THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA AS INQUIRY

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Arts in the

Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Nicole Eiler Henry, B.A.

*****

The Ohio State University
2001

Master’s Examination Committee: Approved by

Dr. Brian Edmiston, Advisor

Dr. Patricia Enciso

Advisor

College of Education
The purpose of this reflective practitioner study was to determine how the use of drama as inquiry would effect the author’s pedagogy. In order to clearly understand how her pedagogy had changed with the use of drama as inquiry, the author focused retrospectively on her pedagogical transformation from the beginning of her teaching career as well as on her current teaching of an inquiry unit with three first grade classes. The author’s data were comprised of her student teaching logs, teaching logs, lesson reflections, lesson plans, and her primary source, a journal.

The author found that her pedagogy was effected in the following ways:

1. The author was able to incorporate student’s interests, and give them more power and authority in the classroom and their own learning.
2. The author found that inquiry broadened and could even confirm or change students perspectives, ideas and opinions.
3. The author found the focus of her lessons changed from planning a group of activities to planning an inquiry question that everything was centered around.
4. The author found that her planning had changed from a very detailed, rigid plan to a more open ended style that accepted student input and suggestions.
5. The author found that she had begun teaching with a purpose in mind and an awareness of how the content or question was relevant to her students lives.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Brian Edmiston for his infectious inspiration and introducing me to the endless possibilities using drama can possess. Without Dr. Edmiston’s relentless commitment, time, and dedication, this thesis would not have been possible.

I would like to thank Blaine Henry for his patience, support and encouragement throughout the entire thesis process.

I would like to thank Doria Wideman for helping me bring to fruition the style of my thesis.

I am grateful to Jenifer Lourens who continually listened to my joys and frustrations, as well as who helped me to create key figures seen in the thesis.

I also wish to thank Kristie Edmund, Kara Rappolt and Jessica McCombe for allowing me to work their students in this study and for helping me record data.
VITA

November 4, 1973............................... Born - Oxford, Ohio

1996.................................................... B.A. in Theatre, Theatre Education, Ohio Wesleyan University

1996 - Present..................................... Drama Specialist, Columbus Public Schools, Columbus, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education with an emphasis in drama
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sections:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Reflective practitioner research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 The purpose of the study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 What this thesis is about</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The time period this thesis spans</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 How I recorded my reflections</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 The functions journal writing and reflecting serve</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Why I wrote in the way I did</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 How I was able to write the letters</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 The process of inquiry</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.1 Process of building from the known</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.2 Process of taking the time to find questions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.3 Process of gaining new perspectives</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.4 Process of attending to difference</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.5 Process of sharing what was learned</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.6 Process of planning new inquiries</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.7 Process of taking thoughtful new action</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Drama as inquiry is distinct</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10.1 Explanation of drama as inquiry</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10.2 How drama extends inquiry</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10.3 Process of distribution of power and authority</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student suggestions for the fairest ending</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Class A’s rationale for why the ending is fair</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Class B’s rationale for why the ending is fair</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Class C’s rationale for why the ending is fair</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Underlying processes of inquiry in the Authoring Cycle</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ways students can explore a question to form a new/expanded position</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nine processes used in reflections</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A chronology of my studies regarding classroom drama</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>How to read this thesis</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Scaffold of questions</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Progression of students' investment in drama work</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION
I have always been an educator who has reflected upon my lessons with the aim of improving my pedagogy. I have asked myself questions like the following: What went successfully? How could I have engaged the students more? What was the purpose of my lesson? Did the lesson have relevance to my students' lives? I have found it easy to create lessons that the students enjoy, however, I want the lessons to have meaning, relevance, and impact on my students' thoughts, actions, and lives. Throughout my teaching career I have also been exposed to many theories of teaching and have experimented with different theories in my classroom. In the course of my graduate studies, I was introduced to the theory of drama as inquiry, a theory that I had previously not been aware of. Although the theory incorporated techniques with which I was already familiar, it intensified for me the significance of student involvement and the need to give students the opportunity to analyze, rationalize and draw conclusions. This thesis is a record of how my teaching has been effected as a result of experimenting with this particular theory in my classroom.

**Reflective Practitioner Research**

This thesis is a reflective practitioner research study by a practicing drama specialist, in a urban elementary school in central Ohio. As Donald Schon (1983) who introduced the concept of reflective practice explains, in reflective practitioner research,

\[
\ldots \text{the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation (p. 68).}
\]

The teacher explores an issue she finds uncertain, such as a theory. (Schon used
the male gender exclusively, I will be using the female.) She can gain new understanding of a theory, by reflecting on her attempts to implement the theory in her practice. Specifically, she can reflect on changes in her teaching, in students' actions, and in her classroom environment. The teacher is able to reflect on those understandings and changes through techniques such as journal writing, or action research, to give her insight into becoming a better practitioner. As Philip Taylor (1996), a leading scholar on researching drama and arts education and a practicing reflective practitioner explains in his edited book, Researching Drama and Arts Education: Paradigms and Possibilities, "... the reflective practitioner stance demands a discovery of self, a recognition of how one interacts with others, and how others read and are read by this interaction" (pg. 27). As practitioners are reflecting on their interactions, Schon emphasizes that they have a goal, "The practitioner has an interest in transforming the situation from what is to something he likes better. He also has an interest in understanding the situation, but it is in the service of his interest to change" (p. 72). Not only is the teacher interested in becoming a better practitioner, but also having a better understanding of the issue she is exploring. Chase, Germundsen, Brownstein, and Distad (2001), confirm "when teachers engage in reflective practice, they improve their teaching effectiveness, leading to increased student performance" (p. 143).

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine how using the methodology of drama as inquiry would effect my pedagogy. I wanted to discover what aspects of my current pedagogy would change as a result of beginning to use drama as inquiry.
What this thesis is about

This thesis is a record of my investigation into how beginning to use drama as inquiry with three first grade classes effected my pedagogy and thus, not only my practice but also my theoretical framework and teaching philosophy. As Taylor (1996), makes clear:

Reflective practitioners use their own instrument, themselves, to raise the question of inquiry, to process how those questions will be investigated, and to consider how their emergent findings will impact upon their lifelong work (p. 40).

I reflected on my actions as a teacher to investigate how my pedagogy changed in order to become a better drama practitioner.

The time period this thesis spans

When I began to write this thesis I realized that I needed to consider my pedagogical transformation from the beginning of my teaching career in September, 1993. As Taylor (1996) emphasizes about the theory behind the reflective practitioner research design, “... reality is multiple and shifting and ... truths evolve and transform over time” (p. 37). In order for me to understand the impact a first grade unit had on my pedagogy, I needed to travel back to where I began to develop my philosophy in pedagogy. I wrote the thesis to take you on what I hope you find is a challenging journey, a trip dating back to my earliest experiences in teaching to today; I plunged into what felt like the abyss of a new methodology and encountered my fears, new places, and adventures.

I currently teach kindergarten through fifth grade, as a drama specialist, but for the purposes of this study, I focused on three first grade classes over a four month period, that I will refer to as “the first grade unit”. I developed a sequence of five lessons using drama as inquiry around the text, Peter and the Wolf. I reflected on my practice in two ways: (1) Over the four month period (March
2001-June 2001) I kept an inquiry unit journal. To assist me in recording events and dialogue in my classroom I asked peers to observe and provide me with written comments. And (2) I reflected in writing on the entries in my journal, on the peer observations, and on my previous teaching journals (1993-2000). In doing so I considered the impact on my classroom practices, theory and philosophy.

**How I recorded my reflections**

My primary data source was my inquiry unit journal. Black, Sileo and Prater (2000), practicing researchers in teacher education and preparation, stress the importance of teacher reflection and the use of journals. They state, “Reflection is critical to decision making that confronts educators on a daily basis and journal writing can be a powerful tool to enhance that reflected process” (p. 71). Taylor (1996) also stresses the importance of reflective practitioners using journals, diaries or logbooks when he states, “If the human instrument is the principal medium for raising the agenda in reflective practitioner research, then the logbook [a journal] is the place where that agenda is recorded” (p. 41). Journal writing becomes for me a permanent record of the following: my observations, various perspectives, analysis of my practice, interpretations of my understanding of topics, comments, and self-reflections (Killion, 1999).

**The functions journal writing and reflecting serve / Why it’s effective**

The reflective tool of journal writing served many functions for me. While journaling, educators are reflecting upon “behaviors and experiences in the context of the educational environments in which they work” (Black et al., 2000, p. 71). What Black et al. discussed in their research on the effectiveness of journal writing as a reflective tool with pre-service teachers is also true for me; reflection allowed
me to connect experiences inside and outside the classroom. They found that journals helped teachers to:

a) become more aware of factors that contribute to individual at-risk circumstances, b) reflect on past experiences and make sense of them in light of new information, c) celebrate personal growth, d) search for solutions to life’s (educational) problems, and d) struggle with decision making processes that will affect the lives of at-risk individuals (p. 82).

Black et al. also emphasized, “Reflection enables individuals to reframe, reinterpret, and articulate their understandings and beliefs, on a continual basis, in light of new experiences and information (p. 71). My journal served the same functions as those that Black et al. found in their study: I was using journal writing as a tool to (1) collect data, (2) record observations, (3) analyze my practice, (4) interpret my understandings on drama as inquiry, (5) reflect on my past and present practices and how it will effect her future theories and practices, and (6) search for solutions to obstacles I was encountering.

Why I wrote in the way I did

Once the first grade unit was complete, I sought a way to reflect upon my journal and crystallize how my pedagogy had changed. I use the metaphor crystallize in the way Taylor (1996) does,

The metaphor of crystallization works well in reflective practitioner design . . . Crystallization, without losing structure, de-constructs the traditional idea of validity (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know (p. 44).

Random House Webster’s College Dictionary (1991) defines that when an idea is crystallized it is given a “definite and concrete form” (p. 328). In order for me to crystallize how my pedagogy had changed, I could not limit myself to only talk
about the time period in which I wrote the first grade unit. I realized that in order for me to accurately assess how my pedagogy had changed, I had not only to look at the transformation through the first grade unit data, but I also had to document my transformation throughout the previous eight years of my teaching career. I had to include experiences and lesson planning from before, as well as during my first grade unit to help give me a clearer understanding of how my teaching had changed during and after using drama as inquiry. In order to embark and retrace my route of transformation, I wrote this thesis in an unconventional way. I decided to create imaginary letters. I wanted to use a letter format because through letters I was better able to express my thoughts, opinions, feelings, frustrations, reactions, and findings. Also, the letter format allowed me to document past teaching experiences and the first grade unit chronologically thus allowing me to recall events as they unfolded and seek an extended insight into how my pedagogy had changed.

How I was able to write the letters

After reflecting upon my inquiry unit journal writings, during pre-service teaching, and past experiences, I was able to look at the events through a new perspective and create the letters that are enclosed in this document. Taylor (1996) points out that “The techniques we adopt to investigate our practice will inform our evolving perspectives” (p. 44) These techniques can include those I have already described; logbooks such as diaries, journals or portfolios; interviews, student journals, peer observations; and student reactions. However, Taylor stresses:
Each technique provides an opportunity for reflective practitioner researchers to gain some distance from the work being explored, distance enables a possible new perspective on a familiar event, a rethinking of an ingrained belief (p. 44).

Through the additional technique of reflecting upon my reflections; I was able to gain distance from the first grade unit and discover new perspectives, rethink my conclusions to initial findings, and reflect upon my current beliefs.

**The process of inquiry**

As you read the rest of this thesis it is important that you understand the core facets of drama as inquiry. In order to understand drama as inquiry, I had to make sense of the inquiry process. I referred to the writings of a scholar who has developed an influential theory of curriculum as inquiry, Jerome C. Harste. Harste, writing with Kathy Short and Carolyn Burke explain in the second edition of their book, *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers* (1996), that:

> Inquiry is more than problem solving. Problem solving suggests a right answer; inquiry suggests alternate answers as we unpack the complexity of issues. Problems are not something to be avoided, but opportunities to inquire. The very act of teaching itself becomes a process of inquiry. Teachers and students are all inquirers (p.51).

In order to adapt the philosophy of curriculum as inquiry to drama as inquiry, it is important to have a framework for classroom practices. In their book about inquiry they originally created a cycle described as “the authoring cycle” as a framework for the writing curriculum, however they now see the authoring cycle as a “metaphor for learning” (p. 39). Short et al. go onto to explain that the authoring cycle is a powerful framework for curriculum if it is “anchored in the underlying processes of inquiry” (p. 51) (see Figure 1).

The cycle includes seven key processes that Short et al. theorize underlie all learning. They explain that, “These processes evolved from our teaching and
Figure 1: Underlying Processes of Inquiry in the Authoring Cycle

---

research on language learning and represent characteristics of language and language users” (p. 53). Let me give a brief explanation of each of the processes.

**Process of building from the known**

In the process of “Building from the Known,” Short et al. (1996) explain that teachers need to “plan initial experiences that support students in making connections to what they already know” (p. 263). Therefore, teachers need to use topics that students can relate with their own experiences and use topics that are of interest to students. As Short et al. emphasize, the teachers need to be willing to let the students explore and listen to their interests and connections.

**Process of taking the time to find questions for inquiry**

The process of “Taking the Time to Find Questions for Inquiry” encourages students to take time to figure out what questions are important to them. Rather than students immediately developing a question for a topic, students take time to explore, observe, listen and discover what they want to inquiry about.

**Process of gaining new perspectives**

During the process, “Gaining New Perspectives,” Students state what they believe and by making their ideas public, others can challenge their belief. Short et al. (1996) explain:

> Participants join in for the purpose of understanding, critiquing, exploring, and constructing meaning. Ideas, not people are at risk. Others are used to gain new perspectives and to help gain new perspectives and to help one outgrow one’s very self (p. 57).

Students can also gain new perspectives on their ideas by using different sign systems such as music, art, literature, resources and tools likes webs, charts, graphs, and diagrams.
Process of attending to difference

In the process, "Attending to Difference," students talk with others to help challenge their thinking. Students are able to reflect upon their thinking, and either change, expand, reinforce, or create a new perspective based on other perspectives the student encountered.

Process of sharing what was learned

During the process, "Sharing What Was Learned," students have an opportunity to share what they know about their inquiry. As Short et al. (1996) indicate, in addition to verbal reports, "These presentations take many forms including Readers Theatres, skits, murals, pieces of writing, displays, songs, webs and charts and experience centers" (p. 279).

Process of planning new inquiries

In the process, "Planning New Inquiries," students take the time to reflect upon their new understandings, and what they learned about the inquiry process. Short et al. (1996) point out, "Through these reflections, students are able to examine their purposes as inquirers and establish goals for where they want to go next" (p. 281).

Process of taking thoughtful new action

During the process of the cycle, "Taking Thoughtful New Action," Students can take new action in their lives, relationships, and/or the world. Students can pursue individual and shared inquiries. Short et al. (1996) suggest, "... we can create structure in the classroom that support students in this move to thoughtful action that will go beyond the classroom door" (p. 288).


**Drama as Inquiry is Distinct**

These seven processes are critical to understanding drama as inquiry. Drama can be used to facilitate inquiry. Drama has multiple meanings and it is important to know how drama as inquiry is distinct from other forms of drama that will be addressed in this thesis.

**Explanation of drama as inquiry**

Drama as inquiry is inquiry that uses drama to explore a topic, issue, question and/or text (Edmiston, 1998b). As Edmiston (1992) explains,

Drama is one research methodology, which can be used in conjunction with others, to gather and interpret data. When drama is used for inquiry, students gather data that are shared from memory, selected from books, presented as words and images, shaped with others, interpreted, and critiqued together. In drama, students can “re-search” when they revisit questions and reposition themselves to reconsider ideas and understandings as they re-look in different ways at the world they are studying together (p. 106).

The purpose of drama as inquiry is to investigate a question, broaden student’s perspectives, and give students more power and authority over their learning.

What makes drama as inquiry distinctive from using other forms of drama are two core components which include a concern with the following; (1) how authority and power are distributed in the classroom, and (2) students experiencing both imaginary and everyday interactions.

**How drama extends inquiry**

Though drama as inquiry is similar to Harste’s view of inquiry, it extends the processes of inquiry. Dorothy Heathcote explained what using drama can do. You “put yourself in other people’s shoes and by using personal experience to help you understand their point of view you may discover more than you knew when you started” (Heathcote et al., 1984, p. 4). In drama as inquiry students are not
just traveling through the inquiry processes as “themselves”, but they are additionally representing and exploring particular fictional positions or perspectives. In this thesis I use the term position and perspective interchangeably. The students are experiencing both “imaginary and everyday interactions.” In drama as inquiry students can explore a topic in three ways: (1) as themselves, (2) from the positions or perspectives in a text, and (3) from the position of an expert. In doing so students can form a new expanded perspective on the topic (see Figure 2).

Drama as inquiry positions students in, what Edmiston has coined as an “expert position” (extending Heathcote and Bolton, 1995). Heathcote and Bolton (1995) explain,

... students should be running some sort of project, in which they are in role, and that they should have a high degree of autonomy, not be “talked down to” by a teacher speaking as a fount of wisdom (p. 76).

Students in such an “expert position” become an authority over opinions and ideas that they want to explore. For example, if students are investigating the topic of poaching and specifically the question, “Why would someone poach animals?” They would gain new understanding when reading an article on animal poaching and investigating that question as if they were representing an “expert position” of for example wildlife conservationists rather than if they were just reading the article as “themselves”. In addition, while students are investigating the article as if they are wild life conservationists, they can also broaden their understanding by exploring particular perspectives “inside” the text of the article.
Students explore a question from multiple positions:

**Figure 2:** Ways students can explore a question to form a new/expanded position.
Process of distribution of power and authority

As a teacher I must also be willing to suspend my teacher authority and work with students' ideas and suggestions. Please understand that throughout this process the students are still abiding by classroom expectations. I am providing an environment that gives them opportunities to explore their suggestions.

As I reflected on my pedagogy I found that, I needed to add one more process that I will refer to as the "Distribution of Power and Authority." Dorothy Heathcote, emphasized the importance of giving students power and authority in the classroom. As Wagner (1976) pointed out about her work,

Heathcote finds taking risks a bracing challenge and typically works in such a way that the students themselves make most of the decisions about what the drama is to be about and its time, place, and plot. She wants them to learn to make decisions and to understand the rewards and demands that come from them (p. 34).

Drama as inquiry requires that power and authority be distributed between the teacher and the students throughout the drama. My definition of student power is student control in both imaginary and everyday interactions, such as control over decisions like how to explore a question, who they may want to meet in the fictional world, what we should do to find answers, and what we might do next in the drama. What I mean by giving the students authority is putting them in a position to state and share what they know or have learned.

I must be willing to share power with my students and allow their interests, questions, and curiosity drive the drama. I need to give opportunities for the students to make important decisions about the drama in order for them to become invested. Giving the students more power allows them to have more control over their learning, and what and how they want to explore.
Also, I should balance my “teacher authority” to control their decisions. As Heathcote (1984) stresses, “...when it comes to the interpretation of ideas it is the child’s viewpoint which is important, not the teacher’s” (p. 85). She also explains that the purpose of the teacher’s role (or position) in using drama:

The teacher’s role is often seen as a consistent one - that of he or she who knows and can therefore tell or instruct. This is too limited a register, and a barren one, except in certain circumstances. In drama the teacher must be prepared to fulfill many roles (p. 58).

As she explains, the teacher’s roles, or positions, should include such characteristics as being a “deliberate opposer of the common view”, narrator, “suggerter of ideas, as a group member”, supporter, reflector, and “arbiter in argument” (p. 58-59). Edmiston (1998a) also points out that by sharing authority in the classroom,

Teachers are freed from being the authority to being an authority who can guide, assist, and wonder with students-but most of all we are freed to ask questions with students and join together in joint explorations (p. 133).

The nine processes I will be referring to throughout the paper

While doing the first grade unit, I was not formally aware of the process of inquiry. However, reflecting upon my first grade unit now, I was clearly traveling to a greater and lesser extent through the processes in the “Authoring Cycle.” I will be referring to the authoring cycle throughout my subsequent reflections. In summary, in this thesis I use the following nine processes as organizing categories for my reflections and discoveries:
My Evolution of the Definition of Drama

As I mentioned earlier, other forms of drama will be addressed in this paper. My definition of drama has evolved with my latest understanding of drama as inquiry. Below you can follow how my definition has transformed with time.

At first drama meant training to be an actor

During my pre-student teaching year at Ohio Wesleyan University (1993-1994), I thought classroom drama was only about teaching students to become actors. I relied on games and acting techniques I had learned in high school and college acting classes, as well as Viola Spolin’s book *Theater Games for the Classroom* (1986), that included games which helped develop acting techniques such as pantomime, movement, concentration, communication and transformation. I relied on Spolin’s intent to “...help students in developing performance skills and lead them to an understanding of what it is to be an artist” (p. 1). I worked on skills to help students become better actors. As the British scholar Gavin Bolton (1985), has observed: “North American Schools have a major interest in formally staged productions and... even elementary school
teachers see drama as training in acting” (p. 151). During this time period I saw drama as training in acting.

**Explanation of Creative Drama**

My first course in classroom drama was called *Developmental Drama* (1994). This course relied a lot on the practice of creative drama. Creative drama, as defined by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE), is:

...an improvisational, non-exhibitiona, process-centered form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect upon human experiences... The leader guides the group to explore, develop, express and communicate ideas, concepts, and feelings through dramatic enactment. In creating drama the group improvises action and dialogue appropriate to the content it is exploring, using elements of drama to give meaning to the experience (Heinig, 1993, p. 4-5).

The five basic activities involved in creative drama are movement, pantomime, theatre games, story dramatization and group improvisation. AATE defines the purpose of creative drama by stating,

Participation in creative drama has the potential to develop language and communication abilities, problem solving skills, and creativity; to promote a positive self-concept, social awareness, empathy, a clarification of values and attitudes, and an understanding of the art of theatre (p. 5).

I no longer saw drama education as just teaching students how to become actors, but a way for students to develop other skills other than acting. Students could enact a scene from a story and have a clearer understanding of the story. Or students could improvise dialogue related to a theme and communicate their opinions or feelings in relation to the context.

My definition of drama had been expanded. However, unlike drama as inquiry, the use of creative drama was completely teacher planned. I came up with all of the activities and questions. I never deviated from my lesson plan.
Also, creative drama does focus on acting skills. Although creative drama gave students the opportunity to experience stories and express their opinions, there was still an emphasis on acting skills. This was apparent in the basic activities of movement, pantomime and theatre games.

Additionally whereas, creative drama puts emphasis on the “personal development” of the individual student (Heathcote, 1984, p.42), drama as inquiry focuses on the whole group. The emphasis with drama as inquiry is the group working together “and the individual strengths and weaknesses of those in it” to explore a question (Heathcote, p.42).

**Explanation of Process Drama**

During my student teaching (1996), my definition of classroom drama broadened again with the introduction of “process drama” (O’Neill, 1995). I was introduced to the idea of entering students into an imaginary world through the techniques of “process drama”. Cecily O’Neill describes “process drama” in the book, *Dreamscapes: Creative Approaches to the African American Heritage* (1997), as providing access “to an imaginary world in which themes, issues and curricular materials may be explored in context (p. 86). She goes on to explain six key characteristics to process drama:

- It creates a fictional world, where experiences, insights, interpretations, and understandings are generated and explored.
- It is not based on a written script or a fixed scenario but grows from a theme, event, or pre-text that interests and engages the participants.
- It includes different scenes or episodes, which may be improvised or composed and rehearsed.
- It takes place within a time frame that allows for this extension and elaboration.
- The whole group is involved in the same enterprise.
- It is not intended for an external audience, but participants are an audience to their own efforts (p. 87).
Joan Webb, my cooperating teacher during student teaching at Duxbury Arts I.M.P.A.C.T. Elementary, introduced me to her adaptation of Heathcote and O’Neill’s pedagogies of drama education. However, Webb’s purpose was to explore themes, topics and concepts that students were learning in their classrooms. I describe her work as curriculum drama. For example, if students were learning about dinosaurs and mathematical measuring, then they may be placed in a fictitious world in which they are representing paleontologists that have discovered dinosaur bones and need to measure them for data.

Although curriculum drama includes many characteristics as used with drama as inquiry, it is not the same. Both are similar in that the whole group is involved, a fictional world is created, and there is no written script and it is not intended for an external audience. However, the biggest difference is that neither process drama nor curriculum drama are centered around the processes of inquiry. Inquiry is at the core of drama as inquiry.

Explanation of using texts with drama

During graduate school I was introduced to the idea of making texts more accessible to students. I was introduced to the notion of moving students “inside” and “outside” a text. As Edmiston (2000) explains,

To read any text we must be able to be in two places; we each stand ‘outside’ the text in order to interpret it as ourselves, but we also step ‘inside’ the text, in imagination, to identify with characters and situations, align ourselves with multiple perspectives presented in the text, experience facets o the text from inside, and in effect populate the world of the text with imaginary people who interact in fictional places, situations, relationships, and events (p. 1).

Therefore, drama can be used to facilitate moving students “inside” and “outside” a text in order to develop their interpretations, perspectives, and understandings of the text. The process of moving students “inside” and “outside” the text involves
the teacher and students taking different perspectives in conjunction with the text. Students are able to interact with the text in four ways: (1) teacher and students as themselves outside the text; (2) the teacher in role as if she is another person while the students interact as themselves, (3) teacher and students all in role inside the text (4) the students in role as if they are other people while the teacher interacts as herself (Edmiston & Enciso, 2000). The purpose of this type of drama is to allow students to develop their own interpretations and connections, by taking on different perspectives, exploring characters’ actions and analyzing situations presented in the text.

Using drama to explore texts incorporates many of the characteristics of drama as inquiry, however their purposes are different. Using drama to explore texts has the purpose of giving students opportunities to develop their own interpretations and connections with the text. The students do go away with broadened perspectives and have been given more power and authority over their learning. Investigating a question is essential to drama as inquiry.

Finally, I was introduced to the methodology of using drama to facilitate inquiry. In figure 4, you will see the chronology of my studies regarding my evolution of the definition of classroom drama.
A Chronology of My Studies Regarding Drama Education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>(Sept.)</td>
<td>Began the education program at Ohio Wesleyan University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assumed <em>drama</em> was teaching students <em>how to act</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>(Sept. - Dec.)</td>
<td>Undergraduate course centered around <em>creative drama</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>(Jan. - May)</td>
<td>Student teaching and introduction to <em>process drama</em> and <em>curriculum drama</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>(Sept.)</td>
<td>Began teaching at Fair Arts I.M.P.A.C.T. elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>(March)</td>
<td>Began Graduate School for my M.A. in the College of Teaching and Learning at Ohio State University with an emphasis in drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>(Jan. - March)</td>
<td>Graduate course centered around <em>making texts more accessible to students with using drama</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>(March - June)</td>
<td>Graduate course centered around <em>drama as inquiry</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(March - June)</td>
<td>Created 1st grade inquiry unit around the text <em>Peter and the Wolf</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(June - Nov.)</td>
<td>Wrote Thesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4:** A chronology of my studies regarding classroom drama.

**To whom and how the letters are written**

To organize and present my reflections and my recent understandings, I have written a series of letters to "Shelby Webster". These letters form the basis of section II and III of this thesis. Though Shelby is fictitious, I based her on lifelong mentors that have served as "tour guides" for me on my journey as a teacher for over seven years--people who have led me through the rough seas, tangled woods and wild jungles of education. I wrote the letters as if they take place chronologically before I did the first grade study, during the study and after. I wrote the letters from the information I had gathered in my student teaching logs (1996-1997), teaching logs (1997-2001) and lesson reflections (1996-2001) that I had kept prior to the study as well as data during the study (2001) and my current reflections (2001).

**How to read the letters**

Though the letters are written to a fictitious person, they are all based on my actual experiences. The letters include actual written lesson plans, and
reflections from those experiences. The lessons and reflections I included before the inquiry unit are taken directly from lessons and reflections I had done during my pre-service teaching. All writings that are in italicized print (such as lessons, reflections, journal writings and experiences) are taken directly from those past sources. Also, I have included in this thesis reflections in bold face print throughout the particular lessons and experiences in order to include my perspectives at the time of writing this thesis, after using drama as inquiry. The bold face print represents my voice speaking to you the reader, not to "Shelby Webster". The text written in Times New Roman print are descriptive and analytical passages that I have synthesized from my pervious teaching logs, reflections, and unrecorded memories. As you are reading this thesis, please keep the following in mind:

| Italicized: actual lessons, reflections, and journal writings written before or during the study. |
| Bold: me speaking to you the reader as I am writing this thesis |
| New Times Roman: synthesis of teaching logs, reflections and unrecorded memories |

Figure 5: How to read this thesis

Conclusion

Throughout the project I was not certain what I would encounter, discover or face. As Taylor (1996) explains, "reflective practitioner researchers are never certain of what the future will bring, what discoveries we will make, what
troubling questions will occur of us as we listen, watch, interact and hear” (p. 55). However, I invite you to take a journey with me where some of the mysteries will be unraveled, and questions will emerge.
SECTION 2

MY EVOLUTION OF CLASSROOM DRAMA
December 15, 1995

Dear Ms. Webster,

Hello, my name is Nikki Eiler [I used my family name in 1995] and I am a senior theatre and theatre education major at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio [I attended undergraduate school at Ohio Wesleyan with majors in education and theatre, 1992-1996]. I am the person who has been placed to student teach with you over the next four months.

I am looking forward to working with a practicing elementary drama specialist. None of my professors in the education department know a lot about drama education. There is only one class offered about using drama with children that I took last year!

The aim of the class was learning how to use creative drama with elementary students. The class did a lot with story dramatization in which we took certain moments from a story and students had to re-enact the movement (pantomime), dialogue or create a frozen picture (tableau) of the scene. I have witnessed that using creative drama helps students to have a clearer understanding of the story. As well, students are given opportunities to communicate their feelings and opinions.

This class gave me the confidence for two other significant drama experiences I have had with children: drama camp and pre-student teaching. I was able to create my own drama sessions for a summer day camp that I taught in 1995. I designed the sessions around creative drama components such as pantomime and story dramatization. Also, because we worked with elementary students in the class, I was much more comfortable when I did my pre-student teaching at the middle school level.
I have enclosed examples of lesson plans and reflections I have done to give you a clearer picture of my experiences. I spent a lot of time planning and preparing these lessons and I thought I might be able to use them with your students. They may give you an idea of the kinds of lessons I have done and what you think I may need to work on in student teaching.

Though the lessons I enclosed are for different age groups, you may notice the similarities in structure. I like to be very well planned and structured. I believe the better planned I am, the better the session will go. The structure of my lesson helps me to organize my lesson and lead students through the progression of the activities. I plan all my lessons with objectives, an introduction and the procedure of activities and questions I want the students to answer. I always start off with a warm-up activity such as a game, pantomime, or discussion. I learned in the elementary drama course that it is important to warm-up the students in order for the to feel more comfortable as the drama progresses. Also, I often have the students assess their work. We might discuss what they might do differently if they were to act out the particular moment again. Or, how one action they did was different than another. I find that having students assess how their movement or acting allows them to improve these techniques when they are given the opportunity to do the activity again. I have found this format to be particularly helpful in the planning of my lessons.

Here is an example of a lesson plan I did during the using drama with children class:
Lesson 1: The Rainbow Fish
Grade Level: 3rd-5th
Date: 10/14/94

Objectives:

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

The following objectives were based on the principle that drama education should work on developing acting skills. We (myself and three other students at Ohio Wesleyan University developed this lesson for a class that taught us how to use creative drama with elementary students) were basically working with student to express emotions and communicate with one another verbally and non-verbally.

1. To develop social interactions through non-verbal and verbal expression
2. To develop reasoning skills to understand emotions
3. To express feelings and emotions through pantomime
4. To develop observational skills

The objectives clearly demonstrate this lesson was not based on inquiry. The students are not investigating a question. Also, all of the objectives were teacher directed and planned. There was no collaboration between myself and the students in planning any of the lesson.

Prep/Materials:

BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN

The Rainbow Fish was very popular with children during the time we created this lesson. The story is based around a mean and conceited Rainbow Fish that does not want to share its shimmering scales with the little blue fish. By the end of the story, the Rainbow Fish discovers the delights of sharing with others its sparkling fins. Our purpose for choosing the book was to spark the students' interests.

1. The story The Rainbow Fish adapted from the story with the same name by Marcus Pfister.
2. Theatre Games for the Classroom by Viola Spolin

I can see I was using the process of "Building from the Known," to try and spark their interests because many students have encountered a situation in which someone would not share with them. Also, many students are concerned with the issue of fairness which sharing addresses.

A. Warm up Activity

IMAGINARY AND EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

The idea of starting the lesson off with a warm up is to make the students more at ease and focused. As Spolin ((1986) points out, "warm-ups remove the outside distractions players [i.e. students] have brought with
them” (p. 23). Spolin also emphasizes, “. . .warming up is essential to performance” (p. 23).

1. “Changing Emotion”
   Pantomime three scenarios about how a person feels in a situation and then how they feel when the situation changes.
   a. Get ready to go to a birthday party and it’s canceled
   b. Your good friend starts playing with someone else
   c. You have a bad day and come home to the smell of cookies

You would not see a warm-up activity with using drama as inquiry. Drama as inquiry’s purpose is not performance. The purpose is to use drama to facilitate inquiry. Students explore inquiry by working in the imaginary and everyday contexts. Students are not preparing for a performance or working on acting techniques.

Also, in this lesson the warm-up activity is disconnected from the rest of the lesson. Whereas, when using drama as inquiry, everything is ideally interconnected.

B. Narrative Pantomime
   1. Read the story
   2. Discussion / Pre-play
      In the beginning, how did the rainbow fish act towards the other fish?
      How did the little blue fish feel when the rainbow fish finally gave a scale?
      Pre-play by pantomiming in unison how the different fish might act and different ways of swimming.
   3. Narrative Pair Pantomime
      A. First Reading
         One child is the rainbow fish and one is the little blue fish.
      B. Discussion
         Now that you have seen your partner, what can you do differently?
      C. Second reading
         Children switch roles
   4. Discussion

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

In order to assess how students would communicate in the situation of an argument, we created a scenario which students could implement their ideas to solve the problem.

a. How did you feel when you were the rainbow fish and the little blue fish asked for a scale? What made you feel this way?
   b. How did the rainbow fish make you feel when she wouldn’t give you a scale?
Crisis Question: What made you feel this way?
Have you ever felt this way before? When?

This was the only time throughout the entire lesson that students were allowed to exercise their power. They were given the opportunity to make suggestions to resolve the argument. I remember the students were highly engaged in the sense that they were actively participating and eager to answer our questions. Also, when given the opportunity to give their own suggestions they made connections to their own lives by stating what they had done in similar situations. However, students were not encouraged to ask questions, challenge their thinking or gain new perspectives.

C. Follow Up Activity

Two leaders dramatize an argument. Students offer suggestions to resolve the argument. The student replaces the leader and implements their own suggestion. Leaders may add obstacles to increase students’ thinking skills and to keep students from doing the same thing.

Reflection:

The experience I had, working on dramakids (the name of the in-class project) with Hope, Jen and Jen (they were my assigned group members during the creative drama class) was absolutely wonderful. When our session was over, I was bursting inside with the excitement of how powerful drama is as a teaching tool.

We put a lot of thought and time into our outline, and we concentrated on choosing activities which would overlap and incorporate similar objectives. Our primary objective was to develop social interaction through non-verbal and verbal expression. We concentrated on this objective through the pair pantomime we expressed that even though action is not written you can have action by interacting with the other player. How are they making you feel? Is how someone is treating you cause an action or feeling you react to? Jen also continued to remind them to watch their partner. Through this activity the players did develop social interaction through non-verbal pantomime, however not as strongly as I had hoped. Some players did a very good job with interacting with one another, but as I observed and others in the class, some players were just pantomiming and not truly interacting with one another. They did not have much eye contact or reaction to the others actions.

However, the objective was more clearly achieved during the follow-up activity in which the players improvised and interacted through verbal expression. The players were also forced to heavily engage their interactions because they had to solve a conflict. Ultimately, we did fairly well on achieving our primary objective because the students did develop social interactions, for some the development was strikingly apparent, for others I wish it could have been stronger.
Our second objective, which was to develop observation skills, was probably the least achieved because we really did not concentrate or stress the objective too highly. The players were encouraged to watch and observe their partner during the pair pantomime, which some did wonderfully, but others did not implement the skill. The players were continually encouraged to comment on their inner observations, as to how they felt, but not their outer observational skills. Therefore, our observation objective was not nearly achieved as our primary goal.

The most effective activity was the follow-up improvisational activity, because the players were fully engaged and challenged. The players were challenged to think on the spot and the activity was an opening to use everything they have learned and they were ready for it! We used the freeze technique for control which the players responded to. Hope also did a wonderful job with setting up what was expected of the players. Jen and I made the scenario real, which gave the students the opportunity to incorporate it into their own lives. We also challenged them to resolve the conflict, and when they were going to resolve the same way, Jen stepped into role to challenge them even more. The activity was very effective and took the players to another level, which they were ready for.

Fortunately, I thought all our activities were effective. However to chose one least effective, I would say the pre-play before the pair pantomime. I just thought we could have made the pre-play stronger and more interesting. Many of the kids did not seem engaged or interested in just a few minutes of play. Instead they seemed to just go through the motions without any enthusiasm or spectacular pantomime.

BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN

The students probably did not show much enthusiasm because we were asking them to pantomime different ways the swim might fish. For one thing, a third grader might not feel comfortable acting like a fish. Secondly, what relevance does fish swimming have on their lives?

If I were to use or adapt this lesson today, I would direct this lesson to kindergartners, first and second graders. My intermediate elementary students would find this too "babyish," and not appropriate for their interests. The issue of the importance of sharing has already been established by the third grade.

Also, my intermediate students would feel self-conscious acting as if they are animal learning to share. There are much more interested in delving into problems and issues realistically or in an "expert position" rather than swimming as if they are a fish. There are more interested in dealing with issues of fairness on a more social and cultural level such as racial inequalities than a fish not sharing their scales.

An outstanding synthesis statement was given by Courtney who said, "If you can't be friends with my friends, then I can't be friends with you."
Viola Spolin’s theatre game book assisted in the planning and implementation of our activity because we adapted one of her games for our warm up, the “Changing Emotion” game. The game fit perfectly with our feelings and emotion motif.

The dramatic kid session was a wonderful experience and one I will never forget. I realized the process is not one you can just throw together, but a process that takes a lot of time and thought.

GAINING NEW PERSPECTIVES

I had completely forgotten about this lesson until I was revisiting my student teaching materials. Certainly, this lesson may have discussed possible conflict resolution, however, there was little impact on the students thinking, ideas or perspectives. The students were not asked to analyze why the Rainbow Fish acts the way he does. They were not looking at the different perspectives of the Rainbow or Blue fish. Finally, there was only one activity in which the students could implement their own ideas, and it was still teacher structured.

Ms. Webster, as you may have noticed from this lesson, reflection has always been an important component to my planning. I always reflect on what worked well, what did not work, and what I would improve next time. I am always looking for ways to improve my lessons.

I had the opportunity to apply what I had learned in my college course. I taught a drama camp last summer in Westerville (1995) to elementary age students. I taught a lot of drama games and did a lot of creative drama with literature. I have worked a lot on storytelling techniques and using drama conventions such as tableaus, pantomiming, interviews, collective role, and meetings. Some of the sessions I offered were:

- **6-8 year olds / Fantasy Island - Creative drama in which children embark on a potpourri of activities such as: theatre games, clowning and much more!**

- **9-11 year olds / Adventure Express - Children experience their favorite literary characters’ adventures through pantomime.**
• 12-14 year olds / Lights, Camera, Action - Adolescence perform all that encompasses scene work such as: play analysis, characterization, line delivery, memorizing techniques, cues and performance.

I did my pre-student teaching experience in a middle school where we worked on monologues, scene work and character techniques. I have incorporated a lot I have learned from acting classes into my teaching of acting to the students. The following is an example of a lesson I did to apply the information they had learned from a previous chapter to one they had recently read.

Lesson 2: As if...

Grade Level: Middle School
Date: 11/16/95

Objectives:
1. Apply the information from Chapter 12.
2. Create imaginary situations “as if” the situations were real.
3. Identify with their monologues.

Introduction: Transition between Chapter 8 and activity though discussion.

Procedures:
1. Have student go into their own space.
2. Have students act “as if” they were...
   - sad
   - happy
   - jealous
   - a fish
   - a bear cub
   - royalty
   - trying to find their keys, dog, sister
3. Have them sit down in their seats.
4. Discuss - Were some things easier to act out than others? Why?
   What were some differences between looking for you keys, dog and your sister?

Closure: Point out in their monologues that their characters have gone through an experience. They need to come up with a similar or related experience so they can identify “as if” they were the character.
Character Analysis Assignment

I want you to write a paragraph “as if” you were your monologue character and tell me about yourself (character).

Questions to think about or answer:
How old are you?
What are your hobbies?
What do you like to do?
What is your favorite color, food, animal?
What is your family like? Do you have any pets?
Do you like school?
What music do you listen to?
What is your home, town, room like?

*Remember to answer WHY?. Don’t just state you like the color blue, explain why!*

BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN

As with The Rainbow Fish, I was using the process of “Building from the Known,” by having the students make connections to their own life with the monologue they were working with. However, all the activities were teacher directed, individual; and no student inquiry was involved.

Reflection:

For this lesson I really needed a much more captivating introduction. My introduction was terrible, all I did was bring up the main point we had talked about in chapter eight, which was the concept of “as if” and I stated we were going to do an activity. So, the introduction needed improvement. Perhaps I could have just had them get up and begin the activity, or have them do something small in their chairs and then introduce the topic.

The activity itself went well, the students were quiet, they stayed in their space and worked nicely. Their written assignment directions should have been clearer. I had multiple questions to clarify my expectations for the assignment. Once they knew what to do, many students put a lot of thought into their answers. Some students even opened up, allowing me to get to know more about them.

POWER AND AUTHORITY

Interestingly, my criteria for the lesson going well were that the students stayed in their seats and were quiet. I do not consider the students engagement, dialogue between each other, or questions they might have.

Notice, my wording when I am discussing students confusion over the assignment. Note my language, “my expectation.” There is no distribution of power between me and my students. If I were to do this same assignment now, I would work with the students to create the criteria for the writing, or even ask their suggestions for the possible assignment.
Below are examples of student writing from this assignment. The students really tried to connect with what the character was saying in their monologue to what they might answer to "my questions". I can only imagine how powerful these writings could have been if the students were able to answer questions that they might have for that particular character. Or if the students tried to find answers to their own questions about a character's motivation or purpose for making a particular statement.

Student Example: 1

My name is Professor Van Helsing, my friends (sic) call me Van Helsing. I am in my late 30's (never shall I reveal my true age) My hobbies include experimenting on small rodents. I like this, it is satisfying to know that one day a life will be saved because of my work. I have no pets or family, they don't agree with me, either of them. My favorites include: red because it reminds me of blood, the given and unfortunately the taker of life itself.

Student Example: 2

My name is Sammy, but I like to be called Sam because I am 16 and Sam sounds more like a grown up name. I like sports very much because I am competitive. Besides playing sports I like to watch movies because they are very interesting. I like cats because they snuggle into your lap. I can eat most foods. My favorite color would have to be red because it looks like a color that means excitement. I don't see my mother or father often because I'm in a military academy. I don't have any animals because my parents wouldn't be able to take care of them. I don't like the strictness of the school, but other than that it's all right. I like any kind of music except hard rock because I like to listen to the meaning of the words. I don't have much things in my room because of where I live and I really don't get out on the town much.

Student Example: 3

Hello, my name is Sammy and I am 15 years old. I don't have any hobbies but I like to go to parties and I also like to dance. My favorite color is blue because I see it everyday on my military uniform, and my favorite food is pizza because that is what everyone eats at their parties. My favorite animals are dogs because we train them at the military academy. My mom is very nice to me, but my dad is strict, because he sent me to a military academy. I don't like school because I go to a military academy, and I don't have many friends there. I get depressed when I walk into the barracks because of the stone walls and generals pictures on the walls. I like classical music when I dance and rock when I go to parties. I live in a apartment with my dad, because my parents are divorced. The apartment is very small with two bedrooms a living, and small kitchen.
Ms. Webster, this assignment gave students the opportunity to identify with
the characters and the world of the story. After doing this assignment the students
had a better understanding of how they should act like the character because they
had a better understanding of the character’s life and feelings.

As you can see, I have done a lot of lessons concentrating on emotions,
expression, pantomime and characterization. I am hoping this gives you some
sense of my background and what I have done at the elementary level. I am
looking forward to meeting you and working with your students.

Sincerely,

Nikki Eiler
January 21, 1996

Dear Ms. Webster,

Wow! Where do you come up with your ideas? I have never seen drama used to facilitate teaching the classroom curriculum before. I was mesmerized by the “Follow the Drinking Gourd” lesson. Not only had you integrated with history, but with movement and music as well.

**CURRICULUM DRAMA**

I had now been exposed to the idea of curriculum drama, in which drama was used to teach students about people, events, language arts, math, science, social studies, health and other subjects in the school curriculum. The lessons were not based on teaching students how to act, but rather, teaching the classroom curriculum. The lessons used many of the characteristics of process drama, which I explained in the introduction.

I have to admit that I was at first taken back when you went into role as the slave master and began yelling at the children to get to work. I found it fascinating how Mrs. Gus (the music teacher) went into role as Peg Leg Joe and offered to help fix a fence and began singing, “Follow the Drinking Gourd.”

I really liked how you used the narration to move the drama forward and inform the students who, what, when and where they were in the drama. For example when you said, “That night, when the slaves were to be sleeping, Peg Leg Joe taught them the song.” Mrs. Gus then taught the song and what each of the codes meant. It was amazing to see the students begin singing very quietly and silently making their way to the blue cloth river on the other side of the room. I could clearly see the tension in the students bodies as they tried to soundlessly make their way to the river. You shot up their level of anxiety when you yelled, “The dogs have the scent, were gaining on them!” Many of the students wanted to bolt and run, but strained to keep calm and quiet.
After this experience, the students were eager to talk about their feelings. The students passionately spoke as to why they must go back and help the others to freedom. There was a level of engagement that was not there at the very beginning of the class.

Today opened up a whole new outlook for me on classroom drama. I was amazed how students were able to learn about history and the purpose of certain music, as well as get “inside” and “outside” the text.

Until today, I was caught up in the confusion as to the purpose and form of classroom drama. One misconception is that the arts are only for artists. For example, in Denny Taylor’s (1998) book, *Beginning to Read and the Spin Doctors of Science*, Taylor quotes author and researcher Jean Osborn about her experience when she walked into an Ohio elementary school: “I’d walk in last fall and kids were drawing pictures in their spare time. I said, ‘We’re not going to have many artists out here. We’ve got to have readers.’” (p.70). This belief has also been attached to drama programs, that they are only for those who want to be actors. Until recently, I was teaching with this same philosophy in mind. I thought I would be teaching elementary students how to act. I now see drama can be used for other purposes. I had no idea the power drama could possess in the classroom. Thank you!

Nikki Eiler
April 15, 1996

Dear Shelby,

Where does the time go? I cannot believe I am coming to an end with student teaching. It is so weird to think that less than four months ago I thought drama was only about teaching students how to act. Now I have been immersed with curriculum drama and cannot imagine any other way of teaching.

I grew up in a very traditional district and had a hard time learning especially because I was a kinetic learner who was being forced to learn by doing quiet seat work. Perhaps if a teacher had integrated drama into the curriculum, I would not have been as frustrated with school.

I look back at all the lessons I created during student teaching such as lessons on Loyalists and Patriots, rural and urban life, rhyming, moving west, fables, plants, the five senses, and people such as Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth, Edwin Booth, George Washington, Charlie Parker, George Gershwin, Charles Drew, Frank Lloyd Wright and Beatrix Potter and am in awe at the power of drama to help students learn about these concepts in a unique way. The students are not only reading and writing about this curriculum, but they are able to experience the curriculum and connect it to their own ideas and lives.

I have to say one of my favorite lessons was the Dinosaur lesson because one of my professors admitted that he had never seen drama like this done by a specialist. I was grateful to have the opportunity to broaden someone’s ideas on classroom drama because he too thought classroom drama was teaching students acting techniques.
Lesson 3: Dinosaurs  
Grade Level: 3rd  
Date: 3/13/96

Objectives:  
1. Students will be able to (SWBAT) hypothesize what the bones are.  
2. SWBAT decide whether or not the farm (the class was studying about rural and urban life) should go to the museum.  
3. SWBAT discuss what a paleontologist does.  
4. SWBAT measure the length and width of the bones.

Introduction: 1. Have students lay down as if they are sleeping. I come in role as their mother and wake them up to begin their chores on the farm.

Procedures: 2. Whole group  
- have students discuss what the bone might be and who they should call.

3. Whole group  
- I come in role as a museum director and it looks like a dinosaur bone. Have sent paleontologist to dig at the site.  
- Break students into pairs or groups and look for bones, measure and predict.

4. Whole Group Press Conference  
- chose 4 students to announce their findings  
- others ask questions

5. Narrate the family is worried about the discovery they heard in the press conference and the paleontologists are ruining the crops.  
- I am in role as head of team and announce we are going to take over the farm  
- allow students to respond

6. Have students write letters to the editor about their opinion as to whether the scientists should take over the farm.  
- Sit a chair in the center of the circle to represent the museum director and have students read one sentence from their letter.

Reflection:  
I need to remember to discuss length and width.  
As a whole the lesson went well. The students really got into the discussions about taking over the farm. Their letters reflected their feelings and had some wonderful reasoning as to why the farm should not be taken.

My lessons at this time were not based on inquiry, but I was beginning to use more of the nine processes.
CURRICULUM DRAMA

This lesson was very different from my earlier lessons because it centered around facets of the classroom curriculum such as hypothesizing, length and width. My thinking that drama was just to teach students how to act had been broaden. I now saw drama as a way to teach the classroom curriculum.

BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN

I consciously tried to build from the known by using students interests and connections to their own life. For example, in this lesson I used students interests in dinosaurs.

TAKING THE TIME TO FIND QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY

I did not have students take the time to find questions for inquiry, but I did have them explore the ethical question, “Should the scientists take over the farm?”

GAIN NEW PERSPECTIVES

Students had a chance to gain new perspectives when they shared their opinions as to whether the scientists should take over the farm. Some students wrote in the perspective of owning the farm and how the farm was precious to their family memories. There were students who wrote in the perspective of the scientist and expressed the importance of research and science. There were others who wrote in the perspective of a neighbor who did not want to see their “friends” home destroyed.

ATTEND TO DIFFERENCE

Students had different opinions on the matter of whether the scientists should take over the farm for research. Students had the opportunity to attend to difference by listening to other perspectives when they heard their peers letters. The students had the opportunity to hear arguments about the farm’s importance to the family, community and the crops and animals, while other arguments defended the importance of science and research. The students also had an opportunity to re-evaluate their own opinions after listening to their peers reasoning.

POWER AND AUTHORITY

Students were given an authority position when they were placed in the “expert role” as a paleontologist. Students expertise was called upon in predicting what the bones could be from and reporting their findings.
IMAGINARY AND EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

The students were put into several imaginary contexts, such as the paleontologists on the farm, concerned neighbors during the press conference, and town citizens writing letters to the newspaper.

Professors comments (written comments from my student teaching professor on this particular lesson):

This whole lesson was absolutely fascinating to me. I've never seen this sort of integration of drama with content at the elementary level by a special teacher (although I have seen some regular teachers do these kinds of activities). It's great motivation. I guess I liked it too since this was a science activity. There was a good variety of activities woven into the lesson as well as content. You touched on almost every content area. This would be a great example for the other student teachers to see. This kind of thing could easily be adapted to the high school level, and it would be just as effective. It was a pleasure to watch; I feel a little guilty about your having paid me (referring to the tuition) to come and watch instead of the other way around (however, not guilty enough to give you a refund or anything like that). I will definitely twist my advisees arms so that they take the children's drama course from now on (though they would not have learned this in the creative drama course because this was Joan Webb's pedagogy).

I was glad to have inspired someone else to voice the praises of drama in the classroom. I want to thank you for providing me with the inspiration to advocate curriculum drama. I am leaving you with an ingrained sense of the philosophy. Now wish me luck to get a job so that I may practice what I have learned.

Sincerely,

Nikki
October 10, 1998

Dear Shelby,

I wanted to thank you for your wonderful recommendation and inform you that I got the job! I am the new elementary drama specialist at Fair Elementary School! The school is an Arts I.M.P.A.C.T. school. I.M.P.A.C.T. stands for Interdisciplinary Model Program in the Arts for Children and Teachers. The program's philosophy is based on collaboration between the classroom teachers and the arts specialists in which the lessons are developed and the classroom curriculum and the art curriculum are integrated. A perfect match to what you have taught me! The classroom teachers attend the arts classes every other week to model participation in the arts to their students. The curriculum includes dance, drama, music and art. The art specialists integrate classroom curriculum and plan with the classroom teachers. As you can see, the school's arts program is very similar to my student teaching experience. I am able to create lessons similar to those I did in student teaching. I am so excited to begin teaching! Wish me luck.

By the way, I was so glad you were able to attend my wedding. It meant a lot to have you there.

Sincerely,

Nikki Henry
April 16, 2000

Dear Shelby,

As I told you over the phone, I have started graduate school. The Drama, Language Arts, Children's Literature, and Reading program at Ohio State University is already turning out to be a tremendous learning experience. I had a tremendous journey this quarter in graduate school and enhanced my skills in drama education methodology, questioning, and reflection. I wanted to share with you a few of my experiences. I just completed the introductory course in using drama with elementary students. When I first signed up for this course, I was thinking, "Why do I have to take an introduction to drama?" I even had the audacity to think I should be able to skip the introduction course with five years of drama teaching experience. However, the very first day of class, I was humbled by all the knowledge I did not have. I was introduced to different methods of using drama, aside from what we had done. During my experiences with you I had tremendous possibilities opened to me and once again, I thought what more is there to know about classroom drama? Let me tell you, I have learned there are more possibilities than I imagined.

The course concentrated on how to make texts more accessible and meaningful to students. The emphasis was on using drama in conjunction with reading a text that had a big problem that all the students were likely to care about.

The course began with the importance of questioning. We were challenged to think of questions that we may not necessarily think of when initially reading a text. For example, rather than ask closed factual questions such as "Who were the characters in the story?" we were to ask open-ended interpretive questions. When reading the story Snow White, we might ask questions like "Why might the king
I knew from the first few classes that it was going to be a learning challenge for me. We both know one of my weaknesses is questioning. As you may recall, I never felt very comfortable asking the students a lot of questions unless I had already planned them. Also, I had never thought about asking questions in this way before. The instructor, Trisha Long, demonstrated the technique the first night with the text *Snow White*. She was modeling a technique in which she was not in role, but rather herself asking us, the students, questions to captivate our interest with the text. I was motivated to try to explore the technique in my own classroom.

I choose the book *Raven* by Gerald McDermott to use with a first grade class. The story is about a sky god who has stolen the sun from the people of the earth Dan the Raven tricks the sky god and returns the sun. I began my preparation by going through the text as the instructor had shown writing questions on post-it notes. One of the questions I asked was, “What would it be like living in total darkness?” The instructor had commented that this would be an interesting exploration for a session.

However, when I was working with the first grade class I bulldozed through my preplanned questions. At the time I wasn’t able to think on my feet and work with the children’s responses. Also, I had no big problem, and no teacher question. I was so hung up on working on my questioning, that I forgot everything else. The students were engaged because they were eager to answer questions and make
predictions. However, it's exciting to think how much more they would have been engaged if I had also explored their own curiosities and interests rather than only my own.

**TAKING THE TIME TO FIND QUESTIONS WITH INQUIRY**

This was the first time that the idea of using a question to guide a drama was presented to me. As you have read, the idea of centering drama work around a question and all the activities pertaining to exploring the answer to the question, took me a while to figure out. I had still not been formally introduced to drama as inquiry, but I was using more of the processes. I now had the key component of a question driving my drama and curriculum, which I had not had in the past.

At the end of the course, we had to work with a group to plan how to use drama with a text. I have to admit that creating a teacher question did not come together for me until then. (You know how I want to know how to do things right away, so this was definitely a challenge for me.) Our group was struggling with selecting a text with a big problem and we were not exploring, “What is my teacher question?” (What do I want the students to walk away knowing and feeling about from this text?)” Finally, when the instructor challenged us to think about our teacher question our text selection became clearer. We knew we wanted to work on a text revolved around the problem of lying. We choose the story The Wolf Who Cried Boy by Jeffrey Dinardo, which is the story of “The Boy Who Cried Wolf,” but the characters have switched roles. The story is about a wolf who repeatedly keeps tricking the people in his town by yelling “boy!”

My group began brainstorming possible inquiry questions about lying. During the brainstorm, I had a break through when I came up with the question, “How can lying affect the people around you?” I felt good about the question, because I felt like I had finally understood. We didn’t want a question that the children could simply answer yes or no. Nor did we want a question with a hidden
“right” answer. We wanted a question that the students could explore for themselves I felt that I had found that. Then creating our activities seemed so much easier because we had a focus. In Enciso and Edmiston’s (1997) article, Drama and Response to Literature: Reading the Story, Re-Reading “the Truth,” they gave examples of teacher questions to explore in reading. For example, Nettie’s Trip South they stated, “rather than ask, ‘What was life like as an enslaved person?’ explore ‘What were people prepared to risk in their opposition to a society that promoted inhumane relationships?’ (p. 93). I know I still need to work on my teacher questions, but at least I see why it is important for a teacher to have a question. If I would have discussed this nine weeks ago, I wouldn’t have had a clue. I now see that, once you know your teacher question is then all of your activities can center on exploring that question.

One of my strengths is that I need to see the big picture and then break the big picture up into parts. I was struggling weekly because I wasn’t seeing the big picture. Finally in the last few weeks everything began to come together and a light bulb came on. In one of my reflection papers the instructor had told me to “relax a bit.” (Don’t laugh, I know you thought the same thing!)

I tried to relax with the next text I used, You are Special by Max Lucado. The story is about a world where wooden people live. They are given dots for bad behavior and stars for good behavior. However, bad behavior in this town constituted accidentally falling down or getting dirty. In this town lived a wooden boy named Punchinello who constantly received dots.

As I told the instructor, the first class was a disaster because I blanked on what to do with the students’ suggestions. My big question was, “What if someone stole all the stars?” Before I got to the big question, I told the students about Punchinello who only received dots. One boy said, “I would just take off...
the dots and put on stars.” This was a solution, but I did not know where to go with the drama from there. My mind went blank with what to do next. However, I went home and thought about how I could engage the students with the big problem that someone had stolen all the stars in the town.

After talking with the kindergarten teacher I came up with a technique I had seen in class. I posed the question in letter that we wrote as if written by the mayor of the town of Wimmick.

Dear Fair Avenue,

We need your help. Someone has stolen all of our gold stars. We give gold stars out all day to those who have done something wonderful. We need them back! Will you please try to find out where the gold stars are?

Thank you for your help.
The Mayor of Wimmick

I read the students the letter and asked them if they wanted to help the town. I also asked for their predictions, as well as how we could find out more about the incident. I listened to the students and went with their responses. They wanted to get more information from someone in the town. I asked them if they wanted to meet the mayor in the town and they did. I then went into role as the mayor.

After the students talked with the mayor, I reflected with the students. I asked them questions like, “What do you want to know more about? Who do you want to talk to? What do you think we should do next?” The timing was perfect because I was able to stop there and prepare a plan of possibilities (a list of ideas) for the next drama session.

The following week in her classroom, the kindergarten teacher told the students that the mayor had called but that they still did not know who had taken
the stars. She told me the class was all excited and Antonio said, “I can’t wait to go to drama!”

In the next drama session the students agree to represent detectives and investigate the mayor’s office, the woods, stores and the neighborhoods. Students used magnifying glasses (which is a kindergarten objective) and searched the room for clues. One student said he found a hand print and we had to take out our brushes and powder to lift the hand print to send to the lab. Students then began giving me small pieces of wood they had found which they said was Punchinello’s (remember the people in the story are made of wood).

One student found the word “he” and said, “a boy must have done it.” We came back and discussed our findings and then got a call from the lab.

I pretended to take the phone call and reported to the class that the lab said the handprint belonged to Punchinello. The students then wanted to talk to Punchinello’s dad to find out information. After they had spoken to me in role as the father, we were discussing what we should do next. The father told us he had not seen Punchinello all day, but he often would go to his secret tree house in the woods to be alone. One student raised his hand and said, “I got a call from the lab, they found Punchinello in the tree house.” They then agreed they wanted to talk to him. I knew students thought Punchinello would be bad because they wanted to arrest him and put him in jail. However, I made Punchinello the opposite-perceptive. The students began to sympathize with Punchinello and Jasmine said, “I will be your friend.” She then, took off her yellow star sheriff badge and put it on me.

After they spoke to me representing Punchinello, we reflected upon what should happen to him. The kindergartners were a little confused. They knew that
stealing was wrong, but they understood more of why Punchinello might have taken the stars. Despite this, in the end, they wanted to be his friend.

I enjoyed this experience because I felt comfortable with moving in and out of different roles and using the different activities. I listened to the students’ responses and I was able to improvise. I felt much more confident after this lesson and acquired the big picture of the methodology.

The techniques I learned in this class such as (1) selecting a text with a big problem, (2) developing a teacher question, (3) and asking the students what they wanted to know more about, helped to create the foundation for drama as inquiry. As I look back now at the lesson plans I created in this class, they followed many of the processes in using drama as inquiry. Drama as inquiry can revolve around a text with a big problem. Drama as inquiry requires having a question to center the drama around. Also, drama as inquiry requires allowing students to have more power in the classroom.

BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN

I did not intentionally use the process of Building from the Known. However, in the story of Punchinello the students could connect experiences they have felt they were “bad,” even when they had not purposely done anything wrong. The students could also relate to the consequences that playing a trick or lying to someone could cause as in the story of The Wolf Who Cried Boy.

TAKING THE TIME TO FIND QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY

The students did not take their own time to find questions for inquiry, but through the teacher developed question they were given time to explore possible answers. I did work with the students as they found their questions in response to my questioning.

GAIN NEW PERSPECTIVES

The students were given the opportunity to gain new perspectives. At the beginning of the Punchinello lesson the students wanted whoever had taken the stars to be punished. However, by exploring why Punchinello took the stars, the students perspective changed. Also, the students were able to explore how the wolf’s lying might have effected other people in the town.

ATTEND TO DIFFERENCE

Students did not attend to difference because I did not challenge their opinions, nor did I provide opportunities for the students to challenge one
another. They also did not share what was learned. Nor did students have the opportunity to plan new inquiries.

**DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY**

This was the first time I intentionally tried to distribute power and authority in the classroom. I used students ideas and suggestions throughout the drama. Their ideas were often utilized and helped to develop the drama work.

**IMAGINED AND EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS**

In both the *Boy Who Cried Wolf* and the Punchinello drama sessions the students had imagined interactions. During the Punchinello drama sessions the students were able to imagine they were detectives searching for clues in the town of Wimmick. Students were able to imagine they were detectives interviewing the mother of Punchinello. The students were also able to relate to getting in trouble for things that they had not maliciously or purposely done. Both the everyday and imagined interactions were inter-related and caused the student’s confusion as to how to punish Punchinello. The students knew that stealing was wrong, however they also could relate to the reasons why Punchinello had taken the stars.

I left the class in awe. I feel like a child in a toy store with a whole new world opened up to me. I know it takes time and practice, but I want to be able to do it with the ease and creativity, right now! I traveled far this quarter, but still have a ways to go. I need to now implement the methodology regularly and become more comfortable with the transitions, questioning and going with the children’s responses. I need to work on choosing my big problem that we can all care about and creating an exploring question to enhance the problem. I am excited that this was only my second course in the graduate school program. I feel a tremendous growth and it was an introduction to drama! I am really excited to see where I will be when this program is complete!

I hope you do not think I am minimizing everything you taught me. The technique is very similar to everything we worked on with curriculum drama. However, rather than the drama’s purpose being to facilitate teaching the
curriculum, the purpose is to make texts more accessible and meaningful to students. For example, the story of Punchinello became more meaningful for the students because they were able to ask questions of the characters, hear their perspectives, and relate to their feelings. In order to get students “inside” a text, the use of drama is centered around a teacher question and big problem that all the students care about.

I am on a journey and discovering multiple ways of using drama. With each new experience and methodology, I am building upon what I know. My perspectives are expanding and I am evolving into a better teacher. I will keep you updated as to any developments.

Sincerely,

Nikki
January 2, 2001

Dear Shelby,

I apologize because I know quite some time has passed since my last letter. My excuse is that I have been immersed in my journey after the discovery of “Drama-as-Inquiry.” Have you heard of it? How could I have been surrounded by drama all of these years and never encountered this methodology? I have spent relentless months trying to uncover the roots of this fascinating methodology. Though this methodology has been a stranger, I have met it head on.

Since the last drama class I told you about, I am now taking another class taught by Dr. Brian Edmiston based solely on drama as inquiry. Both this class and the previous introductory class have stressed the importance of questioning. I’ve wondered, “Why is questioning so critical a tool to use to educate students?” Elizabeth Shaunessy points out one reason (2000): “Researchers indicate that questioning strategies are essential to the growth of critical thinking skills, creativity, and higher level thinking skills” (p. 14). Through questioning, students will learn how to explain, elaborate, clarify their ideas or develop their own question to investigate.

As I delved into the importance of inquiry, I was introduced to the theories of Jerome Harste. Writing with Christine Leland, he goes so far as to propose, “reconceptualizing the whole of education as inquiry” (1998, p. 191). They state:

We want to see reading as inquiry, writing as inquiry, classroom discipline as inquiry, and both teaching and learning as inquiry.

Instead of organizing curriculum around discipline, we want to organize curriculum around personal and social inquiry questions of learners. This does not eliminate the disciplines from consideration, but it does relegate them to a different status. Instead of being the center of curriculum, they become perspectives that learners might use to explore inquiry questions they care about (p. 191).
In Kathy Short, Jerome Harste and Carolyn Burke’s book *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers* (1996), they explain that inquiry “is not a technique but the very focus of the curriculum. Inquiry is not a skill children should learn, but a framework for viewing education” (p. 48). Therefore, activities in the classroom are not intended for busy work, but have a purpose to investigate a particular question or spark the curiosity and the emergence of inquiry development (Short et al.).

Leland and Harste (1998) want to restructure all education around inquiry. They argue that, “Curriculum as inquiry is a philosophy, as way to view education holistically. Inquiry is education; education is inquiry” (p. 51). I will certainly have a clearer picture on inquiry in education as my experiences continue to shape my schema of the educational world.

As I prepare to use drama as inquiry in my own classroom this new year, more questions come to mind. I wonder how I use a text to promote inquiry. I discovered that when using a text, a teacher needs to determine what content in the text is worth teaching and learning about. That content is experienced as a big problem that the students (and I) can all care about (Edmiston, 1998d). A big problem is what the drama work is centered on: Questioning by the teacher focuses the students attention on (and promotes the students’ developing investment in) the problem and thus the content (Edmiston, 1998d). Owens and Barber clarify that:
Education is a process of inquiry and questions are the chief agents by which meanings are mediated whether they are used within discussion, to promote research, as summary or reflection, to focus the intelligence of the group, to generate a collective emotional perspective, to foster shared contexts and joint understandings, to offer springboards to new knowledge, to invite student participation, to encourage talk, to present different ways of communicating, or as a means of handing over control and a device to initiate ownership (1994, p. 51).

Questioning is about a big problem and essential to the framework of how to use drama for inquiry. All of the drama techniques that are used can focus the students on exploring the question. There are many types of questions to be asked, but the “deepest” interpretation and analysis will occur if the drama is framed around an ethical question (Edmiston, 1998a, see Figure 6).

![Diagram of questions]

**Figure 6: Scaffold of Questions**

---

I have learned that besides having a big problem to frame the drama, teacher questioning is important to move the drama ahead for continual learning, interpreting, synthesizing, and evaluating.

At the beginning of the work, the teacher’s questions assist in creating the dramatic world, drawing the students into the action and setting up their first tasks. The teacher is dependent upon the students’ answers in order to move the drama forward. Skillful questioning within the drama process will achieve the following results:
- indicate the parameters of the imaginary world
- strengthen students’ commitment to their roles
- invite explanation and elaboration
- clarify dilemma and suggest tasks
- imply status and achievement
- supply information indirectly
- focus students’ linguistic and imaginative efforts
- remodel limited or inaccurate responses
- deepen students’ thinking about the issues involved in the drama (O’Neill, 1997, p. 96).

In order to get the students invested in exploring the question, I need to attract the students’ attention and motivate them. However, if the students are not self-motivated, then I need to re-think the question or change the question to meet the needs and interests of the students. A significant way in which I began to conceptualize the progression of student’s investment in drama work was through the following diagram:
Attraction - *What within the material will appeal to the students?*
Attention - *How can I attract their attention?*
Interest - *What will interest the students about the text?*
Motivation - *What can I get them interested in that they may get motivated about? Because once the students are motivated, we can cross the threshold to engagement.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>The students’ attention is committed to the drama work.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>Solving the big problem is important to the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>The students are devoted to the drama work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Progression of students’ investment in drama work.³

Working to extend student interests helps to motivate the students to want to learn (deepens investment) and encourages them to become agents of their own learning (Harste and Leland, 2000). Not only is it important to use students’ interests, ideas, and especially their questions, but as Shaunessy states:

Students must learn to consider how and why their thinking is so and what has led them to their conclusions. In this manner, the teacher focuses learning on the investigation of student ideas to bring about further discussion and turns students’ statements around into questions that challenge students to think more deeply about their thinking (2000, p. 16).

In order to take students through this progression with a text, the “teacher-student interaction is crucial” (Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1998, p. 5). I must be willing to share power with the students and allow their interests, questions, and curiosity to drive the drama: “Drama allows us as teachers to position students differently relative to the content by sharing power and authority with our students and thereby affecting students’ engagement” (Edmiston & Enciso, 2000a, p. 7). Short et al even challenge current school restructuring by indicating that “If

interaction patterns in classrooms don’t change, then nothing is really different” (1996, p. 49). Therefore, “To change education requires a shift in the nature of teacher-student, student-student, student-content area interaction” (Short et al, p. 49). Similarly, when using drama as inquiry, there needs to be a shift in power and authority in the classroom. How I talk to my students, how my students talk to each other and how we position ourselves and one another in the classroom will change.

After I realized that the methodology is based on an inquiry approach to drama in which the students experience different types of texts, whether it be a picture book, picture, article, poem or music in a way that really gets the students to examine the text or issues surrounding the text. The methodology requires that I have a big question that the students all care about and then create tasks to analyze the question. The power in the classroom must be shared between myself and the students.

Through my research of drama as inquiry, I have found a purpose for why I must continue on with my explorations. By using drama as inquiry, I can give students more power, support their interests, emerge students “inside” and “outside” the text, as well as support their literacy development. I have discovered that, “Drama is an invaluable tool for educators because it is one of the few vehicles of instruction that can support every aspect of literacy development” (McMaster, 1998, p. 574). Drama is a powerful tool to use to educate children.

Drama’s powerful force in literacy arises from its potential to place learners in a variety of contexts-in situations which generate forms of thought, feeling and language beyond those usually generated in typical classroom interactions (Edmiston, Enciso & King, 1987, p. 219).

Drama provides various writing and reading contexts. Drama gives students an
opportunity to explore "inside" and "outside" the text. Drama builds vocabulary. Drama motivates students to learn. Drama opens students' minds to issues, concerns and events in the world. With these essential items in my pack, I feel motivated and inspired to continue up the steep hill to discover what all this means for me and my classroom.

You may be wondering, "What now?" I am contemplating the same question. I am anxious to bring back what I have learned into my own classroom. I will keep you abreast of my adventures.

Sincerely,

Nikki
Note to the reader

Before I had done the inquiry unit, I had used processes of inquiry and processes of drama as inquiry, but I had not deliberately joined them together. I used the processes in very isolated ways. Below is a summary of where I was with the processes at this point in time before implementing the first grade inquiry unit.

BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN

From the beginning of my teaching career, I used student interests and personal connections in my lesson planning. For example, I used a favorite story with children, The Rainbow Fish. I had middle school students connect the monologue they were working on with their own lives. When I used curriculum drama, I tried to grab the students' attention by using such topics as dinosaurs.

However, I had not consciously thought about the process until I was introduced to the notion of creating a "big problem" that all the students would care about. I then tapped into concerns students had when I used the stories of The Raven, The Wolf Who Cried Boy, and The Wimmicks (Punchinello). Actually thinking about how to make the connection between student interests and concerns when using drama was a new phenomena in my teaching at this point.

TAKING THE TIME TO FIND QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY

I actually did use ethical questions sporadically when I developed curriculum drama lessons, as seen in the dinosaur lesson, however, the lessons were not centered around inquiry.

It was not until taking the graduate course on making texts accessible to students, I had not even revolved drama work around a question. As I mentioned, I felt intimidated and not very comfortable with the questioning process.

GAINING NEW PERSPECTIVES

Early in my teaching I did not even think about perspectives or having students voice their ideas, opinions, or concerns. This was apparent in the Rainbow Fish lesson plan. The students never once discussed the perspectives of the other fish.

At the time when I used curriculum drama, the students were able to share their perspectives and listen to one another. However, the purpose was not to gain new perspectives, but to have the students share.
Again, it was not until the graduate course, of making texts more accessible to students, that I even became aware of the significance of looking at multiple perspectives. Until my lessons using the texts, The Raven, The Wolf Who Cried Boy, and Punchinello, I had not challenged students to look at a story through multiple perspectives.

ATTENDING TO DIFFERENCE
I had not purposely used this process before the first grade inquiry unit.

SHARING WHAT WAS LEARNED
I had not used this process at this point in time.

PLANNING NEW INQUIRIES
I had not used this process at this point in time.

TAKING THOUGHTFUL NEW ACTION
I had not used this process at this point in time.

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY
Throughout much of my teaching career I held the power in the classroom. I created the lesson plans. I decided the activities. I made all the major decisions which how using drama would progress.

At times I would use students ideas, however, only in the context of what I had planned. For example, in the Rainbow Fish lesson, the students were able to implement their ideas, but only in my set scenario.

During the middle school monologue lesson, I did not ask for student input on the questions or the assignment.

When I used curriculum drama, I did give students authority, such as the expert position of the paleontologist in the dinosaur lesson. Yet, the authority was limited to my guidelines and activities I had planned.

I deliberately began using student ideas and suggestion within my structured lesson plan, when I did the lessons with the texts Punchinello and The Wolf Who Cried Boy. This too was a new phenomena in my teaching.

IMAGINARY AND EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS
It was not until I began using curriculum drama that I used the imaginary and everyday interactions with students. Since that time, I have continued to work comfortably between the two.
SECTION 3

FIRST GRADE PETER AND THE WOLF UNIT
June 8, 2001

Dear Shelby,

I did it! I finally completed my first drama as inquiry unit. The process was difficult, yet rewarding. I discovered a lot about my students and their capabilities. I reflected a lot about my teaching, my strengths and what I want to do differently. I also found out some of the benefits of using drama as inquiry. I know I told you I would tell you all about the process, so here it goes.

The Planning Process

Do you remember that I was taking a class all about inquiry? Well, after we had been exposed to the methodology, the professor, Dr. Brian Edmiston, had us form collaborate groups to begin planning using drama as inquiry in our classrooms. He thought it was important to work with others to generate ideas, discuss concerns, and support one another in the process. I teamed up with a music teacher and a first grade teacher from other elementary schools.

Our first challenge was deciding upon a text. The music teacher really wanted a text that would complement his music class and yet still work with what the first grade teacher was doing in her classroom. Finally, we came to the consensus of using the story Peter and the Wolf because it is based on the Russian folktale put to music by Sergei Prokofiev.

Peter and the Wolf is a story about a boy visiting his grandfather. The grandfather instructs the his grandson not to go out of the gate surrounding his house because the woods are dangerous. The boy leaves the gate open and his pet duck and bird go over the gate and are about to be eaten by a wolf. However, Peter saves them by rigging up a rope contraption that captures the wolf. Hunters arrive to kill the wolf, but Peter suggests they take the wolf to the zoo.
I diligently went to the library and got all the versions I could find of the story *Peter and the Wolf*. I read through each of them carefully, and tried to rack my brain for a big problem that all the students would care about. Unfortunately, this is still a difficulty for me. I then decided to ask the three first grade teachers if there was an issue the students were grappling with in their own classroom. The teachers were all in agreement that a big concern the students had was over the issue of fairness.

As I re-read the story, I looked at the story in a different way. I began to look at the different characters' perspective of fairness and gravitated to the wolf. I began to think about if the wolf's punishment was fair. He was taken to the zoo for life. Lost his freedom, perhaps his family, essentially the life he had. The wolf was just doing what a wolf does. Also, it was Peter's fault for leaving the gate open. (Remember, italicized print is taken from actual lessons, reflections, and journal writings written before or during the study).

I presented my idea about the issue of fairness to my cooperative group. They too felt this was a concern with their students. We then came up with ideas for the core question to center our drama sessions around. We brainstormed questions such as:

- How do our actions affect others?
- Who's at fault?
- Have you ever been oppressed for who you are?
- What punishment/consequence is fair?
- Who's perspective/position is privileged?
- What would be the fairest ending for the story?

As a group we had to think about, "What in the content is worth exploring? What's worth thinking/feeling about in this material?" and "What do you think the students will explore?" We wanted to chose a question that would
explore an ethical dilemma (see Figure 6). We decided to chose to have the students work with the question, “What would be the fairest ending to the story?” Students would then need to analyze the information, different perspectives and their value around this complex issue.

**TAKING TIME TO FIND QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY**

The students were not given the opportunity to find questions for inquiry. However, I did take the time to find an inquiry question and I made a concerted effort to find a question that would connect with the students and their interests.

In order to engage the students in exploration of this big question, I had to grab their attention, interest and motivate them to want to explore the issue (See Figure 7). After conferencing with Dr. Edmiston, I decided to use the device of a letter. The premise of the drama was that the students are in role as a production company of movie makers and that the producer has selected their company to make the movie. The letter read:

*Dear Mega-star Movie Company,*

*We are pleased to confirm that your production company has been picked to create the movie Peter and the Wolf. Congratulations! Please let us know if you wish to accept.*

*We enclosed pictures drawn by our illustrators of the story. Let us know a list of characters, animals and settings.*

*No discussion has been made yet on the ending. The different versions of the story have different endings. Please make suggestions for alternative possible endings, were not sure which one is the fairest.*

*Thank you,*

*Smith and Gold Productions*
The Inquiry Drama Sessions

The day arrived for me to begin using drama as inquiry. Interestingly, the three classes I worked with had different decisions, rationale and ideas, but the events unfolded similarly. Therefore, when I am retelling you the chronology of what occurred, I will be synthesizing the events as if it was one class.

Session One:

_The students gathered eagerly around the chalkboard to read the large letter that had arrived for their company. They were imagining that they were in the expert position of a company of movie makers. As one first grader defined, “They get cameras, decide the actors and the put ketchup on people to make them look dead.” The letter had congratulated them on being picked to make the movie, Peter and the Wolf. Their biggest task was to suggest an ending that would be the “fairest.” After a whole group discussion, the students defined fairness as “when people share, take turns or have the same thing.” However, before they could explore the fairest ending, they had to figure out what this movie was about. Enclosed in the letter were twelve illustrations. Unfortunately, as I explained to the students, I had dropped the envelope and the pictures got all out of order, so we needed to try to figure out the sequence of the story. The children gathered around the long line of pictures and began to place them in the order they thought was correct. After a long discussion and a lot of questioning, the students had summarized their version of the story. (None of the students had heard the story before).

Peter had gone outside his grandfather’s gate and when his grandfather found him, Peter was in big trouble. The woods were dangerous and there could
be wolves. Peter's grandfather had locked him inside the gate, however, Peter disobeyed his grandfather's orders. As Peter left the safety of the gate, the wolf was watching him and his friends, the duck, bird and cat. The wolf chased them to a tree, where Peter caught the wolf's tail with a rope. Hunters emerged from the forest wanting to kill the wolf.

BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN

Students were given the opportunity to share their knowledge of what movie makers did. They created their own definition of fairness from their own experiences. As well, they read the picture illustrations and determined from their analysis of the pictures what the story was about.

Shelby, I have to admit that I was very hesitant with having the students read the pictures and interpret the story. I was anxious and thought, "How on earth are they going to tell me the story if they haven't heard it? How are they going to figure out what order they are to go in? What if they create a whole different story? Yikes!" However, they did it! It was amazing to watch some students working together discussing the pictures and others quietly thinking. If a student began to move a picture that another student had placed there, I would challenge them to rationalize why they were changing the order. However, I did not give any indication of the actual order of the events in the story (though this was a struggle), I allowed the students to make their own interpretations.

Once the students created their interpretation of the story. I showed the students one more picture. The picture was of the wolf tied up, and the hunters, Peter, duck, bird and Grandfather happily marching the wolf off somewhere. I asked the students to suggest possible endings to the story that would be "fair." I have enclosed what the students suggested (see table 1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>First Grade Class A:</strong></th>
<th><strong>First Grade Class B:</strong></th>
<th><strong>First Grade Class C:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take the wolf to the zoo</td>
<td>Take the wolf to the zoo</td>
<td>Make the wolf a pet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train the wolf to be a pet</td>
<td>Make the wolf a pet</td>
<td>Make the wolf a pet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let the wolf go in the woods</td>
<td>Take the wolf to another country</td>
<td>Let the wolf go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the wolf shot</td>
<td>Have the wolf shot and make it a coat</td>
<td>Have the wolf shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train the wolf to be a guard dog</td>
<td>Put the wolf in a cage at the pound</td>
<td>Make the wolf a pet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take the wolf to a wolf reserve</td>
<td>Put the wolf in a cage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take the wolf to the circus</td>
<td>Put the wolf in a cage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Torture the wolf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Student suggestions as to the fairest ending.

It was difficult for me not to interject when students were discussing "torturing" the wolf, or having the wolf as a pet. However, I did not say a word. It was interesting that when a student suggested torturing the wolf, another student spoke up and said, "I don't think that's fair." It was exciting to see how the students perspectives about what was fair evolved throughout the drama sessions.

By the end of the session the students agreed we had a lot of work to do next week to decide a fair ending. They seemed committed to try to discover which ending would be the fairest. They also seemed committed to their position as movie experts. One student commented, "I think this is a good company!"

**IMAGINED AND EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS**

I asked the students if they could agree to represent this movie company, and they all did. Throughout the drama sessions, the students represented this imagined expert position as movie makers.
DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

I allowed students to exercise their power to explore their own interpretation of the story. I did not try to sway where they ordered the pictures or their reasoning behind their juices. I did question them in order for them to have to rationalize their ideas and choices, but I did not encourage them to think one way or another.

As I interacted with the students I affirmed their authority position as the movie makers and they were given the task to interpret the illustrations on their own. They were also to give their suggestions as to possible fair movie endings. I did not interject teacher authority or my own moral judgements when they suggested “kill the wolf for its coat”, “torture the wolf”, or the idea of “making the wolf a pet”. I wanted them to discover the possible rewards and consequences of their decisions. Heathcote (1984) states,

I want my classes to learn to make decisions, and to understand the problems and rewards of these decisions, so I regard it as my prime task to ensure that they clearly understand the choice between possibilities, the nature of the decision taken and the demands likely put upon them because of the decision taken (p. 66).

I wanted my students to discover for themselves which ending they would find the fairest once we explored their possible suggestions.

Session 2:

When the students left, I began to panic. I had planned so long for this day to attract the students and get them interested in the problem. Now they were engaged and I didn’t know what to do for the following week. I immediately e-mailed Dr. Edmiston to beg for help.

He called me that night and calmly observed that it sounded like the next step was classic small group work. They could choose one of the endings to work with and create a still image or scene and justify why it is fair and their peers can question them. He reminded me to help guard those groups who may be attracted because of their ending selection and to support them. Of course, it all seemed so clear after speaking with him. I only wish I could have thought of it.
I was then concerned about planning the next steps and he suggested using the last five minutes of class to ask the students what they see happening next. “Ask the students.” Why couldn’t I think of that?!

The next week the students reviewed the letter. We completed the task the letter asked of us by listing the characters, animals and settings. The students then retold the story. (These were classroom curriculum objectives that the students needed to be able to do with a piece of literature). We reviewed their endings they suggested and then I had them chose which ending they wanted to work on. Interestingly, no one chose the ending to work on that required “torturing the wolf.”

The students then found a place in the room and began creating a representation of their chosen ending for the movie. They were excited to work on their endings and stayed on task to create them. The students were cooperating together to create a possible ending to what happened to the wolf. They were practicing what they would say and what actions they would take as or with the wolf.

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

In the past, I would have just assigned small groups or had them chose a group to work with and assigned them what to work on. However, this time I gave the students the power to chose what they wanted to work on. I was fascinated to see most students chose the ending they wanted to work on regardless of who else wanted to work on that ending. Also, I did not have students complaining which group they were in, or having to complete the task.

Session 3:

During the next session, I was blown away by the students capabilities to justify the endings they chose and challenge other groups endings. The students
shared their movie ending and then rationalized why their ending was the fairest.

The other students were given the opportunity to ask questions of the group.

**TAKING THOUGHTFUL NEW ACTION**

The students had the opportunity to explore how their ending was the fairest. As well, students were able to inquiry about their peers rationale.

Here are a few examples of what the students said:

*Take the wolf to the zoo: DeAndre was in role as the wolf and Helen was in role as the zoo keeper.*

Mrs. Henry: Why is your ending the fairest one?
Helen: It is fairest for Peter because the wolf won’t bother anyone else.
Tyler (to DeAndre): Why are you trying to get out of the cage?
DeAndre: I am mad.
Destiny (to Helen): Why are you trying to catch the wolf?
Helen: To put him in the cage to keep him in. Keep him safe. If he goes out, he’ll run away.
Karlos: But it’s not fair, the wolf stays in the cage and there might be other animals and he might hurt them.
Helen: There are no other animals.
Kailin: I don’t think it’s fair the wolf doesn’t have anyone to play with.
Helen: We play with him.

*Shot the wolf: Salim was in role as the wolf. Estevez was in role as the hunter who shoots the wolf.*

Mrs. Henry: Why is your ending the fairest?
Salim: If we put him in a cage or make him a pet he could sneak out. If we shoot him there won’t be anymore problems.
Karley: What if he has a family?
Salim: If he did have a family, they could test his blood. If he already has a family we won’t kill him. But it’s like a robber who robs who gets to jail and can get out and rob again.
I chose to explain about the process of blood testing, and how just by testing the wolf we would not know if he had children. I chose to use my power and authority at this time so that the students would have an correct understanding as to how blood testing works.

*Keep the wolf as a pet: Xavia was in role as the wolf and Jade was in role as the owner.*

Jade: I think our ending is fair because it’s just really nice just not letting it die and not shooting it.
Salim: But you told her to lay down, and she didn't listen to you.
Jade: So, I didn't feed her.
Helen: What if the wolf bites you?
Jade: I'd get a stick and whoop it!
India: But what happened to the wolf at the end?
Jade: Peter was trying to keep it as a pet. Then all of a sudden she didn't listen and I put her in a cage and took her to the dungeon. I tried to give her food and the doctors came and said she was dead.

Take the wolf to the woods: Jamarkus was in role as the wolf and Melvin took him to the woods.
Mrs. Henry: Why is your ending the fairest?
Melvin: Cause, instead of killing him, you can put him asleep and put him somewhere far in the woods so he won't ever come back. If you got dogs at your house you don't want to kill the dog. A human has their family, let's say you kill the dog, their family will be looking for him. If someone would kill me and I'm a human being my family would after you all.
India: Why won't you train him?
Melvin: Because that's not our ending.
Taveen: Why won't you take him to work?
Jamarkus: He would bite.
Karlos: I think he might be right, because it is the fairest thing.

Once the students had shared their ending and presented why they thought their ending was the fairest, I took Dr. Edmiston's advice and asked the students how they thought we should decide the fairest ending. They all decided they wanted to take a vote and then write a letter to the producers of their decision.

GAINING NEW PERSPECTIVES
The students were able to gain new perspectives because they were able to see a variety of perspectives from their peers. As well, they had to think about the perspectives of those involved in the ending they chose.

ATTENDING TO DIFFERENCE
Students had to reflect upon their thinking as they were answering questions from their peers. Their thinking was challenged as they had to justify their reasoning to one another.

Students also used their own questioning to challenge one another's opinions and ideas. After questioning in one session, a student, Karlos, had changed his mind and said, "I think he might be right because it is the fairest thing."
TAKING THE TIME TO FIND QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY

Students were given the time to find questions for inquiry when they had the opportunity to ask questions their peers opinions and ideas.

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

I gave students time to rationalize their endings which I had not done in my past teaching. I never took the time to have students justify the choices or opinions they made. I gave students opportunity to question one another, which in the past I would have done the primary questioning. I also gave students the opportunity to decide how we should proceed with the drama.

Session 4:

Before the students voted on which ending they thought was the fairest, we decided to review each of the possibilities and why they were fair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class A:</th>
<th>Pet</th>
<th>Guard Dog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zoo</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- not chase or hurt Peter</td>
<td>get lots of care</td>
<td>won't bite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- won’t eat other animals</td>
<td>won't get in trouble</td>
<td>keep people safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- won’t run away</td>
<td>won’t hurt anyone</td>
<td>like an alarm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- there are other wild animals</td>
<td>better for the wolf to be respectful</td>
<td>guard house from bad people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- won’t eat other animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Woods</strong></td>
<td>Shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- see its family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- able to run free</td>
<td>won’t hurt others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- can protect family</td>
<td>won’t eat the duck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- free</td>
<td>- won’t bite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Class A’s rationale for why the ending is fair.
### Table 3: Class B’s rationale for why the ending is fair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class B:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zoo</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pet</strong></td>
<td><strong>Another Country</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- can be feed</td>
<td>- train to not hurt other animals</td>
<td>- gets a new home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- lets him get a family</td>
<td>- won’t kill people</td>
<td>- new town so people won’t get hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- train him to do tricks</td>
<td>- confine him to cage if causing trouble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- new friends and games, can take walks, play ball</td>
<td>- will start to take dog treats instead of animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- can put in cage if causing trouble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- train him to help you around the house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Shot</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cage</strong></th>
<th><strong>Wolf Reserve</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- people won’t get hurt</td>
<td>- won’t eat animals</td>
<td>- able to make friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- somebody will get a coat</td>
<td>- people will be safe</td>
<td>- his family might be there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- might kill other people’s pets</td>
<td>- calm him down</td>
<td>- free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- able to feed him</td>
<td>- have food to eat</td>
<td>- no hunters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- there’s already dead animals so he won’t have to kill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- big fence to play in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- do things he wants to do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Class C’s rationale for why the ending is fair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class C:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pet</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shot</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- keep is as a dog</td>
<td>- won’t kill anyone</td>
<td>- won’t attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- train it</td>
<td>- won’t eat other animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- can tie up</td>
<td>- won’t chase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- if you treat it right, it might treat you right</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Other Place with Wolves</strong></th>
<th><strong>Tie up</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- won’t chase anyone</td>
<td>- won’t attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- can be with family</td>
<td>- won’t break in house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- won’t bite or eat what it shouldn’t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- can run around</td>
<td>- free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We proceeded with the vote but there was no unanimous decision. The students decided to write the letter to the producers anyway and concluded:

**Letter A:**

Dear Company,

We found out that we do not agree which ending to pick. We voted for the best ones. A lot of people agree to let the wolf go in the woods so it can be free. It's fair for the wolf and the people. The wolf probably wants to be close to his family.

Other people want to take the wolf to the zoo because he will not bite anyone or run away. When he is at the zoo he should be in a cage and fed everyday.

Others picked for the wolf to be a guard dog so he could be trained and keep the people safe.

We're sorry we couldn't find an ending, it is hard to decide on an ending.

Thank you for picking us!

**Letter B:**

Dear Company,

We are sorry that we didn't agree on which is the fairest ending. Eight people think the wolf should be a pet because he can help you around your house and protect you from other animals. But, some people think he may turn mean.

Four people think the wolf should be put in a cage because he won't eat other things. Some people think he will break out of the cage with his sharp teeth.

One person thinks he should go to the wolf reserve because he can play with other animals and forget about eating other people. And one person thought the wolf should go to another country because it won't eat anyone.

We don't know which ending is right because we can see how each could be fair. We can't agree.

**Letter C:**

Dear Company,

We cannot decide on the fairest ending. Some people think the wolf should be a pet because it won’t bite people if it has a dog mask and you can pet it. Some people think the wolf should be let go with other wolves because it won’t attack anyone and it won’t kill the pet animals.

We cannot decide, ask a different company.
It was fascinating that many students had changed their minds from their initial reactions to which ending was fair. None of the students chose to shoot the wolf, perhaps because they could not justify how it would be equal for the wolf, and animals and the people. Many of the students were able to justify how an ending could be fair for everyone. The students found it hard to agree on one ending because they were able to see multiple perspectives and reasons for why a particular ending was fair.

Once the letter was complete, I again asked the students how they wanted to proceed. Each class wanted to hear the actual story and act it out.

GAINING NEW PERSPECTIVES
I used a chart to record their rationale for why each ending was fair. Perhaps the chart helped them to understand, critique and explore meaning to which ending they thought was fair.

ATTEND TO DIFFERENCE
The chart also challenged students thinking because they were able to see reasons for why each ending could be considered fair.

SHARING WHAT WAS LEARNED
The students shared what they learned in the letters to the producers.

PLANNING NEW INQUIRIES
Once the letter was complete and our decision was made that we could not agree. We discussed possible reasons why we could not decide on an ending. The students thought they had different ideas about what was fair and they were not going to come to a negotiation.

I did not pursue asking them if they had any other questions to pursue at this time. They seemed to really be interested in hearing the story and having the opportunity to act it out.

Session 4:
I shared the story of Peter and the Wolf by Michele Lemieux. The students were intrigued as to how accurate they were in their interpretation of the story.
Once the students heard the books ending to the story (that the wolf had been taken to the zoo), many could rationalize the ending, while others were firm in their belief that it was not the fairest ending that the book could have chosen.

Shelby, I know you are wondering why I was so worried about this whole process. Now that it is done, I can utilize a lot of what I learned along the way for other uses of drama as inquiry. However, during the process I was a wreck, not because of the students, but because I was uncertain of my own capabilities and confidence. It can be scary trying a new methodology and changing major aspects of your teaching.

I think my biggest concern was the planning. With drama as inquiry, you can plan the beginning motivation for the students, but after that the plan has to unfold with the students. Remember how structured I was in student teaching? Actually I have remained tightly structured throughout my whole teaching career! This has been a huge adjustment for me.

I thought you might get a kick out of my initial reflection when the study was over. I wrote this to my professor:

Tryng this new technique has been like being lost in the woods. I can start off with a map or overall plan, but depending upon the students' interests, questions or answers, I may end up down one path or another. In addition, I have the constant fear of being eaten alive by wolves (my students) or not thinking fast enough on my feet or knowing which direction to go. Of course, it does not help my confidence when there are those who are incredibly knowledgeable about the woods and can easily suggest one path or another to get me started, or even safely home.

For four years, it is like I have been living in the locked gate of Peter's grandfather's house. I feel safe and secure. I have cultivated my garden and my blossoming students have grown and thrived. Many spectators would pass by and compliment the beauty of my garden and how lively and colorful my flowers were. I was content. However, about a year ago, there was a visitor inside the gate that coaxed me to come out and explore what surrounded my protective enclosure. I
ventured out, little by little. However, as the seasons changed and time passed, I settled back inside the gate, back to my comfortable, safe surroundings.

Some time passed, and again another visitor ventured inside the gate and convinced me to unlock the door and explore the woods outside. As I passed the gate's threshold, a little voice in the back of my head asked, "Why are you trying to change something that's working so well?" I could only justify this question with the thought that though there are wonderful things occurring inside this enclosure, it is a very small area and there is a whole world out there with possibilities and ideas that may be better. I owe it to myself and my students to discover if there is something more powerful beyond these walls.

Now that the gate is unlocked and I have these massive woods in front of me with a variety of trails, tangled branches, creatures and noises, I want to know how to get through them now! Those who are familiar with these particular woods say that it takes time and practice, and I suddenly realize I need some major patience!

Once I calmed my nerves down, I met with some other woods travelers and we devised a plan. We sought out a wise man who knew a lot about the surroundings, and the wise man made all these suggestions. The suggestions were wonderful, however, not only did I not think of them, but they were not even in my plan of possibilities. Not to mention, I had spent a whole sweltering hot day making a plan and had to scrap the whole thing! Patience, I told myself.

When I completed my first day of the adventure, I had several questions running through me head. Of course the wise man of the forest had very easy answers. "How do I plan ahead?" I asked. He simply suggested that I end class five minutes early and ask the kids. "How do I discipline?" I asked. He simply suggested I step out of role and discipline as I would normally do. "How do I incorporate all their ending suggestions?" I asked. He easily suggested that I use small groups to work on a proposed ending. He also reminded me to bridge each lesson to the next in order for the students to recall what had occurred the previous week. How does he have a compass that steers him in all the right directions and I feel as if I am traveling in circles? Will I ever find my way?

As I weave my way through the entangled brush, I had to remind myself not to judge any of the students' answers or comments. When the students suggested that one possible ending could be that the wolf is tortured, I had to take that answer. The students needed to explore their own possibilities and discover on their own which one may be the fairest.

The next week we began to explore the domain of fairness as each group worked on an ending to the movie. One group decided that the fairest ending would be to put the wolf in the zoo. They justified their ending by stating, "At the zoo the wolf won't bother anyone else." The wolf rammed the cage and desperately wanted out, however the zoo keeper explained, "I put him in the cage to keep him in and safe." The company members were concerned that the wolf
was not getting any food, but the zoo keeper assured them that he was. The group was concerned that there might be other animals in the cage and the wolf would hurt them. However, the zoo keeper explained that the wolf was alone. Then a member of the group was concerned that the wolf had no one to play with. However, the zoo keeper explained that she plays with him. The students also wanted to know why the wolf was not washed. After all of the concerns were out, the zoo keeper explained that the wolf was just visiting the zoo and would soon be taken back to the woods. The students were really looking at different perspectives to try to figure out if this was the fairest ending. They looked at Peter’s perspective, the wolf’s and other animal’s perspectives. They were truly trying to analyze if this was the fairest consequence. The students were trying to rationalize fairness by how the ending would be “equal” to the wolf, people and other animals. However, some of the students put more worth on the human perspective or the wolf perspective depending on the context.

After interviewing a small group of students, they seemed to really be enjoying the experience. We did not discuss the issue of fairness, but rather what they liked about the drama, what they did not like and what they noticed different about my teaching. One students enjoyed that “we talked about the endings and stuff.” Another “liked how the actors acted.” While another liked when “we did the movie.” The students even noticed that there were differences in the path. One student noticed that I let them chose what they wanted to do. Another realized that discussing the pictures was a different technique, while another student stated, “You talk like those people who make real movies.” No one acknowledged any discomfort or dislikes with the path we were taking. The students seem to be emerging without a scratch. They seem exhilarated and excited about their new adventure.

I, on the other hand, still feel lost. I feel as if I am trapped in the middle of the woods and do not know which direction to take. Once I get out of this dense brush, I know I will be shaken, weary and tired. I am hoping to have the strength to keep going; however, I need more in my pack to overcome the obstacles and hardships. I know I need to practice and have patience; however, developing patience when you are anxious and frightened is not easy. I have seen beauty in these woods and I hope to travel through them again, if only I do not retreat to the locked gate.

I really hope I do not retreat back to the locked gate. I am hoping from everything I learned, that I will have the confidence and knowledge to keep going. It has been a long journey but I have discovered many things.
My Discoveries

I have discovered “The Big Question” that all the students care about can help to focus and guide the drama. I realized that once I focused on the question, “What is a fair ending?,” it helped me to keep the drama moving forward, as well as, all of the tasks revolved around this big question. I do have to admit that the idea of developing another question makes me nervous. There are so many texts to explore and questions to ask that I am having a hard time deciding where I would focus next. I have learned that I need to use a text that has special meaning to me. However, I have also learned that a text, such as Peter and the Wolf, might not have meaning for me at first, but after analyzing and questioning the text with my group, I became very intrigued with the story because of all the perspectives to consider with the issue of fairness.

I have learned that “teachers must determine when to provide information and when to listen, when to probe further and when to let go” (Lewis, 1999, p. 174). I am still struggling with my confidence in this technique. I noticed when the students were interpreting the illustrations of the text, I was constantly probing them to analyze the picture. I wonder if I was probing too much, or directing my questions to have them retell me “the correct” version of Peter and the Wolf. For example, one student said the man was the boy’s father, and I asked, “Who else could this person be?” Then when a little girl answered, “The boy’s grandfather,” I probed further, “What makes you think that?” I then asked, “How many of you think this man is the boy’s father? How many think it is the boy’s grandfather? Wow, that is most of you. Can we all agree that the man is his grandfather?” I never disregarded their answers; however, I wonder if I redirected them to fit the story. One piece of advice that Dr. Edmiston gave that was extremely helpful was
to not judge any of their answers. I listened to all of their ideas, even when students discussed torturing the wolf.

I discovered there were times I needed to provide information to the students. After the students would share their movie ending, we had time to ask questions. One student asked the group that shot the wolf, “What if the wolf had a family?” The group then answered matter-of-factly that they would take the wolf to the vet before they shot the wolf for a blood test. I inquired further as to what that would do. They explained that it would let them know if the wolf had a family. I tried to take the opportunity to provide them with the proper information. The group was still determined to believe that this was a solution, but at least I tried. Another group shared their movie ending about the wolf being tied up. Students were convinced that this would not be safe because wolves could eat through steal chains. I asked the students if they had ever seen a wolf eat through a steal chain, and they said they had. I did not want to argue with them or minimize their answer, so I just listened.

I have learned that drama facilitates the inquiry process because “drama creates a space in which students are safe to ask questions and raise objections in role without feeling that their ideas are ‘wrong’” (Edmiston, 1998a, p. 113). When I gave the students the opportunity to question the groups about the fairness of their endings, the students embraced this experience. All of their questions delved deeper into their understanding of whether or not the ending was fair. For example, one group had the wolf in the cage. Students asked questions such as, “Why don’t you feed the wolf? Did you give the wolf a bath? Does the wolf get to go for walks?” These were all questions to help them form their opinion to whether or not the act was fair.
Through their active explorations of their world, tensions arise which lead them to ask questions about aspects of the world, tensions arise which lead them to ask questions about aspects of the world that puzzle them. They systematically investigate those questions, thereby creating new understandings and new questions and issues (Short, 1996, p. 8).

Through their questioning, the students were investigating the issue and creating new understandings, questions, and issues. Also, the students did not feel as if they were wrong; instead, they felt comfortable in defending their position or altering their stances. For example, the group who shot the wolf decided that they would take the wolf to a vet first to determine whether the wolf had a family. If the wolf had a family, they would not shoot him.

I have also learned that “inquiry does not narrow our perspective; it gives us more understandings, questions, and possibilities than when we started” (Short, 1996, p. 8). When the students brainstormed the possible ending ideas, some voiced how a few of the ideas were not fair. However, after watching the movie endings and hearing the students’ rationale for fairness, many discovered other perspectives. Even the classroom teacher commented that at first she felt some of the endings were unfair, but after hearing the students’ rationale, she began to see their reasoning. When we had finally watched all the endings and I asked how we were going to decide on the fairest one, a student raised his hand and said, “Mrs. Henry, I think we are going to have to think very hard about this.” Not one ending jumped out because many of the students discovered “new voices and points of view they had not previously considered” (Edmiston, 1998c, p. 66).

I have learned that revolving the drama around inquiry empowers the students. I discovered that many students who have been discipline problems in the past, or disengaged, were captivated and elated that their ideas and opinions were being heard. The students were eager to help piece together the story, and
felt their input was important. The students loved being able to question one another and justify their answers. In addition, the students were able to ask questions that they were curious about and that were important to them. The students also really liked when I asked them their thoughts on what we should do next. Not only did the students feel empowered, but I was giving them much more power, which actually made the class run smoother. In the past if we had spent an entire period in discussion, I would have lost half the class. However, the students were engaged and interested in the tasks and in discovering the answer to which ending is the fairest.

I have found that exploring authentic questions with students is enriching, enlightening, and a struggle. As Short states:

Taking an inquiry perspective on curriculum was much more difficult than adding another activity or changing the format of our units. It meant another way of thinking about curriculum. We used many of the same activities and materials as before, but our thinking about those activities and materials had to shift. It was easy to slide back into our old ways of operating in the classroom because this new way of thinking was hard (Short, 1996, p. 3-4).

I agree that it is another way of thinking about curriculum. The students are exploring questions that interest them, the students hold power, and all of the activities and materials enhance the big question. I am not just teaching the students a concept, I am going beyond a simple concept to having the students “shape facets of an ethical self” (Edmiston, 1998c, p. 66). The process is very challenging. I become anxious with the thought of creating meaningful questions for the students to explore. Which are the most important? If there is a certain curriculum to teach, how to you make sure that it will be covered in the exploration of the question? How can I trust myself to allow the students to even
discover the big question? Once I determine the question, I panic with where to start. There are so many possibilities and choices, how do I know which will be the most engaging? How do I know which one will set the path to the exploration of the big question? Now I do feel more relaxed once I get started because I can ask the students where they think we might go with the drama. One of my weaknesses is not thinking quick on my feet. I am one to ponder and think and create an abundance of possibilities. Will this become easier with practice, or is it engrained? Of course, I have many questions and concerns, but I have seen the impact on my students and a new way of looking at teaching drama. I have found that being able to talk to colleagues has helped the process tremendously!

“So now what?” I do not want to lose the distance I have made. The school year is coming to an end and how do I maintain this momentum into next year? I plan on transitioning slowly rather than drastically changing my whole program. I am hoping that with a gradual change I will be less inclined to give up or retreat back to what I am comfortable. Lastly, I need to accept where I am now with the methodology instead of spending energy worrying about where I want to be. I need to just take one step at a time.

I wrote a story that I wanted to share with you that has helped my to synthesize where I am now with the methodology.

*Once upon a time in a very small village there lived a girl who made a huge discovery. One day while she was out exploring and following her curiosity she came across a magnificent jewel. To her delight she discovered that as she gazed into the jewel she was able to see other worlds, some that were believable, others only created by her imagination and places she never thought she could imagine.*

*The girl rushed back to her village to share the brilliance of the treasure. The villagers did not react the way she had expected. She thought all would be dazzled and delighted about the new found prize. However, some were curious, others were skeptical, others teased and taunted, and others did not even care.*
The girl knew she had uncovered something precious and was determined to discover its luster. She had heard of others with similar treasure that had traveled outside the village to get direction and guidance on how to tap into the jewel’s powers. She decided to journey to the council of Wesleyan to receive her training. After many tasks, studying and gaining knowledge, she thought she was prepared to inform others about the sparkling gem. The girl did not return to her village because she did not believe that they valued what she had to offer. So she traveled to a city outside her village that was considered dangerous, rough and wild. After navigating through the crowds and chaos she finally settled down. On the outside the surroundings were tattered and worn, but inside was alive with energy. In order to survive she tried to convert her presentation of information as she had previously seen people in her village do. However, the subjects turned on her. They revolted against her by name calling, lashing out and rumbling amongst each other. As the girl began to give up and pack to leave, she saw something sparkling at the bottom of her satchel. Of course, her jewel! How could she forget her main quest? The next day she emerged with the jewel in hand and everyone was mesmerized and intrigued. She knew the jewel was special! They were dazzled by its powers.

Time passed, the girl was now a woman. Throughout the years the jewel had transformed many people, including herself. She thought she knew all the jewel’s powers, but she was wrong. One day a band of wizards were offering demonstrations about these majestic jewels. The woman’s curiosity was peaked. Was there more to her discovery? She decided to venture to the arena and see what she could find out. As she watched, she was amazed at the wealth of knowledge she did not know. She desperately wanted to learn how to use the gem to its full potential. She listened carefully to the wizards’ information and carefully followed their spells. Unfortunately, the outcomes were not always what she had hoped. There were times she wanted a beautiful butterfly and got a very ugly, bumpy toad.

After a lot of time and practice she finally realized it was all in how and what she asked. Of course it had taken her 1581 times to reach this discovery. She now had a few keys to unlocking the gem’s mystery.

The wizards disappeared and as time passed the woman began to regress back to her old spells and charms. She knew she should continue to practice and dabble now and then, but it was hard and she got confused. Also, the gem still delighted and awed the spectators, so what could be the harm?

A year passed and the band of wizards passed through the village again. One of the powerful wizards put a call out to those to enhance the power of the valuable stone. The woman was please with her transformations, but she secretly knew there was more to the jewel than what she was sharing. It was only fair to share the knowledge with others. She decided to venture to the wizards’ demonstrations once again. When she arrived at the festival she was thrown into
a vortex of energy. She had never encountered so many people at once with the desire and passion for the stone. The wizards forced them to think about their purpose for the powerful gem. Then they were forced to encounter the true strength of the stone. The journey was tiring, frustrating and exhilarating. The door to the force of the stone was open and the possibilities were flooding out. The woman desperately tried to organize and make sense of the abundance of ideas pouring out, but the strength and numbers were too massive and the woman collapsed with exhaustion. The woman had so many questions and concerns. Everyone was so helpful, kind and giving. The woman lifted herself up and felt inspired, yet hesitant. She wanted to know all the spells, charms and powers of the stone immediately. Both wizards emphasized that it would take patience, practice and time. Yet, that did not calm the woman’s anxieties.

The woman experienced spurts of success and hope. However, with each step she took, she was blocked with questions, concerns and worries. The wizard gave her a handbook of wisdom that did help some. Plus, the festival participants shared a wealth of ideas and ways to grapple with the stone’s wonderment.

Once the festival ended and the excitement and vigor died down, the woman was left alone. As she contemplated what to do with her newfound spells, charms and ideas, she received an invitation. She was invited to a festival in the fall to share and teach others with the jewel. Three months! Will she be able to maintain the inspiration and stamina to carry over what she had learned? She could not do it before, so what had changed now? She did not want to fall back to her old ways. Was she ready? She still had not unlocked all the stone’s powers! She grasped the stone tightly and began to purge all her question and concerns. The stone began to throb and glow, however, as the questions continued the gem’s brightness began to get dimmer and dimmer and dimmer. What had she done? In a flurry she went to seek out the wizard.

The wizard listened and then asked her to come with him. They traveled through streams, over mountains and under bridges. They walked, jogged, ran and sprinted until they finally came to a tall tower. The only way up to the top of the tower was a set of endless, curving, steep stairs. The wizard pointed towards the sky, “Now at the top of the tower is a gift. I cannot just give you the gift. That would be too simple,” he smiled. “You will have to climb, sweat and work your way up the stairs to retrieve it. Do you understand?” Finally she understood. She could wish, hope, dream and pray to have all the answers to the crystal right now, but it was a waste of time and energy. She needed to accept where she was on the steps now and work her way up the tower. There was not a fast, easy way. It would take hard work and determination. She needed to let go of the worrying and take one step at a time. So she took a deep breath and continued her journey.

The end.
I have no idea what next year will bring after this experience, but you know I will keep you informed.

Sincerely,

Nikki
Note to the reader

At this point I had merged all that I learned about inquiry into the preceding first grade inquiry unit.

BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN
Immediately, at the beginning of using drama as inquiry, I had students share what they knew about what movie makers did, their definition of fairness and how they interpreted the illustrations.

Through the rest of the sessions, the students continually reinforced information with their opinions and what they knew about wolves.

TAKING TIME TO FIND QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY
I took the time to find a question that was a concern and relevant to the students. Also, I gave students the opportunity to ask each other questions when they were sharing their movie endings.

The very last week of school, I had students brainstorm questions that they were interested in. They asked such questions as, "Why do people die? Why do people kill one another? Why are some people treated unfairly?"

I currently refer to these their questions when I am planning lessons. However, I have not yet found a comfortable way to negotiate a question with the students to center a drama around.

GAINING NEW PERSPECTIVES
Students were able to gain new perspectives by watching their peers' movie endings. They were able to question, and hear the justifications for why each ending was considered fair. In the end, the students perspectives had broadened. They were perplexed because they now saw multiple perspectives.

ATTENDING TO DIFFERENCE
Students were given the opportunity and encouraged to rationalize their ideas, answer questions, create questions and listen to one another. Through this process, some students had their ideas reinforced, while many others changed their attitudes and opinions.

SHARING WHAT WAS LEARNED
Students had the opportunity to share what they learned by writing the letter to the producers. This was a time for the students to synthesize their ideas and decisions.
PLANNING NEW INQUIRIES

This is a process I need to work on. Once the letter was complete, the students wanted to hear the story and act it out. I went with the students interests. Perhaps if there was still time left in the year, the students would have wanted to pursue other questions. However, at this point in time they wanted to hear the story.

TAKING THOUGHTFUL NEW ACTION

Students were given the opportunity to explore individual inquiries when they asked their peers questions regarding their movie endings. I cannot precisely say that the students actions changed. However, I can note that the following school year, when I worked on other inquiries with the students, they brought other perspectives to the forefront of their discussions. Preceding the inquiry unit, they had not highlighted other perspectives.

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

I allowed students to exercise their power and authority during this unit than I ever had before. I allowed the students to interpret the pictures on their own. The students decided on possible movie endings. The students selected which ending they wanted to work on. The students rationalized why their particular ending was the fairest. The students asked one another questions. The students decided how we should proceed with the sessions.

IMAGINARY AND EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Throughout the sessions the students interacted as themselves and with the fictional world of the text, and expert role of the movie makers. All three of these interactions helped them to expand and perhaps reinforce or change their perspective (see Figure 3).
November 4, 2001

Dear Shelby,

I am happy to report that I am continuing to work on using drama as inquiry. No, I am not nearly where I want to be with the methodology, but that is ok. I am trying techniques and consciously trying to implement what I learned all last year.

I notice that my teaching has changed drastically in many ways. I have changed what my lessons are focused around. I give students more power and authority in my classroom. I incorporate student interests into my teaching. Even how I plan has changed. However, the biggest difference is my purpose.

I am purposely creating lessons centered around a core question. For example in a lesson with second graders we nursed a found creature with fur, fins and feathers to health. We had to decide “What should we do with the creature now that it is better?” Interestingly, students used rationale that they remembered from the Peter and the Wolf unit to justify what we should do with the creature. Students mentioned concerns they had about the creatures family, keeping the creature as a pet, or just letting the creature go. I no longer plan most of my lessons around activities, but rather a central question.

TAKING THOUGHTFUL NEW ACTION

Students were able to recall rationalizations from last years experience to justify their reasoning for what to do with the creature. They actually thought about different perspectives and how they would be effected in relation to their decision.

I share more power with students in my classroom. I allow them to work with me on deciding criteria for assignments. I give them a choice as to what they want to work on. I also implement their ideas as to what we should do next in the
drama. I found this engages the students more and allows them to feel ownership over their decisions. Plus, they want to work on a particular task because they made a choice and their own selection.

My planning has changed. I no longer have all my questions pre-thought out or my all my activities planned in a nice sequential order. I plan how I am going to attract the students attention, but after that I have a plan of possibilities. I allow the students to direct me. I have found they often have ideas that I had not thought of and often times make more sense.

I still need more experience with using the methodology. I haven’t yet given up planning some lessons using just curriculum drama. Because our arts program is centered on curriculum integration, I have to find a more comfortable marriage between using curriculum drama and inquiry. I need to continue working on focusing the drama on one particular question and keep that question driving the drama. I also need to continue working with the fact that I only have the students for forty-five minutes, once a week.

I think the biggest difference in my teaching is my purpose. I concentrate on my purpose for what and how I am teaching. Heathcote (1984) observes that all too often teachers are concerned with results, rather than the “how and why” of classroom practice. I continually ask myself; “How am I going to get my students engaged? How am I going to incorporate their interests? How much power should they have? Why am I selecting this text? Why should we investigate this question? Why is this important to the students?” I am much more aware of why I am doing what I am doing.

As I wrote in my story, I have taken that deep breath and am continuing my journey. I can see the top of the tower, though it is still a long way up. Perhaps, I will get to the top someday. However, the places this adventure has
taken me, I have a feeling that once I make it to the top, there will be another
tower to climb. That will be alright, because I will just take it one step at a time.

Sincerely,

Nikki Henry
LIST OF REFERENCES


