to hear and has a monotone voice.
Facial Expressions and Gestures	Actor uses facial expressions and gestures frequently to enhance the performance.	Actor uses few facial expressions and there are minimal gestures during the performance.	Actor uses no facial expressions and does not use hands or body to express themselves.
Script reading	Actor is comfortable with their lines and glances at the words.	Actor uses the book frequently when reading the script.	Actor never makes eye contact with audience and the other actor on stage.
Props	Props are used to enhance the performance and make sense for the scene.	Props are used but do not make sense for the scene or are not used to enhance the performance.	Minimal props or no props are used during the performance.
Use of space	Actors use the entire stage and are not stationary during the performance.	Actors move around on stage but do not use all the space provided.	Students are stationary and do not use any of the space provided.

APPENDIX H: Dance Rubric

Name: _____

Music Selection: _____

Dance Choreography

_____ (3 points)	40 counts long or more
_____ (3 points)	Used three different levels (standing, sitting, kneeling)
_____ (2 points)	2 different types of jumps
_____ (2 points)	2 turns (jumps and turns should not be combined)
_____ (4 points)	Energy throughout the dance, smile, confidence
_____ (3 points)	Used props and/or changed dress to fit the movement and music
_____ (3 point)	Dance was in unison
_____ (3 points)	Working time was spent wisely
_____ (2 points)	Movement flowed with music
_____ TOTAL	

Comments: