

HOW DOES CREATIVE DRAMA INSTRUCTION INCREASE THE READING ENGAGEMENT OF
EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES?

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DEDICATION

For my precious husband, Loy Kirkland, who believes in dreams.

Thank you for your endless sacrifices, love and
encouragement in making this
dream come true.

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The pursuit of knowledge is rarely if ever a solitary venture. I am forever indebted to my husband, Loy, who believes dreams are meant to be lived, and the dreams of the old are as worthy as the dreams of the young. A special thank you is extended to my daughter, Stacey, family, and friends who accepted my rigorous schedule while patiently awaiting the end.

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ABSTRACT

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Students with learning disabilities may experience difficulty engaging in literacy activities, as they risk being hindered by negative attitudes and doubt of their intellectual abilities, reduced effort, lower self-efficacy, and failure (Klassen, 2007; Litch & Kirstner, 1986; Oldfather, 2002; Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008). Motivating these adolescents to read critically from an engaged stance is an indispensable requirement of literacy instruction because adolescent readers face increasingly complex material, may risk aliteracy (Brinda, 2007), need to develop a positive reader identity to facilitate life-long reading (Strommen & Mates, 2004), and live in a world with increased literacy demands (Allington, 2001).

Hearing the adolescents' voices concerning reading engagement is of value (Brinda, 2007; Mizzelle, 1997; Oldfather, 2002) when addressing the literacy needs of these students. Once teachers can understand how their students feel about reading, they can help students to engage in successful learning (Vlach & Burcie, 2010).

This study explores if creative drama instruction increases reading engagement of eighth grade students with learning disabilities. Using narrative inquiry, I gathered, analyzed, and interpreted the stories told by the participants through observation, conversation, and interviews using descriptive questions to discover what the students say and do that reveal their experiences and observations of engaged readers, particularly when participating in creative drama activities. I also used student created artifacts, along with student reflections following each drama enactment. Researcher observations, the researcher's reflective journal, and audio and video recordings contributed to the data sources.

Themes clustered into the following categories: engaged readers are focused, interact with others, demonstrate their thinking, take an aesthetic stance, do not give up, desire to select good books, and abandon boring books. Data was portrayed using the participants' words, where possible, to capture the students' voices, personal meanings, and stories.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Influence of Jeffrey Wilhelm.....	2
Statement of the Problem	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Question.....	7
Rationale for the Study	7
Significance of the Study.....	10
Definitions.....	12
Summary	14
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	16
Reading Engagement	16
A Brief History of Reading Engagement	17

Definitions of Engaged Reading	19
Aspects of Reading	20
Theoretical Foundations of the Study	24
Reading Engagement Instruction for Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities.....	27
Overview: Traditional and Current Shift in Views of Learning Disabilities...	27
Results and Profile of the Student with Classified Learning Disabilities.....	30
The Middle School Classroom and the Student with Learning Disabilities...	33
The Need for Reading Engagement Instruction during the Middle School Years.....	35
Characteristics that Affect the Middle School Reading Experience.....	36
Detachment of reading instruction.....	36
Texts	37
Formal response	37
Student choice	39
Isolation	39
Real world interactions.....	40
Working Toward Engagement	42
Creative Drama	44
Contributing Theorists.....	44
Building upon Wilhelm’s Work.....	47
Drama as an Instructional Technique	49

Drama Within a Collaborative Community	52
The Adolescent Voices	54
Summary	55
III. METHODOLOGY	57
Overview and Research Approach	57
Design and Methodology	59
Setting	61
Role of the Researcher and Background of the Study	63
Participants	66
Instructional Procedures	72
Creative Drama Techniques	73
Data Sources	78
Interviews	79
Individual Student Reflective Questionnaires	79
Group Reflective Conversations	80
Recordings of the Creative Drama Enactments	80
Artifacts	80
Researcher Journal	81
Archival School Records	81
Data Collection	82
Interview Process	84
Student Reflective Questionnaires and Group Reflective Conversations ..	85

Recordings and Researcher Journal	85
Artifacts and Archival Records.....	86
Pilot Study with Seventh Graders.....	86
Data Analysis.....	89
Ethical and Political Considerations.....	93
Researcher Biography	94
Summary	96
IV. RESULTS	97
Pre-interviews: Adolescents Talk About Engaged Readers	98
Selecting Good Books.....	99
Abandoning Boring Books	101
Themes Overlapping with the Drama Enactments.....	103
Class Novel: <i>Touching Spirit Bear</i>	103
Engaged Readers are Focused.....	104
Living the Experience – An Aesthetic Stance.....	105
Interacting with Others.....	107
What Are You Thinking?	112
Making a Movie in My Head	113
Alter Ego: Inside the Character.....	114
The Crystal Ball	116
How’s the View?	116
Reflection.....	117

Don't Give Up!	119
Profile of Marcus.....	119
"Reading is not my thing:" Marcus's Initial Views on Engaged Reading	121
Marcus's View of Engaged Reading and the Drama Enactments.....	122
Summary	127
V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS	128
Statement of the Problem.....	128
Purpose of the Research	129
Research Question	129
Review of the Methodology	130
Summary and Discussion of Findings	131
Behavioral Engagement.....	133
Cognitive Engagement.....	135
Motivational Engagement	139
Social Engagement.....	140
Emotional Engagement.....	142
Conclusions.....	144
Implications for Future Practice	151
Implications for Future Research	153
Summary.....	155
REFERENCES	157
APPENDICES	

A. Pre- and Post-Interview Questions	186
B. Individual Reflective Drama Questionnaire	189
C. Group Reflective Conversation Questions	191
D. Data Analysis: An Example of Two Patterns That Developed From the Data	196

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Standardized Test Results	71
2. Approximate Timeline.....	83

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The learning difficulties of adolescents with learning disabilities often become more pronounced as academic demands increase, particularly when called upon to use higher-order thinking skills. These students may have difficulty maintaining positive attitudes, motivation, and persistence to meet academic expectations. When reading, they encounter tasks of greater complexity; grapple with comprehension of more abstract concepts and experience greater problem-solving demands. These factors can contribute to disengagement with reading. Classrooms that offer a variety of communication systems can facilitate engagement in learning and deepen understanding for adolescents who struggle with reading. One of those systems is creative drama that can be used to elicit higher-order thinking and problem-solving. Drama has the ability to bring curriculum to life in dynamic ways (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). According to Hoyt (1992, p. 580), "Even learners with special needs can bring life into the word on the page."

Creative drama offers a means for students with learning disabilities (LD) to be engaged readers. It puts the students into other people's shoes helping them to understand other points of view. Drama provides the means to understand self, others

and the world. Drama guides students in learning how to learn, how to be aware, and how to be critical through authentic engagement (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Genuine learning involves an interaction between the learner, the environment and the content (Smith & Herring, 2001). Less engaged readers approach reading passively, thinking that meaning is to be received instead of constructed. Active participatory experiences enhance motivation and concept attainment (Wilhelm, 2008).

Influence of Jeffrey Wilhelm

Working at a private school for students with learning disabilities, I had experienced both the joys and challenges of meeting the learning needs of my students. Being a reading/literature teacher, I had first-hand experience with students who struggled with the reading process. For some it was dyslexia, for others it was building comprehension, some were unable to relate to the characters or identify the theme of a story. The problems that seemed to interfere with the enjoyment of reading were as complex and varied as the students themselves. This led me to be vigilant in searching professional literature for ideas to support my students' learning, particularly some of my middle school level students who appeared disengaged or apathetic toward reading in general. For my disengaged students, I had little optimism that I could turn things around or support them in re-writing their reader identities if I could not help my reluctant learners to be more engaged. It was this search for answers that led me to enter a doctoral program.

Along the way, I encountered *You Gotta Be the Book* written by Jeffrey Wilhelm. Perusing the book, Wilhelm asked the very questions in which I was interested. “What experiences did they lack that might help them to develop a love of reading...? (5) What can be done in the classroom to help reluctant readers reconceive of reading as a creative and personally meaningful pursuit? (11) If teachers cannot help students to read better, with more purpose, better attitudes and greater power, then what good are we? (23)”

I was hooked! Wilhelm was speaking to my particular interests and concerns. While reading his book, I discovered Wilhelm’s dissertation was the basis of the book. Logically the next step was to read his dissertation titled, “Developing Readers: Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading in the Middle School.” Wilhelm was attempting to find what could be done in the classroom to help reluctant readers reconceive of reading as a creative and personally meaningful pursuit. He believed that drama and art could help to develop response and awareness of readerly activities in his less engaged readers. Drama and art had the capacity to engender involvement and a sense of ownership that are necessary for the less engaged readers (Wilhelm, 2008). I read and reflected upon Wilhelm’s discoveries and how this could relate to my own classroom.

Wilhelm made a point of encouraging teachers to become researchers who collaborate with their students and share a community of multi-voiced stories. This was

the impetus that served to confirm the direction I desired to take with my own research as I was embarking on writing my dissertation.

This study was grounded in the work of Jeffrey Wilhelm (1994) whose research provided the general framework for the study. Wilhelm recognizes resistance and lack of engagement as compelling issues and sought to discover how less engaged readers might be helped to reconceive of reading as a creative and personally meaningful pursuit. Wilhelm explores how drama and the visual arts in the language arts classroom could privilege ways of knowing that schools often ignore. He sees drama and art as engendering a sense of involvement and a sense of ownership as the reader constructs meaning and owns this meaning. Drama and art serve as the vehicle for less engaged readers to become engaged readers (Wilhelm, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The majority of classrooms have relied upon the traditional information driven approach for instruction. Teachers share the information with students being the passive receptacles of that information (Wilhelm, 2008). Allington (2001) proclaims that schools have done a better job of teaching the basic literacy skills, such as word recognition and literal comprehension, rather than teaching the higher-order thinking skills and strategies. One study (Pianta et al., 2007) found that schools are spending too much time on basic reading and math skills and not enough on problem-solving, reasoning, science, and social studies. Students spent over 90% of their class time

passively listening to the teacher and little time working together on significant problems, resulting in classrooms that were dull and uninspiring places. Is it any wonder that adolescents describe school as boring? Wilhelm (2008) noted in his research that the real reading lives of his students took place outside of school. They did not expect school reading to be enjoyable, engaging, or personally satisfying. The adolescents described reading as finding or answering questions.

Effective instruction in reading involves language combined with action in order that students may connect the abstract words of the text to the concrete world of reality. Sadly, the patterns in schools in the U.S. of recitation, questioning and discussion have served to reinforce unengaged readers' passivity and the attitude that meaning is to be received from the text rather than constructed (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Durkin (1979) studied elementary schools and Hillocks (1986) studied high schools, finding that most reading and literature instruction involved seatwork and recitation with the emphasis on breaking the code instead of creating meanings. The emphasis is on the mastery of skills moving from the small units of letters to bigger units such as words, phrases, and sentences. This bottom up approach has had the longest influence on basal readers and reading programs, continuing to dominate many classrooms, particularly the LD classroom.

Students with learning disabilities may experience difficulty engaging in literacy activities, as they risk being hindered by negative attitudes and doubt of their

intellectual abilities, reduced effort, lower self-efficacy, and failure (Klassen, 2007; Litch & Kirstner, 1986; Oldfather, 2002; Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008). Motivating these adolescents to read critically from an engaged stance is an indispensable requirement of literacy instruction because adolescent readers face increasingly complex material, may risk aliteracy (Brinda, 2007), need to develop a positive reader identity to facilitate life-long reading (Strommen & Mates, 2004), and they live in a world with increased literacy demands (Allington, 2001).

A marked decline in the interest of adolescents for reading in school, along with a commonly expressed theme of boredom and disengagement (Steinberg, 2005), makes hearing the adolescents' perspectives about reading engagement of value (Brinda, 2007; Mizzelle, 1997; Oldfather, 2002) when addressing the literacy needs of these students. Once teachers can understand how their students feel about reading, they can help students to engage in successful learning (Vlach & Burcie, 2010). When monotony and task completion characterize classroom instruction, students are less likely to engage intellectually (Schussler, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

As a reading/literature teacher and researcher in a private school for students with learning disabilities, I sought to interpret if using creative drama techniques in the literature classroom increased reading engagement.

Narrative inquiry with its power to elicit voice was used in this study to explore the participant stories about reading engagement. Reading questionnaires, interviews, observations of the talk and interactions with classmates/teacher were documented to provide data.

Research Question

The following research question that guided the study was interpretive in nature.

How does creative drama instruction increase the reading engagement of eighth grade students with learning disabilities?

Rationale for the Study

The world today is one of an information age that places higher-order literacy demands on all of us. It is necessary that schools support students in developing the ability to search and sort through information; to synthesize, analyze, summarize, and evaluate the information encountered (Allington, 2001). Allington (2001) claims we have done a better job of teaching basic literacy skills than the higher-order thinking skills. Reading and the teaching of reading can serve as the basis for developing these higher order thinking skills, yet the emphasis in most classrooms becomes the recall of facts rather than the development of thoughtful literacy.

The majority of students are unengaged; relegated to the role of passive listeners where they have become, according to Cusik (1973, p.222), “watchers, waiters, order-followers, and passive-receptacles for the depositing of disconnected bits of

information.” Researchers report that in the typical classroom the assigned tasks emphasize copying, remembering, and reciting, with few tasks assigned that engage students in thinking about what they’ve read. For students with LD where classrooms tend to emphasize mastery of skills and sub-skills, even less time is spent engaged in thoughtful literacy (Allington, 2001).

For many of the students with LD, reading is a passive exercise with students battling negative attitudes toward reading, expressing boredom, and doubting their intellectual abilities (Klassen, 2007; Litch & Kirstner, 1986; Oldfather, 2002; Steinberg, 2005; Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008). This further serves to reinforce a negative reader identity with students feeling they have nothing worthwhile to contribute to discussions with others.

My desire as a classroom teacher was for these students to engage in thoughtful literary discussions or book talks with others about what they are reading and learning with enthusiasm rather than holding the belief that reading is boring; it is answering questions, taking a test, receiving a grade.

Classroom drama, according to Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998), evokes engagement by supporting students to visualize what they are reading and learning, to create mental models, and to play out possibilities in a secure setting. Classroom drama activities can become the springboard for authentic engagement, asking questions, posing problems, finding information, creating and interpreting the elements for

developing thoughtful literacy. After all, the point of all reading, and of all learning activity, “is to change our understanding, and as a result, our ways of thinking and being in the world” (Wilhelm, 2002, p. 98).

One method of supporting engagement is by offering motivating activities that encourage reading and writing (Boyd, 2002; Ivey, 1999). Drama evokes genuine dialogue of the concepts and content of the curriculum whereby significant questions and answers are explored (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Engagement becomes an active process for the reluctant readers as they learn to envision reading as creative and personally meaningful (Wilhelm, 2008). Engaged students become productive participants, while at the same time, developing the higher-order critical thinking skills. Wilhelm (2008) cautions that the often used delivery of the information approach in the classroom can drain the life from a subject, undermine students’ abilities to apply what they learn to their lives, and fail to help the students increase their learning capabilities.

The method this study utilized to consider the student perspectives of reading engagement was narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry offers a method of getting at the lived experiences of the students through their personally constructed stories about events and experiences, bringing the adolescent voices to the forefront. It allows wondering, tentativeness, and alternative views to exist as part of the research. Interviews and conversations are grounded in a constructivist perspective where knowledge is co-constructed through social interactions and understandings. The

interviews and conversations served as the avenue for learning as the stories of the students were shaped. This approach lends itself well to the teacher/student relationship because narrative inquiry recognizes that the researcher and the researched in a study are in relationship with each other and that both the teacher and students will learn and change in the encounter (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006).

With the myriad of difficulties students with LD encounter in the school setting, it is hoped that the results of this study may be relevant to educators, both in regular and special education disciplines, researchers, and policy makers who are interested or have a stake in meeting the learning needs of this population of students, as well as, preparing these students for the more demanding academic years of high school, and perhaps, college.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study is significant because although we understand the importance of reading engagement, there is little research about what adolescents with learning disabilities say and do related to reading engagement as told through the voices of the students. This study sought to place the voices of the adolescents, in a unique setting at a private school for students with LD, at the forefront. By listening to the voices of the students, educators might create, develop, and implement the conditions that promote reading engagement.

Students with learning disabilities often face repeated academic failures causing them to disengage from learning or to take a passive stance. Maintaining a positive attitude, motivation, and persistence to meet learning expectations can be a challenge for these students (NJCLD, 2008). Research has shown that students with LD (1) have difficulty organizing information, (2) have limited background knowledge for academic activities, and (3) tend to approach learning tasks in ineffective and inefficient ways. Instruction for reading engagement not only supports improved learning, but reading engagement has the power to shape students' lives and identities in ways that go beyond the academics. Reading and the conversations about the reading contributes to the construction of self, and the construction of 'other' (Ferryhough, 2008; Hermann, 1995; Nettle & Liddle, 2008).

Many struggling readers do not know how to participate in entering the story world or how to build a mental model in the case of expository text. Effective instruction in reading involves language combined with action in order that students may connect the abstract words of the text to the concrete world of reality. Sadly, the patterns in schools in the U.S. of recitation, questioning and discussion have served to reinforce unengaged readers' passivity and the attitude that meaning is to be received from the text rather than constructed (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Another concern with instruction is the belief that reading has been taught in the elementary grades and explicit instruction is no longer needed at the middle school level. However, the reading

expectations are formidable in middle school, and for many of the students with LD, explicit instruction is necessary for success (Guthrie & Davis, 2003).

Creative drama can serve to meet many of these learning needs of students with LD. Drama educators O'Neill and Lambert (1982), Heathcote (1984), Edmiston (1993), and Wilhelm (1993, 2008) note that dramatic techniques allow readers to represent and critique both the personal and social meanings they experience when reading (Wolf & Enciso, 1994). Students are given opportunities to engage in a text world as a character while analyzing ways of talking, moving, and relating to others. This requires multiple decisions, perspectives, and interpretations as the text comes alive. Students benefit from connecting their conversation to a physical product, resulting in increased engagement when directing their own learning (Casey, 2009). Creative drama provides an avenue for students to produce the product through physical re-enactment. Participants do not merely accept information passively, but create meaning actively. A dialogic relationship evolves as the participants work together to discuss, dispute, challenge, and confirm one another's suggestions for text interpretation. Students discover reading is an active, strategic, and social process (Wolf & Enciso, 1994).

Definitions

Adolescent – An adolescence is a child in a series of transitions that involve the emergence of cognitive capacities for more abstract and advanced thought, acknowledged by various sources to be the years from 11-20 (Christenbury, Bomer, &

Smagorinsky, 2009). In the context of this study, the adolescent will refer to students in grade eight.

Aliteracy – A term used to describe a person who has the skills to read, but for a variety of reasons, chooses not to use them (Brinda, 2007).

Creative drama – Is an instructional approach to learning through role playing and problem-solving. Drama activities are used to express, explore, and elaborate story understandings and possibilities (Wilhelm, 2008). Drama in this context enables readers to enter a story while enacting individual and group interpretations (Wolf & Enciso, 1994).

Deficit view – This view sees students' lack of academic success as the result of uncontrollable deficits or abilities, rather than lack of effort (Klassen, 2007) or appropriate instruction (Clay, 1987).

Engagement – Engaged reading has been defined as those who are intrinsically motivated to read and read frequently (Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, 2000).

Engaged readers are mentally active, use metacognitive strategies to create meaning of texts, and are social in discussing what they are reading (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

Higher order thinking – Thinking that moves beyond basic literacy skills to be able to synthesize, analyze, summarize, and evaluate information (Allington, 2001).

Learning disability – Is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking,

reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span (A Report from the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2008).

Motivation – Reading motivation is the individual's personal beliefs, values, needs and goals (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Self-concept - Definitions include a greater emphasis on comparison with others, evaluation of affect, and past versus future orientation. It is a reflection of one's competence (Klassen, 2007).

Self-efficacy – Is the belief in one's abilities to carry out a desired course of action, and this belief influences the level of effort and persistence expended on a task (Klassen, 2007).

Sign systems – Creative drama extends beyond verbal language to include gesture, eye gaze, use of props, sets, and costumes (Wolf & Enciso, 1994).

Tableaux – Is the staging of single moments of a story where character and scene is revealed through eye gaze, stance, and frozen gesture, as well as the use of cut out figures, props and/or scenes from construction paper (Wolf & Enciso, 1994).

Summary

For many students entering middle school, interest in reading declines as motivation and engagement significantly decrease, replaced with negative attitudes and

resistance (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). However, the demands of academics increase, not to mention the demands of the informational age that requires higher literacy levels. Drama is an invaluable tool because it is one of the few techniques that can support every aspect of literacy development as it creates interest, motivation, and boosts self-concept (Smith & Herring, 2001). This study seeks to place the adolescents at the forefront while investigating the students' perceptions of how they view engaged readers, and the possibilities of creative drama as an instructional technique to support literacy learning for students with LD within the literature classroom.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore whether creative drama instruction increases reading engagement for eighth graders with learning disabilities. This chapter presents an analysis of related literature. The chapter is divided into the following five sections: reading engagement, theoretical foundations of the study, reading engagement instruction for middle school students with learning disabilities, creative drama, and the adolescent voices.

Reading Engagement

A Brief History provides a concise overview of some of the influences that have helped shape our understanding of reading engagement. This history is followed by the Definitions of Reading offering various definitions of reading engagement that illustrate the complexity of the usage and meaning of the term reading engagement. Next is the Aspects of Reading that considers the recurring themes related to engaged reading. Theoretical Foundations of the Study focuses on the theory that undergirds the development of creative drama as an instructional tool. The Instruction for Reading Engagement of Middle School Students with LD describes observations, challenges, and obstacles adolescents face in many middle school classrooms. Sub-sections address an overview of the traditional and current shift in views of learning disabilities; there is a

profile of the student with classified learning disabilities, and a look at the middle school classroom. The Creative Drama section provides insights into the contributors to dramatic literacy, how this study builds on Wilhelm's work, explains how drama is an instructional tool for increasing reading engagement in students with LD, and how drama occurs within a collaborative community. The Adolescent Voices section communicates the importance of hearing from the students as stakeholders in their learning. In closing, a summary is provided.

A Brief History of Reading Engagement

Influences on engagement are readily traced to the Era of Information Processing from 1976-1985. Cognitive psychology and information processing theory dominated reading (Anderson, 1977) with research on knowledge at the forefront of this era. Knowledge was thought to be modified with direct intervention training or explicit instruction. Strategies were emphasized as a method for improving cognitive abilities (Alexander & Fox, 2004). A major contributor to this era was Louise Rosenblatt (1938/1983), who would strongly influence Wilhelm's work on creative drama, with her views on transacting with the text from an efferent or aesthetic stance.

The years 1986-1995 marked the Era of Sociocultural Learning (Alexander & Fox, 2008). With the influence of Vygotsky's constructivist theory, learning shifted to a collaborative and sociocultural influence. Schools functioned as social institutions centered on the interactions of students and teachers where teachers assumed the role

of facilitator (Rogoff & Gauvain, 1986; Vygotsky, 1934/1986). Scaffolding was used by the teacher and gradually decreased as the students' knowledge and abilities increased (Brown & Palincsar, 1989), and students developed autonomy (Deci et. al., 1991). The idea of the teacher as the facilitator guiding the students toward autonomy as they worked independently or collaborated would play a significant role in the implementation of creative drama.

The Era of Engaged Learning 1996 to the present began to consider motivation as it pertained to readers' goals, interest, and involvement in the learning experience (Oldfather & Wigfield, 1996). Engaged readers during this era were thought to be motivated readers (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). A characteristic of motivational research during this era was the social cognitive perspective on student learning (Pintrich & Schunk, 2001). Students' knowledge, strategic abilities, sociocultural background, and learning context were all viewed as motivational factors that supported student engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Learners are more than passive receptacles of information when they are engaged (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Students are active, goal directed participants in the construction of knowledge (Alexander, 1997; Reed & Schallert, 1993; Reed, Schallert, & Goetz, 1993). This idea was a driving force behind creative drama techniques that sought to actively involve the learners in knowledge construction (Smith & Herring, 2001). The engaged reader has both an individual and collective dimension as

the reader seeks to create a personally meaningful body of knowledge but does so within a sociocultural context. Again, the influence in drama methods is apparent as students work either independently or collaboratively with partners or small groups to create dramatic enactments.

Ideas that reading must be cognitive, aesthetic, or sociocultural in nature are set aside. Rather, all of these forces are actively and interactively involved (Alexander & Jetton, 2000) in the complex and multidimensional process of reading. This brief historical retrospective provides a glimpse at some of the influences on reading engagement, how this influenced drama techniques, and, reveals the multifaceted complexity of the reading process.

Definitions of Engaged Reading

With reading being multifaceted, the result is variability of definitions of engaged reading depending on the specific reading attribute to be emphasized. Engaged reading has been defined as those who are intrinsically motivated to read, read frequently (Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, 2000), and strategically (Wigfield et al., 2008) for a variety of personal goals (Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, and Rice, 1996), and are capable of being socially interactive in discussing what they are reading (Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, & Rice, 1996; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Other aspects of engaged reading include on-task behavior (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), improved reading

achievement (Allington, 2001), self-confidence (Au, 1997), and taking responsibility for learning (Cambourne, 1995).

Aspects of Reading

Recurring themes related to a definition of engaged reading for this study centered on the behavioral, cognitive, motivational, social, and emotional, aspects of reading. A brief description of these elements follows.

Behavioral engagement, according to Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003), may be viewed as the active performance of academic tasks. Behavioral engagement involves observable behavior whereby the teacher can see students engaged in terms of their effort, working hard, instead of being easily distracted, not giving up when the work becomes more difficult rather than giving minimal effort, and asking for help when needed. Higher achieving students give good effort, are persistent with tasks, and ask for help when needed (Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004; Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Wilhelm, 1994).

It is more difficult to ascertain if a student is cognitively engaged because a student can appear behaviorally engaged but not be cognitively engaged, that is, the student can be thinking about something else even when looking at the teacher. Cognition is difficult to know because we cannot observe the internal process of a student's thinking. Language is one way to assess cognition (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2008). Students who paraphrase or summarize the material or organize it in some way often

display deeper learning. These strategies reflect an active learner who tries to do something cognitively with the content being learned (Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, & Rice, 1996). Cognition focuses on what students do when they read and the content that is expected to be learned by the reader. Cognition involves using prior knowledge, questioning, applying necessary reading strategies, and constructing meaning from text through interaction with the text (Afflerbach, 2004). As students engage with the material at a deeper level, they are more likely to understand it better (Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004). Cognitive engagement reflects the quality of students' effort in the task (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006).

According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) motivation is crucial to engagement because it guides cognition and activates behavior. It is likely that motivational processes are the foundation for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading. Becoming an active reader involves coordination of motivational processes with cognitive processes in reading. Less motivated readers spend less time reading, exert lower cognitive effort, and comprehend less than a more highly motivated reader. Motivation refers to the goals that students are striving to reach, the choices they select among several actions, and their persistence when difficulties are encountered in pursuing their goals (Bandura, 1997; Reed, Schallert, Beth, & Woodruff, 2004; & Schunk 1989, 1991). Two components of motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci, 1992; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Intrinsic motivation refers to the

students' enjoyment of reading activities that are performed for their own sake (Deci, 1992) and pursued during free time (Morrow, 1996). An intrinsically motivated activity has the potential to create excitement, interest, and enjoyment in participation of the activity and includes the desire to interact in the activity (Deci, 1992).

Extrinsic motivation for reading is the desire to receive external recognition, rewards, or incentives (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Extrinsic motivation is typically associated with the use of surface strategies for reading and the desire to complete a task rather than to understand or enjoy a text or task (Meece & Miller, 1999).

Researchers Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) consider motivational engagement to have three components. First is personal interest that reflects the students' intrinsic interest in the subject matter or task (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2008). Next is utility value which represents how useful the students believe the task is to them. Finally, students can have value beliefs about the importance of the content or task as it relates to their personal goals in life (Oldfather, 2002).

The social dimension recognizes the engaged reader has both individualistic and collective dimensions, attending not only to the motivations and knowledge of the individual, but also to the interactions with others inside and outside the classroom (Fresch, 2008). Within many classrooms, engaged readers are interacting with peers socially to construct meaning of texts (Almasi, 1995; Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006) and

participate in communities of discourse as a natural part of schooling (Gee, 1996; Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, & Rice, 1996). A supportive learning community helps facilitate students' engaged interactions and positive peer influences (Ivey & Johnston, 2011; Oldfather, 2002). Although the cognitive and social dimensions of engaged reading are distinguishable from the motivational dimension, engagement cannot occur without all three. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) propose that engaged readers in the classroom coordinate their strategies and knowledge (cognition) within a community of literacy (social) in order to fulfill their personal goals, desires, and intentions (motivation).

Emotional engagement describes enjoying academic tasks and expressing enthusiasm about learning (Fredricks, Blumenfield, and Paris, 2004). Long and Gove (2003) report the need for students to connect with texts emotionally by becoming avid and enthusiastic readers and writers. This emotional connection leads to sharing thoughts about what is read with others. One of the most important characteristics of emotional engagement is fostering positive attitudes to enhance a sense of belongingness and respect. This enables students to feel they are valued as individuals, they belong in the classroom, they are capable of doing challenging intellectual work, and their ideas are respected (Schussler, 2009).

Wilhelm's (2008) definition of engagement is "helping students to see that they have the capacity to read in powerful ways; it is about knowing how to construct

meaning with texts; it is about developing and using a wide and flexible repertoire of strategies that help the reader to engage with meanings and the authors who construct these” (p. 114). This study will lean upon Wilhelm’s definition as creative drama offers a broad range of strategies that may be implemented with flexibility according to the needs of the students. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the social aspect of engaged reading as the students participate in creative drama techniques to enhance literary understanding while engaging in collaborative, as well as, reflective discussions with classmates/teacher concerning reading engagement.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Creative drama as a learning technique builds on a constructivist approach to learning. Constructivism is a theory of learning that emphasizes the active construction of knowledge by individuals (Woolfolk, 1999). Learning occurs when students integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge. In this theoretical perspective, the integration of new knowledge with existing knowledge and prior experiences can only occur when the learner is actively engaged in the learning process (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

Rosenblatt (1978) develops Transactional/Reader Response Theory from constructivism. She stated that every reading experience is unique to the individual because each individual has unique background schema (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Transactional Theory focuses less on the literature itself and more on what students experience in the process or what Rosenblatt (1978) called the students’ transaction

with literature. Rosenblatt's theory states that readers do not just retrieve an author's meaning, but they create their own meanings guided by the author's text and informed by their own understandings at the time (Fresch, 2008). In other words, reading is a transaction in which the reader and the text converse together in a particular situation to make meaning. The readers make meaning with the text, instead of solely on their own. Rosenblatt calls this reader interaction with the text the "poem," and it is unique to each reader and reading (Wilhelm, 2008).

Rosenblatt draws a distinction of two kinds of responses that all readers have with texts. These are known as "efferent responses" and "aesthetic responses" (Tracey & Morrow, 2008). Efferent reading is a stance adopted by the reader when concerned with reading for facts or information. The aesthetic stance is maintained for the purpose of living through an experience that is enjoyed while reading (Rosenblatt, 1978). It is subjective and personal (Tracey & Morrow, 2008). Readers who assume the aesthetic stance connect emotionally with the story they are reading to become as one with it. According to Langer (1995), they are envisioning "text worlds in the mind" (Langer, 1995, p. 131).

The reader is free to choose either the predominant stance of efferent or aesthetic response toward any text. The efferent and aesthetic apply both to the writer's and the reader's selective attitude toward the reading event. Rosenblatt rejects the binary either-or tendency and recognizes that both of these aspects of meaning are

present in different proportions in any linguistic event, making one of the most important steps in any reading event the selection of either a predominantly efferent or a predominantly aesthetic stance toward the transaction with a text. For this study, I desired students to learn to see reading as more than finding answers to questions or knowing necessary information to pass a test, I wanted them to learn to adopt an aesthetic stance and connect with feelings, ideas, personalities, tensions, and conflicts when entering the text world (Rosenblatt, 2004).

Readers will move along a continuum as they read and may shift between the two stances. Rosenblatt suggests that students must be able to notice their reactions to the text, which also means teachers should encourage students to give careful thought to what they see, feel, think and remember as they read, encouraging them to attend to their own experience of the text (Probst, 1988). Rosenblatt addresses the issue of building meaning when she asserts that a valid reading requires that (1) the interpretation is not contradicted by any element of the text, and (2) that nothing is projected for which there is no verbal basis (Rosenblatt, 1978). Although understanding is uniquely situated in the individual, interpretive reading also implies an ability to shift roles and take on the perspective of others (Wolf & Enciso, 1994).

Another theory that supports creative drama is the social learning perspective which emphasizes the role of social interaction in the development of knowledge and learning. When applied to reading, the emphasis is on the importance of social

interaction to literacy learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2008). Learning is an active, constructive process of playing with ideas and concepts where the learner and others create social contexts or zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's work illustrates how working together can move us through our zones of individual proximal development when he argues that children can do with help from others what they cannot yet do alone. This is the nature of literacy.

Reading Engagement Instruction for Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities

Before considering the instructional needs of the student with learning disabilities, the two predominant views of learning disabilities will be addressed as these views have had a decided affect upon instructional approaches utilized in classrooms.

Overview: Traditional and Current Shift in Views of Learning Disabilities

In the recent past, as evident in the special education literature (Heward, 2006), instruction of students with learning disabilities over-emphasized the remediation of basic skill deficits such as decoding or comprehension strategies to the exclusion of any creative or cognitively complex activities, often at the expense of students having opportunities to express themselves or learn problem-solving skills.

Learning disabilities as represented in the special education literature are associated with problems in listening, reasoning, memory, attention, selecting and focusing on relevant stimuli, and the perception and processing of visual and/or auditory information. These perceptual and cognitive processing difficulties are

assumed to be the underlying reason why students with learning disabilities experience one or more of the following characteristics: reading problems, memory problems, deficits in written language, underachievement in math, poor social skills, attention deficits and hyperactivity, and behavioral problems (Heward, 2006; Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996).

Even today there is no universal agreement among physicians, psychologists, or educators on how to classify and diagnose the range of problems that fall under the umbrella term of learning disability (Lyons, 2003). The one thing held in common with the various definitions is that students have something wrong with them that may be organic in nature. While in most cases, the cause of a child's learning disability is unknown four suspected causal factors identified in the special education literature are brain damage, heredity, biochemical imbalance, and environmental causes (Heward, 2006).

Difficulty with reading is the most common characteristic of students with learning disabilities (Moats & Lyon, 1993) with it estimated that 90% of all children identified as learning disabled are referred for special education services because of reading problems. Children who fail to learn to read by the end of first grade tend to fall farther and farther behind their peers, not only in reading, but in general academics as well (Heward, 2006). The longer students struggle, the more compounded the reading problem becomes (Johnston & Allington, 1991; Snow, Burn, & Griffin 1998). Longitudinal

studies have found that 74% of students who are diagnosed as learning disabled because of reading problems remain classified as disabled in ninth grade (Fletcher et al., 1994; Stanovich & Siegel, 1994).

The second view of learning disabilities centers on instruction. Clay (1987) cautions that struggling readers build a system of inefficient responses when reading, and the longer the student is in an inappropriate program and practices inefficient responses the more inclined the student is “learning to be learning disabled” (p. 160). Students adjust to the demands of a program for learning, and different programs bias students’ response patterns in different ways. Every program is not going to be successful for every student. The longer students remain in a program that is not meeting the students’ needs the more the students will have practiced an inappropriate response system. Clay purports such children are learning to be LD as long as the inappropriate responding continues, and teachers run the risk of teaching the child to be learning disabled when they design their lessons from disability models where the students are likely to learn many items and responses relevant to reading but are unable to make application of the learning to the reading process. In Clay’s view, the term learning disability can only be used as a “sophisticated term” for underachievement.

The field has begun to shift the instructional focus from a remediation-only mode to an approach designed to give students with LD meaningful opportunities for success with the broader curriculum (Heward, 2006). Instruction needs to have the

potential for changing readers with LD into eager, active readers. Readers will consider information in a text in light of the knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs that they bring to the text. These reader-text transactions (Rosenblatt, 1978) are central to the reading experiences

Results and Profile of the Student with Classified Learning Disabilities

Regardless of the view, for the students with learning disabilities, engagement is critical to learning. As these students approach middle school, the difference between what students with learning disabilities “are expected to do and what they can do autonomously....grows larger and larger over time” (Deshler, Schumaker, & Lenz, 2001, p. 97). The performance gap becomes especially noticeable in the middle and secondary grades, when the academic growth of many students with disabilities plateaus (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003).

Students with LD have a tendency to experience low self-efficacy related to academics, convincing themselves that they lack the needed abilities for success where trying seems useless and success impossible because of their lack of ability (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Students with LD generally attribute their failure to internal causes such as ability and effort and their success to external causes such as luck and chance (Bryan, 1986; Cooley & Ayres, 1988; Pearl, 1982, 1992; McInerney, 1999; Rogers & Saklofske, 1985). Students’ “self-talk” says, it does not matter how hard I try because the outcome will not change or get better. Students often procrastinate and deliberately avoid giving

effort to tasks in order to protect their self-image. If they fail, they can attribute their poor outcome to a lack of effort rather than to the lack of intellectual ability (Midgley & Urban, 1995). Their concern is often more for how they are viewed by others rather than concern for increasing literacy skills. This often results in the adolescents being less willing to form positive relationships in school, leaving them socially marginalized and feeling disrespected (Anderman, 1999).

Another issue that can be problematic is that of learned helplessness when students believe that no matter what they do, how hard they study, or how hard they try, they will not be able to learn or do well in school. Simply put, they do not see any connection between their behavior and learning outcomes. This pattern leads to low self-efficacy, as well as, low outcome expectations (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Students who are high in learned helplessness are much less likely to persist at tasks, resulting in poor performance and outcome (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Students with LD tend to read slowly, laboriously expending great effort resulting in less developed reading vocabularies. They read less fluently, and comprehend less of what they read (Roberts et. al., 2008) compared to successful older readers who may read orally from 120 to 170 words correctly per minute depending on the text (Tindal, Hasbrouk, & Jones, 2005). In addition to laborious reading, assignments that can be frustrating or anxiety producing may lead to off-task behavior, task avoidance, careless responses, or distractibility (Margolis & McCabe, 2004). Generally,

adolescents with LD hold negative attitudes toward reading, regarding reading as the finding of meaning in the text or accepting another's interpretation of meaning. Reading is thought of as being able to answer the questions at the end of a story (Wilhelm, 2008).

Less engaged readers show lower motivation and use fewer strategies for comprehending text (Wigfield et al., 2008). Disengaged readers are inactive, avoiding reading and minimizing effort. Evidence is strong that by the time students reach the middle grades, many have developed negative attitudes toward voluntary reading in general (Anderson, Tollefson, & Gilbert, 1985; Cline & Kretke, 1980). Students become passive readers when they confront texts with an unwillingness to actively engage in creating meaning, monitoring what does and does not make sense, and shut down when the process becomes difficult (Rosenblatt, 1978).

An important topic to consider today is the influence of brain research. Understanding neuroscience can help improve educational practice, especially the recent discoveries about how the brain is organized and functions. Research has debunked three previously held beliefs and challenged thinking about the learning process. The long-held belief that the brain is hardwired at birth and remains that way until old age is inaccurate. Recent research has shown that the brain is remarkably plastic. The idea that neurons cannot regenerate is also inaccurate. Researchers investigating the thinking and memory systems of aging adults (McKhann & Albert,

2002) proved that the adult brain contains cells capable of dividing and becoming healthy new neurons. Finally, discoveries in neuroscience reveal that earlier studies were based on faulty assumptions about how individuals learn because properties of the brain as a whole working system cannot be recognized or understood when only parts of the brain are examined (Ratey, 2001).

From a personal perspective, I am continuing to sort out my philosophy regarding learning disabilities. Like Lyon (2003) I think there may be a blending of science and the art of teaching that we are only beginning to understand. Brain research in the coming years will likely impact teaching and how to improve instruction for those students who struggle to read. The most important factor of which to be cognizant is that these students should receive the best instruction possible. Allington (2001) acknowledges that it will be teachers who make the difference in students' lives. The focus of change has to be on supporting teachers in their efforts to become more expert so that they can teach as expertly as they know how.

The Middle School Classroom and the Student with Learning Disabilities

Often educators struggle to engage middle school students in learning. Learning and succeeding in school require active engagement, a term used to describe the degree to which students are psychologically and emotionally connected to what is happening in their classrooms (Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004).

The majority of classrooms have relied upon the traditional information driven approach. Teachers share the information with students being the passive receptacles of that information (Wilhelm, 2007). Allington (2001) notes that schools have done a better job of teaching the basic literacy skills, such as word recognition and literal comprehension, rather than teaching the higher-order thinking skills and strategies. A study by Pianta and associates (2007) found that schools are spending too much time on basic reading and math skills and not enough on problem-solving, reasoning, science, and social studies. Students spent over 90% of their class time passively listening to the teacher and little time working together on significant problems, resulting in classrooms that were dull and uninspiring places. This can become particularly problematic for the students with LD as engagement will support improved learning (Fernyhough, 2008; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Nettle & Liddle, 2008).

Research reports that the trend for middle school students is a decline in intrinsic motivation for reading when compared to elementary school students. Intrinsic motivation is defined here as students reading out of curiosity, pursuing their interests, demonstrating an ability to read independently for understanding, completing assignments and meeting the teachers' expectations (Allington, 2001; Ivey & Johnston, 2011).

The Need for Reading Engagement Instruction during the Middle School Years

Discovering ways to enhance reading engagement is a critical component of middle school literacy instruction, particularly as these students face increasingly difficult reading material and classroom environments that tend to deemphasize the importance of fostering motivation to read (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). It is necessary for teachers to attempt to optimize students' reading engagement in the classroom with the expectation that this engagement will enhance comprehension and achievement (Wigfield, et. al., 2008), while enabling the students to experience success and possibly attain a positive reader identity.

Teachers need to provide opportunities to succeed and consider a curriculum that is student-driven rather than curriculum-driven. Students who disengage often feel as though success is out of their reach; it is meant for those who are smart or lucky. To engage these students, teachers must help them to feel like they belong in the classroom and achievement is possible because they will have the needed support to experience success (Schussler, 2009). Students who experience failures in school literacy are likely the students who struggle to see the value of literacy in their everyday lives (Knobel, 2001), but reading engagement has the potential to contribute powerfully to adolescent development (Ivey & Johnson, 2011).

Helping students develop dispositions for engaging in challenging tasks, to focus, and give effort, requires support from the teacher. Some students who struggle with

reading view it as a magical process in which comprehension just happens for successful readers (Greenleaf et al., 2001). These students need to develop a sense of agency in their reading. Support for students to develop dispositions toward engagement in reading means helping them to sustain interest and to participate in meaningful discussions.

Characteristics that Affect the Middle School Reading Experience

Guthrie and Davis (2003) in their study of motivating struggling readers in middle school through an engagement model have identified six characteristics that affect the reading experience when making the transition from elementary to middle school. These are (1) detachment of reading instruction from content, (2) formidable texts and textbook structures, (3) formal, non-personal response expectations, (4) diminished student choice, (5) isolation of students from teachers, and (6) minimal linkage of real-world interaction with reading. A brief explanation of the six dimensions follows.

Detachment of reading instruction. Detachment of reading instruction from content is the belief that reading has been taught in the elementary grades and explicit instruction is no longer needed at the middle school level. However, the reading expectations are formidable in middle school (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). As a result of this detachment of reading instruction, students view themselves as less competent when it comes to reading tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) have shown students

need both support and explicit instruction in order to gain motivation and put forth effort in reading.

Texts. Next to consider is texts. Allington (2001) reports that many students are confronted daily with texts that are too complex, yet the students are given less support with the texts. He discovered only 1 in 18 elementary science and social studies books examined had readability levels at the grade level intended. Most were one to two grade levels above, and it was even worse for students with LD who struggled with reading. Textbooks used in grades K-12 have been described as offering a curriculum plan that is a mile wide and an inch deep, claiming these textbooks neither educate nor engage students (Allington, 2001). Guthrie and Davis (2003) report that while middle school texts are forbidding to struggling readers, rarely are students provided a diversity of materials that would enable them to learn content through texts matched to their reading ability.

Formal response. Another concern is the formal, non-personal response expectations with texts that relates to how we engage in discussions of the reading. Students are expected to answer high-level questions on the reading content. Researchers (Allington et al. 1996; Dahl & Freppon, 1995; Goodlad 1983; Johnston et al., 1999; Pressley et al., 2000) report that in the typical classroom the assigned tasks emphasize copying, remembering, and reciting with few tasks assigned that engage students in thinking about what they have read. Students do not view the material as

personally relevant or connected to their lives in any worthwhile way. It has been observed that in many reading classrooms real world interactions are not connected to the reading instruction (Allington, 2001). One recommendation is the use of trade books in place of textbooks. Also, students need to be given time to learn background knowledge and opportunities to discuss the text from different viewpoints (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Conversations about texts outside of school center on how well the text informs, engages, or entertains the reader. In school, conversations center on asking and answering questions about what was in the text, while confusing remembering with understanding. The focus is on copying, remembering, and the recitation of facts rather than thoughtful discussion of the reading. This emphasis on remembering may actually hinder students' understanding and the development of thoughtful literacy abilities (Allington, 2001).

Allington (2001) asserts that classrooms that emphasize thoughtful literacy work have students who are more skilled with peer collaboration, take more personal responsibility for their work, and demonstrate higher levels of engagement in academic work. Shared collaboration can help students feel they have something important to share with others. Students find themselves in conversations with people they would otherwise not have considered talking with and find themselves engaged. Growing in understanding of others opens new relationships and builds trust (Ivey & Johnston, 2011).

Student choice. Diminished student choice can be an issue in middle school classrooms. Allington (2001) argues that middle school classrooms are more teacher directed than student centered, resulting in reduced student choice. However, the students need choice to increase engagement with reading tasks. Struggling readers need choice to support their engagement with literacy activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A fundamental principle in the development of reading engagement is support for students' autonomy and decision making. This does not mean giving students' total freedom; rather choice refers to enabling students to have some control over their learning (Guthrie & Davis, 2003).

Isolation. An additional problem is the isolation of students from teachers (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Middle school teachers typically teach a large number of students in each class, resulting in less opportunity for the teacher to establish a personal relationship with the students (Allington, 2001).

One of the most important factors in determining the engagement of students is teachers' attitudes. When teachers have an attitude of genuine interest in their students, the students notice. This involves more than just knowing the content, but thinking about knowing the students as individuals (Schussler, 2006). Because middle school classrooms may have large numbers of students, teachers may have limited information about students' backgrounds, needs, or interests, resulting in teachers knowing little about the students. This may cause students to feel that the teachers are

not caring (Anderman, 1999). Creating a caring literacy environment is what the struggling students need most (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Real world interactions. Finally Guthrie and Davis (2003) acknowledge the importance of real-world interactions. Middle school instruction is often textbook centered with abstract concepts (McCombs & Pope, 1994). Real-world interactions are needed and may include such reading activities as discussing books, magazines, or song lyrics in the popular culture (Avermann & Hagood, 2000). It is rare that real-world interactions are closely connected to reading instruction (Guthrie & Davis, 2003).

This lack of real-world interactions may cause many struggling readers not to know how to participate in entering the story world or how to build a mental model in the case of expository text. Effective instruction in reading involves language combined with action in order that students may connect the abstract words of the text to the concrete world of reality. Sadly, the patterns in schools in the U.S. of recitation, questioning and discussion have served to reinforce unengaged readers' passivity and the attitude that meaning is to be received from the text rather than constructed (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Durkin (1979) studied elementary schools and Hillocks (1987) studied high schools, finding that most reading and literature instruction involved seatwork and recitation with the emphasis on breaking the code instead of creating meanings. The emphasis is on the mastery of skills moving from the small units of letters to bigger units such as words, phrases, and sentences. This bottom up approach has

had the longest influence on basal readers and reading programs, continuing to dominate many classrooms, particularly the LD classroom (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

Research has shown that students with LD (1) have difficulty organizing information on their own, (2) bring limited stores of background knowledge to academic activities, and (3) often do not approach learning tasks in effective and efficient ways. Thus, best practice for students with LD, as well as struggling readers, is characterized by explicit instruction, content enhancements, and learning strategies (Gersten, 1998; Hock et al., 1999; Swanson, 2001). Not only does instruction for reading engagement support improved learning, but reading engagement has the power to shape students' lives in ways that go beyond the academics. Reading and the conversations about the reading contributes to the construction of self, including the ability for social imagination and the construction of 'other' (Fernyhough, 2008; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Nettle & Liddle, 2008).

Educators struggle to engage middle school students in learning. Learning and succeeding in school require active engagement, a term used to describe the degree to which students are psychologically and emotionally connected to what is happening in their classrooms (Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004). Data from a number studies suggest that students are generally bored and disengaged in school (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, 2006; Intrator, 2003; Pope,

2001). Students are less likely to engage intellectually when monotony and task completion are the focus of classroom instruction (Schussler, 2009).

Working Toward Engagement

The important question for the classroom teacher is - How can we engage students so that they feel a sense of belongingness, that they have worthwhile contributions to make, while being supported to develop the skills and knowledge that they need? A multiliteracies pedagogic framework offers a means for accomplishing these goals (Ryan, 2008). Multiliteracies is described as a different way of learning or coming to know “in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes” (Cope & Kalantzis 2000, p. 5). These various modes that learners access include: linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial with combinations of these as well (Ryan, 2008).

Genuine learning involves an interaction among the learner, the environment, and the content. This interaction takes what we experience and gives it meaning. This enables students to learn new knowledge and also enables them to understand more deeply what they already know (Smith & Herring, 2001).

When applying this to reading engagement, it refers to the intense involvement the reader experiences as they visualize, move through, and sometimes become a part of the story world (Wolf & Enciso, 1994). Instruction needs to have the potential for

changing readers (Rosenblatt, 1978) with LD into eager, active readers. The challenge is finding ways for the readers to enter the story and make connections with characters, setting, and their own sense of self. Reading engagement requires readers to take up the lives of the characters in those texts (Rosenblatt, 1983). Rosenblatt (1983) describes engagement as not simply with the text but with the imagined mental and relational lives of others. Literary theorists (Benton, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1991) consider the reader's imaginative creation of the story world of the text to be essential as it serves as the foundation for any further discussion. Readers will consider information in a text in light of the knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs that they bring to the text. These reader-text transactions (Rosenblatt, 1978) are the cornerstone of reading experiences.

What is it that motivates students to create meaning from text in active rather than passive ways? According to Robinson (2005) we choose to actively and thoughtfully construct meaning because we experience reading as an act that empowers us. This sense of empowerment affords readers the right and the responsibility to ask questions, to make connections, to create images, and to make predictions. As students read both narrative and expository texts, they can find themselves exploring personal and world issues in meaningful ways. The reading experience can be an empowering experience for the engaged reader (Robinson, 2005). Engagement portrays readers as active and willful participants in their learning, rather than as passive receptacles of information (Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, & Rice, 1996).

With studies confirming that few middle school students choose to read on their own (Strommen & Mates, 2004), they could benefit from meaningful, motivational contexts for reading instruction because of their tendency to read less frequently as they enter the teen years (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000).

Creative Drama

Creative drama is an instructional method that can serve as a vehicle for letting the less engaged readers become more engaged. Drama supports the reluctant readers to see reading as a creative and a personally meaningful pursuit (Wilhelm, 2008). Students develop an awareness of their own knowledge and competencies. They become active in the learning process not just cognitively but socially and kinesthetically (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

Contributing Theorists

Creative drama is supported by a variety of research in language, literacy, learning, and cognition throughout various content areas (Barnes, 1986; Knapp, Stearns, John, & Zucker, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978; & Wade, 1983). Creative drama enactments utilized in this study are based on the drama structures described by drama educators Heathcote (1984), Bolton (1995), O'Neill and Lambert (1987), Edmiston, (1991, 1998), Enciso (1994, 1996), Wilhelm (1994), and Smith and Herring (2001) but will lean most heavily on the work of Wilhelm.

Heathcote (1995) is recognized as an innovator with a major influence in developing drama for educational purposes. Her method named the “mantle of the expert” challenged fundamental ideas about education, teacher responsibility, and of dramatic art. She believed theater could serve as an incentive for effective learning across the entire curriculum. Mantle of the expert requires the teacher and students to take on a role of someone who is an expert in running something, completing short-term tasks that are initiated by the teacher, where students work in small groups, the teacher’s role is dependent on the students’ roles for guidance in tasks to be done, and the teacher strives to raise the students’ awareness and responsibility. Working from the stance of an expert enables students to engage, and this is what learning is about (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Heathcote advocates selecting scenes or details from stories to create dramatic encounters that require entering the story, elaborating on it, taking different perspectives, and challenging the students’ own ways of thinking (Heathcote, 1984, 1990).

O’Neill and Lambert (1987) view drama in education as a mode of learning where students take on imagined roles and situations so they can learn to explore issues, events, and relationships. The most significant kind of learning from the drama experience is a growth in the students’ understanding about human behavior, themselves, and the world in which they live. The primary aim of the drama experience

is to grow in understanding which involves changes in ways of thinking and feeling (O'Neill & Lambert, 1987).

Edmiston (1991, 1998) studied with Heathcote and collaborated with O'Neill. He believes curriculum has meaning which is co-created by teachers and students within the classroom. Working with Wilhelm, Edmiston shows teachers how drama could create an integrated curriculum and transform study of a specific curricular area.

For Enciso (1994, 1996) the process is the product. Drama weaves the mind and emotion together within the experience and action of specific situations. This is the place of active learning. The process becomes the focus of the learning experience.

Smith and Herring (2001) define drama as a means of learning through role playing and problem solving. They believe drama is a learning process that eliminates students' passivity and fosters both individual and cooperative learning. Students are able to demonstrate what they know through the dramatic process that requires students to perform, write, discuss, listen, problem-solve, think critically, reflect on thinking, interact with others, create, build relationships, have fun, yet be powerfully engaged with the content under study. Drama as a learning tool for students calls for self-awareness, communication skills, concentration, and group cooperation. The teacher must understand how to create dramatic action, how to facilitate student participation within the dramatic actions, and how to discuss and evaluate the dramatic action created.

Building upon Wilhelm's Work

This study is grounded in the work of Jeffrey Wilhelm (1994) whose research provides the general framework for the study. Wilhelm questions why many students dislike reading and recognizes resistance and lack of engagement as compelling issues. He sought to discover how less engaged readers might be helped to reconceive of reading as a creative and personally meaningful pursuit. Wilhelm explores how drama and the visual arts in the language arts classroom could privilege ways of knowing that schools often ignore. He sees drama and art as engendering a sense of involvement and a sense of ownership as the reader constructs meaning and owns this meaning. Drama and art serve as the vehicle for less engaged readers to become engaged readers. He enlists his students as co-investigators and challenges the role of the teacher as the sole classroom authority (Wilhelm, 2008).

Wilhelm's initial research (1994) consisted of nine participants in three separate studies. The first study involved three highly engaged seventh grade readers. The second and third studies, with three participants in each, focuses on reluctant and unengaged readers who use drama and art to help develop a wider repertoire of response strategies.

The highly engaged readers in the first study reveal the following characteristics: they enter the story world, visualize settings and characters, relate to characters, connect events from the story to their own lives, fill in textual gaps, elaborate on events,

recognize textual conventions, reflect on significances, consider the roles of the reader and the writer, and evaluate the author's work and ideology.

By observing what highly engaged readers do when reading, Wilhelm (2008) identifies three dimensions of reader response that convey reading engagement: evocative, connective, and reflective. The evocative dimension is the ability to enter the story world, show interest in the story, relate to the characters, and visualize the story world. The connective dimension relates to being able to elaborate on the story world and to connect literature to life. The reflective dimension considers the significance of the text, recognizing literary conventions, recognizing reading as a transaction, and evaluating an author and self as the readers.

Wilhelm's evocative dimension parallels the idea of the active learner who tries to do something cognitively with the material being learned or engaging with intentionality to better comprehend what is read. This relates to the work of Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) who view the active performance of academic tasks as behavioral engagement that involves observable behavior such as effort and attention. The connective dimension Wilhelm describes fits both with cognitive and motivational aspects where students need to organize the material to display deeper learning and interest in the subject matter in order for students to be able to make personal connections to the reading. Finally, the reflective dimension of significance and evaluation is related to the motivational aspect as students transact with the text and

display a willingness to consider the importance of the material. This may also relate to the behavioral and cognitive dimensions as students give quality, concerted effort while striving for a critical understanding.

Wilhelm's data indicates that story drama helps reluctant readers expand their repertoire of response strategies and to reconceive of the act of reading. The studies imply that reluctant readers do not know how to engage with texts, but drama and art support students to think of reading as a productive activity instead of as a passive reception of meaning (Wilhelm, 1994).

Drama as an Instructional Technique

Drama is one of the most powerful discoveries and techniques at a teacher's disposal for helping students to become more accomplished readers and learners. Reading is the foundation of school success and the basis of most cognitive development and thought in our culture. If students don't learn to read well, they will be severely disadvantaged both in school and in life. Many students do not read because they do not understand the connection between the text that is made up of abstract verbal symbols called words, and everyday objects, concepts and systems (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

According to Smith and Herring (2001) genuine learning involves an interaction among the learner, the environment, and the content. This interaction integrates what we experience into our system of meanings. Piaget points out that physical activity can

become the groundwork for abstract mental concepts as it enables students to learn new knowledge and also enables them to understand more deeply what they already know. Despite the benefits of physical activity, extended dramatization is still a relatively rare event in most middle level classrooms.

Drama is essentially social and leads to communication and negotiation of meaning. It encourages inquiry, critical, constructive thought, problem-solving, skills of comparison, interpretation, judgment and discrimination, and extended learning and research (O'Neill & Lambert, 1982), making students better thinkers. We tend to limit our students to only a few forms of expression to learn content or to demonstrate their grasp of the content. Drama serves as a multi-modal instruction meeting a variety of student needs (Smith & Herring, 2001).

Drama is a way of learning through role playing and problem-solving as it enables learners to experience the concepts under study. It provides learners with the opportunity to make choices, become actively engaged in learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate, and evaluate the learning process. Using drama as a mode of learning builds on one of the oldest form of communication – physical and oral interpretation.

Drama is a powerful instructional tool where self-perception, interaction with others, movement, and language become the means to engage while experiencing, reflecting, and responding to the concepts under study. It is a creative way of using the

entire body to receive and transmit information, while working in collaboration to create a total picture (Smith & Herring, 2001). Drama is not theater; rather it is creating meaning together and creating visible mental models of understanding in imaginative contexts and situations. It is not about performance, but about exploration. Drama makes students better thinkers as it supports a deeper learning experience. Drama provides the means to live the story as a way to learn (Smith & Herring, 2001). It makes learning visible, releases the imagination, and creates opportunities for learning unlike any other medium (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

Wilhelm (2008) asserts less engaged readers' approach to reading is passive; the text itself is regarded as expressing meaning to be received instead of constructed. Active participatory experiences enhance motivation and concept attainment. It is successful with all students from the resistant and reluctant to those who are highly accomplished students. Drama is active, short, scriptless, can be performed internally or externally, and is always purposefully framed. Participants are always accountable for doing and creating something specific within the context of the drama strategy, something they could write about, reflect on, or share. Drama can naturally engender involvement and a sense of ownership which needs to be developed in the disengaged readers.

Drama Within a Collaborative Community

Learning occurs most efficiently within a supportive, collaborative community. Students are required to question, negotiate compromise, take responsibility, cooperate, and collaborate. They develop an awareness of their own knowledge and competencies. They are active in the learning process, not just cognitively but socially and kinesthetically (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). All learners benefit from instruction built on social interaction. Social interactions are a fundamental aspect of drama as it requires students to think, talk, manipulate concrete materials, and share viewpoints in order to arrive at decisions (Smith & Herring, 2001).

This approach challenges some basic ideas about the nature of teaching as the students are empowered. Drama is about making significant meaning and operates best when a whole class shares that meaning making. The teacher's responsibility is to empower the students, and the most useful way of doing this is for the teacher to play a facilitating role. One teacher lamented, "I don't really teach kids how to read. I assign, I spout facts, I share my interpretations, and I grade," (Wilhelm, April, 1988, Journal). Drama guides students in learning how to learn, how to be aware, and how to be critical through authentic engagement (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). As Freire (2005) writes, learners are motivated and empowered by the knowledge that they are learners

Teacher/student interaction is crucial in drama. Even though students will often work in small groups, it is in the teachers' interactions with students where ideas are

most likely to be clarified, shaped, extended and revised. Heathcote pioneered this practice whereby the teacher structures the work from within the drama world by participating alongside the students. Working alongside the students, in role, raised both the status and stature of the students – they were continually treated with respect as knowledgeable, responsible people helping the students move from passive to active readers when entering the story world (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Heathcote's innovations in the use of drama challenged assumptions about the fundamental nature of knowledge, of education, of teacher responsibility, and of dramatic art (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

Heathcote (1984) believes that within the drama, the students confront situations that may change them because of what they discover while considering issues or problems. It puts the students into other people's shoes helping them to understand other points of view. Drama provides the means to understand self, others, and the world. Genuine dialogue is more than conversation it means shared ownership capable of reflecting a classroom democracy (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). When students connect their experiences with those of others' then their views of others and of themselves will be changed (Heathcote, 1984). Drama nurtures the student's sense of individuality which helps to strengthen the cognitive structure of the self. Drama by definition is an intentional and self-determined process that should contribute to what a person defines as his or her being (Smith & Herring, 2001).

One of the primary differences between this study and other studies utilizing drama techniques is that this study is situated in the setting of a private school for students with learning disabilities. Another difference is the desire to place student voices at the forefront to ascertain what the students say and do concerning reading engagement when implementing drama activities. Having experienced students' lack of aesthetic response where they do not enjoy reading and view reading as answering questions, it is important to support students in rewriting their personal reader identities to find success and pleasure when reading. Since many classrooms do not adequately meet the needs of students with LD, considering creative drama as an instructional approach becomes a significant goal of the study to better fulfill the needs of the students.

The Adolescent Voices

Student voice is a critical component for addressing the issues related to reading engagement. By listening to the adolescent voices, educators might create, develop, and implement the conditions that promote reading engagement. Some researchers (Pitcher, et al., 2007; Ivey & Broaddus, 2007; Wilhelm, 2008) have invited students as the experts or knowers to contribute to the knowledge base. Because of whom they are, what they know, and how they are positioned, students must be recognized as having knowledge essential to the development of educational practices. Student voice should be considered a valuable perspective on schooling (Boyer & Bishop, 2004). Students are

directly affected by the definitions of learning and learning differences that inform the curriculum and instruction. Therefore, they should help shape, rather than simply be shaped by, the policies and practices (Cook-Sather, 2003). We must find ways to include students' voices in conversations about school. Hearing what does matter to adolescents in the classroom can help educators better understand the forces that shape the adolescents attitudes and dispositions toward school (Smagorinsky, 2001; Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998). Adolescents can offer impressive insights and share the deep feelings they hold about learning and learning differences. As educators, we can begin to make different decisions about how to support these students' learning and learning differences (Cook-Sather, 2003). Fletcher (2004) acknowledges that listening to students can inform opinions for school change.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented a review of the literature relating to reading engagement considering behavioral, cognitive, motivational, social, and emotional engagement, the theoretical foundations of the study, reading engagement instruction of students with learning disabilities, providing an overview of the traditional and current shift in describing learning disabilities, the results and profile of the student with LD, and the middle school classroom's need for reading engagement instruction. This is followed by the sections on creative drama highlighting contributors to creative drama, drama as an instructional technique, drama within the collaborative community, the

adolescent voices, and a summary. The literature reveals the myriad of challenges many students with LD face with engaged reading. Yet it is essential for these adolescents to develop higher-level thinking skills, problem-solving, strategic, and critical reading to be successful not only in the academic arena but in life as well. Listening to the adolescents' voices and valuing their perspectives within studies provides valuable insights into the students' needs for learning. Vlach and Burcie (2010) state that when we listen students will open up about failure and success as a reader. They will describe what has happened in the past, what scares them, what interests them, and what they know or do not know about reading. When teachers understand how their students identified as LD feel about reading, they may better help those students to engage in successful learning. Not only can this serve to improve instructional methods within the classroom, but this dialogue can foster a relationship of respect and empowerment. Adolescents should help shape, rather than simply be shaped by, the policies and practices (Cook-Sather, 2003). In the next chapter, I describe the methodology used to guide the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study explored whether creative drama instruction increases reading engagement for eighth grade students' with learning disabilities. This chapter describes the research methodology utilized in the study with the discussion organized into the following sections: (a) overview and research approach, (b) design and methodology, (c) setting, (d) role of the researcher and background of the study, (e) participants, (f) instructional procedures, (g) data sources, (h) data collection methods, (i) data analysis, (j) ethical and political considerations of the study, (k) researcher biography (l) role of the researcher, and (m) summary.

Overview and Research Approach

Effective instruction in reading involves language combined with action in order that students may connect the abstract words of the text to the concrete world of reality. Sadly, the patterns in schools in the U.S. of recitation, questioning and discussion have served to reinforce unengaged readers' passivity and the attitude that meaning is to be received from the text rather than constructed (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

Students with learning disabilities may experience difficulty engaging in literacy activities, as they risk being hindered by negative attitudes and doubt of their intellectual abilities, reduced effort, lower self-efficacy, and failure (Klassen, 2007; Litch

& Kirstner, 1986; Oldfather, 2002; Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008).

Motivating these adolescents to read critically from an engaged stance is an indispensable requirement of literacy instruction because adolescent readers face increasingly complex material, may risk aliteracy (Brinda, 2007), need to develop a positive reader identity to facilitate life-long reading (Strommen & Mates, 2004), and they live in a world with increased literacy demands (Allington, 2001).

As a reading/literature teacher and researcher in a private school for students with learning disabilities, I sought to interpret the voices of seven adolescent students related to engaged reading when using creative drama techniques in the literature classroom for seven weeks. Creative drama is an instructional approach to learning through role playing and problem-solving. Drama activities are used to express, explore, and elaborate story understandings and possibilities (Wilhelm, 2008). Narrative inquiry with its power to elicit voice was used in this study to explore the participant stories about reading engagement. Pre- and post-interviews, student reflective questionnaires, group reflective conversations, audio and video of the creative drama enactments, artifacts, researcher journal, and archival school records were sources of data.

The following research question guided the study and was interpretive in nature.

How does creative drama instruction increase the reading engagement for eighth grade students with learning disabilities?

Design and Methodology

Some qualitative research uses narrative approaches for data collection to understand the way things are and what it means from the perspectives of the research participants (Mills, 2003). Narrative inquiry provided the framework through which I explored and sought to understand the lived literacy experiences of the participants. Numerous researchers (Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Paris & Oka, 1986; Schunk, 1985) assert that the attitudes, values, expectations and beliefs that individuals possess play a vital role in engagement with reading and other literacy processes. Narrative inquiry as a research approach understands the way things are and what it means from the perspective of the research participants (Mill, 2003).

Daiute and Lightfoot (2004), state that narratives organize life. When the narrator tells his story, he shapes, constructs, and performs the self, experience, and reality (Chase, 2005). The reality of the participant is constructed through his personal story. Openness and trust between the participant and researcher are necessary as the process involves a sincere collaboration, while drawing out the participant's voice (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In narrative inquiry, both the researcher and the researched in a study are in relationship with one another (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006). Narrative inquiry involves conversation, either structured or unstructured, as an integral part of learning. Issues of relationship, identity, and power influence the construction of conversation (Hollingswoth & Dybdahl, 2006). This study adopted a qualitative research

design that enabled me to learn about and understand the stories of the social experiences and interactions (Merriam, 1998, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) of the students.

Using narrative inquiry, I gathered, analyzed, and interpreted the stories told by the participants through observation, conversation, and interviews to discover what the students said and did that revealed their experiences and observations of engaged readers, particularly when they participated in creative drama activities. The qualitative research design enabled me to learn about and understand the stories of the social experiences and interactions (Merriam, 1998, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) of the students.

Creative drama is an instructional method that can serve as a vehicle for letting the less engaged readers become more engaged. Drama supports the reluctant readers to see reading as a creative and a personally meaningful pursuit (Wilhelm, 2008). Students develop an awareness of their own knowledge and competencies. They become active in the learning process not just cognitively but socially and kinesthetically (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

Creative drama is supported by a variety of research in language, literacy, learning, and cognition throughout various content areas (Barnes, 1986; Knapp, Stearns, John, & Zucker, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978; & Wade, 1983). Creative drama enactments utilized in this study are based on the drama structures described by drama

educators Heathcote (1984), Bolton (1995), O'Neill and Lambert (1987), Edmiston, (1991, 1998), Enciso (1994, 1996), Wilhelm (1994), and Smith and Herring (2001) but will lean most heavily on the work of Wilhelm.

Researcher observations, the researcher's reflective journal, audio and video recordings of the drama activities and audio recordings of class reflective discussions, and the pre- and post-interviews, contributed to the data sources. Additional data sources in narrative research can include documents. In this study I also used artifacts produced by the students during the creative drama enactments, along with student reflections pertaining to engagement using creative drama following each enactment. Archival school records provided standardized testing results and the diagnosed learning difference of each participant.

Setting

The school site for this study was a private, non-profit, college preparatory school, founded in 1971, serving grades 1 through 12. The school deems its primary purpose as providing a superior education for students of average and above average intelligence who have been diagnosed with a learning difference such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory processing disorder, or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Teachers guide individual students in "learning to learn" through a multi-sensory approach with a small student/teacher ratio in a warm supportive atmosphere. Many

students and their families choose to complete high school education at this school, while others successfully transition to public or private schools of their choice after developing appropriate study and organizational skills to enhance individual learning needs. Learning needs here means the individual needs of the student. Students with LD hold a wide range of strengths and weaknesses. Some of the observable themes that frequently occur within this population are weak processing and production; problems with memory; chronic misunderstanding that hinders language processing and concept formation; deficient output that results in poor motor performance, persistent organizational failure, and difficulty with problem-solving and strategy use; delayed skill acquisition; and poor adaptation that results in social inability, loss of motivation and non-compliant behaviors (Gersten, 1998; Heward, 2006; Hock et al., 1999; Levine, 1994; & Swanson, 2001).

A wide range of techniques called content enhancements are used by teachers to enhance the organization and delivery of curriculum content so that students are better able to organize, comprehend, and retain information (Hock et al., Lenz & Bulgren, 1995).

The school is a fully accredited, co-educational, day school with an enrollment of approximately 250 students and a staff of 47. Both the lower and upper school is departmentalized with students changing classes every 55 minutes. The school has a Diagnostic and Assessment Center staffed with two clinical psychologists and a testing

specialist. I am affiliated with this school as a classroom teacher holding both reading specialist and dyslexia specialist certifications.

Role of the Researcher and Background of the Study

My professional involvement with the literacy development of adolescents with LD spans approximately seventeen years of working in two private schools for learning disabled students located in the urban north Texas area. I am certified as a classroom teacher and also hold certifications both as a dyslexia specialist and a reading specialist. The majority of students I encountered in these settings was diagnosed with language related learning disabilities and frequently had a secondary diagnosis of attention deficit disorder. Many of the students were aware of their difficulties with reading. Some were task avoidant; others gave what seemed to be minimal effort, and a portion of the students often exhibited negative, disruptive behaviors. A number of these students came from school backgrounds where failure was a part of their everyday experience. Realizing the complexities involved with teaching students who experience literacy difficulties, I chose to pursue a Ph.D. in reading education so that I could more effectively work with these students and enable them to experience success with literacy.

During the time of this study, I taught six classes of reading/literature to varying grade levels. This study took place in one eighth grade literature class over a period of seven weeks. A typical class began with taking attendance, then doing a read aloud for

approximately five to ten minutes. Following the read aloud, a brief overview was provided of what we did the previous day and collecting homework, if any was assigned. As a general rule, little homework was assigned because the majority of the students had a tendency not to do reading assignments. Since some students did not enjoy reading, it became easy to delay or not complete the reading. Students claimed they meant to do the assignment but did not have the time. Reading homework, in my class, typically consisted of the one or two students who worked at a significantly slower pace than the majority of the class members and needed to complete the day's work so as not to fall behind. An additional factor that affected homework was that medications for many students began to wear off at the end of the day, making focusing on homework difficult. Simply taking another dose of meds was not a practical solution, for this interfered with sleep, leaving the student unable to function the following day.

The school's reading curriculum required teachers to work in the textbook and, in addition, supplement with at least two novel units each semester. With most novel units, the reading department used prepared novel unit questions for students to complete following each assigned reading. Finding this not to be a particularly successful method for engaging students in learning and understanding (Allington, 2001), I sought to move my students toward more interactive dialogues concerning the reading. I utilized literature circle discussions and lots of "turn and talk" with a partner or small group collaboration to enhance comprehension of the material read. I relied on graphic

organizers to explore the literary elements of character, setting, plot, and conflict, as well as, using student drawings as a means to reflect understanding of text. Students were encouraged to exercise independence and choose texts of interest to them.

While I had not previously used the technique of creative drama, there was some research (Wilhelm, 1993; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998) that indicated it would be a beneficial tool for engaging my students with LD to become more active, engaged readers while learning problem-solving skills. Creative drama is an instructional technique that brings text to life through role playing and problem-solving. It is an active, constructive process where self-perception, interaction with others, movement, and language become the means to engage while experiencing, reflecting, and responding to the concepts under study. Drama enables students to become better thinkers as it supports the cognitive processes of questioning, critical and constructive thought, problem-solving, comparison, interpretation, and a deeper learning experience (Smith & Herring, 2001). Through my experience with students with LD, abstract concepts could be a challenge to grasp, whereas creative drama had the power to make learning visible and more easily understood (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

My role in this study was that of an insider fulfilling the roles of teacher/researcher. This inside-out approach, according to Goswami and colleagues (2009), goes directly to the source for information – the students. The act of looking

closely at student work and listening closely to what students have to say, can better inform educators.

I personally collected all of the data. I had taught five of the students' literature the previous year, and had another in my homeroom, during seventh grade. This enabled me, in a timely manner, to build on a pre-existing relationship of trust with the participants. I attempted to create a relaxed, respectful classroom environment that enhanced data gathering for the study.

Participants

My eighth-grade literature class consisted of six boys and one girl and was selected because the students had a willingness to participate, and each one possessed adequate expressive language skills that enabled them to share their personal perspectives and participate in the interview process. Students were assigned pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Using archival student school records, coupled with my professional experience and expertise, the following information describes each participant.

Lewis, a 13 year old Black male, had been enrolled at this private school since he was in second grade. He was identified as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and written expression disorder. Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder can be briefly defined as the lack of impulse control or attention for what is expected in certain settings. Dyslexia is considered to be a specific

learning disability that is neurobiological in origin and is characterized by difficulties with accurate word recognition, poor spelling, and decoding abilities (Heward, 2006). Written expression disorder is defined as those who perform significantly lower across most written expression tasks, especially vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and spelling (Newcomer & Barenbaum, 1991).

I taught Lewis for five of the years he had been enrolled. His classroom performance had been inconsistent through the years in most subject areas. He performed well for a period of four to six weeks; then would hit a slump where he gave minimal effort on class work and failed to turn in assignments. He would readily tell you that he hated school. When assigned reading, he often moaned and groaned that he didn't want to do it, putting his head down on the desk. Contributions he made to discussions were frequently concrete observations, reluctantly shared. Lewis could be described as a reluctant learner.

Marcus was a 13 year old multi-ethnic male who had been enrolled at this school since fourth grade. He was diagnosed with ADHD, for which he took medication, dyslexia, written expression disorder, dysgraphia, and mild Asperger Syndrome. Asperger Syndrome is at the mild end of the autism spectrum and the most distinctive feature is the inability to understand how to interact socially (Safran, 2002). Dysgraphia is a poor or reluctant writer. The problem may have its source in the motor area, in memory, in language, in ideation, in organization, or in some combination of these

functions (Levine, 1994). Marcus was a very social young man who interacted frequently with peers and adults alike. Organization was a challenge for him and without constant support, he failed to complete or turn in assignments. His interpretations of readings were often literal and reflected confusion in sequencing events and drawing conclusions. Inferencing required scaffolding to enable him to move beyond a literal interpretation.

Carl was an energetic Caucasian boy of 13 years of age, who had been enrolled for two years at the school. He was identified as ADHD and dyslexic. He took regular medication for the ADHD. He could easily become self-distracted and miss instructions or discussion. Carl readily engaged in group discussions contributing thoughtful comments, however, his written work was often lacking in details and did not represent eighth grade expectations. Keeping him engaged and on task was a challenge because he frequently did not take his ADHD medication. His mother reported that because he was growing older she had made this his responsibility, and he often forgot.

Simon, a 14 year old male Caucasian, was identified as ADHD, Asperger Syndrome, and had anxiety disorder. He took regular medication for his attention problems and took medication at varying intervals for the anxiety disorder. Simon said he loved to read but appeared to pull into his own world when engaged in reading and was reluctant to share his thinking or ideas with others. He consistently produced quality work on assignments if they were done independently but did not enjoy

collaborating or working with others, finding it a challenge to appreciate ideas differing from his own. This was his second year at the school.

Randall, a 13 year old Caucasian boy, was identified as mildly dyslexic and ADHD for which he took medication. He had only been at the school since the middle of the 2012, spring semester. He was very verbal and thrived on social activity. He displayed exemplary leadership abilities when directing a literature circle or doing group collaboration. He would elicit ideas from others, listen carefully to the responses, and affirm the other students' contributions. For those students who were reluctant to share, Randall made a concerted effort to draw them into the discussion. He had a tendency to rush through his reading assignments resulting in missing details or being able to demonstrate his thinking with quality effort. Displaying an attitude of over-confidence with writing assignments could sometimes result in his self-evaluation of task performance to be higher than it actually was. The product of his efforts would often lack descriptive detail. When offered an opportunity to add more to the writing, he would look it over but make no changes.

Jack, a 13 year old male Caucasian, was identified as ADHD with anxiety disorder and depression. He took regular medication for the ADHD and at intervals for the anxiety and depression as needed. He was new to the school the 2012-2013 year. His mother said that homework was a major battle at home, and he preferred to take a bad grade rather than do the work, even if it didn't require much time to complete. He was

highly verbal and often self-distracted causing him to miss instruction. He required clear boundaries and expectations to keep him on task and often displayed a tendency to rush through his work.

Melody, a 14 year old Caucasian girl, was identified to have ADHD, dyslexia, written expression disorder, and dysgraphia. This was her third year at the school. Her area of interest was drama where she performed in local children's theater, and she emphatically stated that she did not like school. Written work was a challenge for her, and she was equally reluctant to use an Alpha Smart or computer when writing. During discussions, Melody was willing to take a stand on a topic even if others disagreed.

Table 1 below indicates the total grade level equivalency scores for each participant taken from the Stanford Achievement Test (2008) administered April of 2012, and the scores from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000) administered in August 2012.

Table 1

Standardized Test Results

Participant	Stanford Achievement Test	Gates-MacGinitie Test
1	7.9	12.7
2	8.9	12.7
3	PHS	PHS
4	PHS	PHS
5	11.4	12.2
6	Not enrolled when administered	PHS
7	7.9	12.7

While these eighth graders' reading achievement scores were high, several of the students demonstrated a lack of reading engagement in class. An example was Lewis, who scored above grade level on the Gates-MacGinitie Test and slightly below grade level on the Stanford Achievement Test. During class he often put his head on the desk and did not contribute to discussions about the reading, unless asked a specific question. His responses tended to be concrete and superficial in nature, demonstrating difficulty making inferences and relating to the character in any meaningful way. When asked to elaborate on his comments, he looked me straight in the eyes and replied, "That's all I got." His responses were brief to the point of not making sense or having sufficient comprehension of the reading.

Marcus exhibited difficulty with comprehension. Typically his standardized test results were higher in vocabulary than comprehension, but he did achieve overall positive results. When discussing texts read in class, he often expressed confusion repeatedly claiming, “I just don’t get it. This makes no sense.” This confusion often hindered his ability to get deeper meaning from the readings. His goal in his words was “just to pass.” Sadly, this attitude precluded his enjoyment of the reading activities

Instructional Procedures

For seven weeks, the students and I embarked on a discovery journey where we used creative drama, and I emphasized that it was a new learning experience for all of us. After the novel, *Touching Spirit Bear*, was introduced we discussed the literary genre, author information, pertinent background information, and set a purpose to read. An important purpose for reading this text was learning to use the creative drama activities as a means of enhancing reading engagement. The overall timeline of the reading and division of the chapters for daily reading was shared on a handout provided to the students before the reading began. I gave each student a prepared folder that contained explanations of the creative drama enactments to be used with the reading, along with discussion questions, extension activities, a totem pole and research projects. We read the designated chapters in the novel silently; then I selected the drama activity that seemed most appropriate for that portion of the reading, provided the students with a broad, exploratory question related to the reading that extended the students thinking

when the creative drama enactments were prepared. Specific creative drama techniques I considered for implementation included: symbolic story representation, tableaux, hot-seating, round robin monologues, radio show, and choral montage. I introduced each technique to the students and modeled examples of how to use the technique in the context of the novel being studied (Wilhelm, 2002).

Creative Drama Techniques

The particular creative drama techniques selected for the students to learn offered a variety of methods for responding to the reading in an attempt to engage the participants in a deeper understanding of the reading. What follows is a brief summary of each of the creative drama techniques selected for this study. These techniques were selected and implemented based on the learning needs of the students and the material read in the novel.

Choral Montage was the first drama enactment we explored after reading chapters 1-8. The choral montage is used to explore different points of view about what happened or what may happen in the text. Students created a kind of poem by writing a line about a character that explained the actions or expressed feelings. Students formed a group and put their words and phrases into an order that created a poem. Students formed a line and read the montage (Wilhelm, 2002). In spite of two students absent from this small class, the following poem was created from the novel, *Touching Spirit Bear*.

Anger, the fire that burns like the intense heat of the sun
Which holds and controls.
The concrete was cracked and filled with rage and anger.
His heart was filled with fear and rage.
His parents he thinks are to blame.
A lost boy who doesn't care about himself,
It's not my fault;
With my great rage comes your great responsibility.

Radio Show is another enactment technique where students selected a role and used the conventions of talk radio to discuss issues that arose in the reading. A provocative question can be introduced and students discuss the issue from the perspective of their role (Wilhelm, 2002). The question that opened the class discussion was "Does the Circle Justice requirements achieve true justice for those who are wronged, in this instance, Peter, or would jail time better serve what is fair and just for the victims?" This enactment was selected early on in the novel because I wanted students to discuss the characters' personality attributes, motivations, perspectives and actions as they considered the cause and effect of events that transpired in the reading. The goal was for students to confront the complexity of such social issues like juvenile delinquency.

Tableaux make use of visual and kinesthetic learning styles, which, according to Wilhelm (2002), are often not used in school. Tableau (singular) means visual presentation. In enactment, it can be accomplished in a variety of ways, using the body. It generally takes the form of a frozen scene or pose that captures a physical,

psychological, or emotional relationship. It can be adapted to include movement, speaking, and other features. Tableaux help students visualize and explore settings, scenes, situations, characters, relationships, and meaning, as well as, representing vocabulary, creating mental models of concepts, or visually translating themes and ideas (Wilhelm, 2002).

Students selected a scene from a chapter or created a scene to represent an entire chapter(s). Students chose to work with a partner to collaborate and present the scenes. Randall shared that the tableaux was productive because he did not picture characters in the reading, and this experience helped him not only see the character but get a sense of the character's emotions. He commented that acting out the scenes caused the reader to think about the book and what was happening in the reader's mind during the reading process.

Symbolic story representation is a technique in which students used cutouts or found objects to dramatize both what they were reading and how they were reading it. The cutouts symbolize characters, character qualities, groups, forces, scenes, or settings of importance from the book. The cutouts are used to both dramatize the story events and recount the reader's experiences or moves during the reading process while making the reading process visible (Wilhelm, 2002). While students created their cutouts, they discussed their choice of symbols and why that particular choice best represented the

character or setting. Students supported one another and offered encouragement and ideas when one student became stuck trying to represent the victim in the story.

Hot-seating is an enactment technique whereby a student is put on the hot-seat while role playing a character and tells about that person, and responds to questions and situations in that role. The individual can be addressed, advised, or questioned as students have the opportunity to sharpen their skills to analyze characters, infer, elaborate, and think on their feet. A student in the hot seat may represent a story character, an author, a real-life figure, a group of people, an idea, force, or concept (Wilhelm, 2002).

Simon played the character of Cole, and Carl served as his alternate conscience with whom he turned and talked as needed. This enactment was reserved for later in the novel when students had learned more about the characters and had the necessary information to question motivations, analyze, and elaborate upon the story events. Interestingly, the quietest, most withdrawn student wanted to be on the hotseat. Students in character questioned the character, Cole about his childhood history, early memories, and touched on topics of child abuse, alcoholism, and delinquency. Simon and Carl displayed flawless teamwork.

Round Robin Monologues can be used during or after reading. Students form a circle with everyone imagining they are the same character faced with a particular situation provided by the teacher. Each student contributes one sentence that

summarizes their feelings or what they want to do at that point. With each student sharing their sentence going around the circle a single monologue is formed which may have conflicting feelings just as in real life (Wilhelm, 2002). This was selected as a closing activity because it reflected what the class did for the first enactment, though nothing was written, and brought us full circle. Circle Justice used the concept of the circle symbolically in the reading, it seemed fitting to end our learning experience standing in a circle. The question I put to the students was to consider the end of the novel with Cole and Peter on the island alone. What words and/or actions would Cole need to give Peter to help Peter further heal from the trauma he experienced at the beginning of the story?

At the beginning of the process, my role as a guide was more predominant as the students learned how to prepare and enact the various drama activities. Each student was provided a handout with a brief description of how that particular enactment was performed. I answered any questions posed by the students. The fishbowl technique was utilized as some students performed the creative drama with me as others observed to see how the specific enactment was accomplished. After the fishbowl demonstration, the class discussed observations with the opportunity to ask and answer questions related to the performance. Most of the enactments required collaboration with a partner or small group.

From an instructional point of view, I regularly asked students to give me feedback on various techniques or instructional approaches to inform my teaching methods. Through experience I have learned that each class of students with LD can be unique in their learning styles and needs, making student feedback and reflection a valuable activity to inform my instructional decision-making. Therefore, after each drama enactment, students completed a brief questionnaire relating to their personal reaction to the activity. We also brainstormed and reflected on the learning as a group asking ourselves: What went well? What could we improve the next time? Did it extend our learning? How? If not, why? What did it feel like when preparing for the enactment? What did it feel like doing the enactment? What was the overall impression of engaging in the exercise?

As the students became more adept at performing the creative drama enactments, I gradually released more of the responsibility to the students. As the class gained experience with the new techniques, my role was primarily to provide an inquiry question based on the reading to extend the learning through the various enactment activities. As the teacher, I too documented students' reactions, learning, decisions, or shifts made during the implementation of creative drama in my observational notes.

Data Sources

Narrative inquiry framed the data gathering as I sought to understand the lived experiences of the students through the stories they constructed. I listened to the story

told by the participant and recorded it for analysis. Narrative inquiry gives the narrator full voice, but because it is a collaboration (Weiss, 1994); it permits both the voices of the researcher and the participant to be heard. The data sources included audio and video recordings of the interviews, individual student reflective questionnaires, group reflective conversations, recordings of the creative drama enactments, artifacts, researcher journal, and archival school records.

Interviews

Audio recordings of in-depth interviews with researcher constructed questions were taken during the first week of the novel unit and again during the last week of the novel unit. The purpose of the interviews was to learn about the students' stories. My role as the researcher during the interview was to be a listener and a learner. By carefully listening to the participant's responses, the researcher can assist in ensuring that the participant's voice is heard (Polkinghorne, 2007). I presented the data as much as possible as it was shared with me. See Appendix A.

Individual Student Reflective Questionnaires

Brief student reflective questionnaires were completed individually following each creative drama enactment. Students answered the same six questions with scaled answers from "a lot" to "not at all." The questionnaires were done independently to avoid influence by fellow students. I used the results of the student questionnaires to confirm and triangulate other data. See Appendix B.

Group Reflective Conversations

Class reflective conversations were audio recorded each time that a creative drama activity was prepared and presented. During the reflective discussion, we talked about what went well, what could be improved, and how or if the activity influenced the learning process. Finally, the enactment was compared to former enactments the students had learned in order to hear their preferences for which type of drama enactment best suited their individual learning needs. See Appendix C.

Recordings of the Creative Drama Enactments

Video recordings of the creative drama enactments were made on three separate occasions throughout the weeks of study with the first video made approximately the second week of the novel unit study. Additional recordings followed the third and fourth weeks. All video and audio recordings, as well as the interviews, took place in the students' literature classroom.

Artifacts

An additional data source was the artifacts students constructed as part of the creative drama assignments. For example, the Symbolic Story Representation required students to create symbols to represent characters or elements from the stories. Each student selected a topic to research and wrote seven facts to present to the class. A typed paper of the seven facts each supported with a two or three sentence explanation was completed for a grade. Topics from which to choose included: alcoholism, child

abuse, juvenile delinquency, peer courts in schools, wilderness survival, aboriginal justice, and community organizations that work with troubled youth. Students also created totem poles that represented their lives. In the novel the totem represented a personal life story, the search for meaning, and the person's past history. The totem project replaced taking a written test at the end of the novel unit.

Researcher Journal

As the researcher, I took observational notes that recorded body language and affect, tone of voice, and other messages, in addition to words, during each class period when creative drama was implemented. I used a researcher journal to record reflective comments. In an attempt to elicit student voices, I sought to convey the attitude that the students' views were valuable and useful while respecting the way the participants framed their responses.

Archival School Records

Archival school records provided diagnosed learning differences of the participants in the study as well as standardized test scores administered each year while attending this private school. Observational data from previous teachers at the school that revealed student strengths and weaknesses in the classroom was also available in the school's student records.

Data Collection

Two weeks prior to the introduction of the novel unit for the 8th grade literature class a consent form for students' participation was sent home in the students' binders to parents that explained the purpose and the type of research I planned to undertake and explained how I would maintain confidentiality of the students and the data, and availability of the results of the study. An email preceded the consent form, letting parents know the form was forthcoming, and I was available for any questions or concerns parents had either by email or phone as listed on the consent letter. Parents of the students, with the exception of the one new student, were aware that I was working on my doctorate and had been supportive and encouraging of the endeavor. I included the drama enactments and dates performed on a timeline that represented the novel study and data gathering in Table 2.

Table 2

Approximate Timeline of the Literature Class Activities

Weeks	Literature Class Activity	Data Collection
Week 1	Email to parents telling them of consent form Consent forms sent home in student binders	
Week 2	Consent forms to be returned	
Week 3	Novel unit folders with creative drama activities Overview of creative drama activities Question/answer time Introduce novel Make cutouts for SSR activity Fishbowl of Symbolic Story Representation	Pre-interviews Audio recording Student questionnaire Group reflective conversation
Week 4	Choral montage activity Radio show	Audio recording Student questionnaire Group reflective conversation Audio recording Student questionnaire Group reflective conversation
Week 5	Symbolic Story Representation	Video recording Student questionnaire Group reflective conversation

	Hotseat	Artifacts Audio recording Student questionnaire Group reflective conversation
	Tableau	Video recording Student questionnaire Group reflective conversation
Week 6	Round Robin Monologues	Audio recording Student questionnaire Group reflective conversation
	Symbolic Story Representation	Video recording Student questionnaire Group reflective conversation
Week 7		Post-interviews

Note. Researcher journal used for each enactment and preparation.

Interview Process

Questions for the pre- and post-interviews were semi-structured and descriptive in nature. I used an interview guide that listed the questions to be used. The guide functioned as a prompter for the interviewer (Weiss, 1994). With the purpose of the study being to hear the student voices, student responses occasionally required an additional question(s) that was not included on the list of prepared questions. The

interviews were conducted in the classroom individually while other students worked. In order to provide as much privacy as possible, the interview was conducted in the foyer area of the classroom. This was the farthest point from the other students but also permitted me to keep a watchful eye on the other students.

Student Reflective Questionnaires and Group Reflective Conversations

Following the creative drama enactments, each student completed brief written reflective questionnaires assessing personal reaction to the drama activity. Next, I guided students in a recorded class reflective discussion of what they felt and observed during the process of preparation and presentation of the drama enactment. At the first opportunity, I wrote my reflective observations of the process in my researcher journal and transcribed the recording.

Recordings and Researcher Journal

Audio recordings were taken for each enactment presentation. Recordings were also done with a group as it engaged in the collaborative process to prepare for a creative drama enactment. I transcribed the recordings in an expedient manner to maintain accuracy as near as possible. According to Weiss (1994), the stages in qualitative research overlap and are intertwined making analysis of early data important as this analysis can contribute to new emphases in interviewing. On three separate enactments I made video recordings and transcribed the recordings as soon as possible.

As I observed the students preparing or making presentations, I took jottings with shorthand notes in the teacher researcher journal, and transcription followed in a timely manner after the notes were gathered.

Artifacts and Archival Records

I collected supplemental artifacts at various times throughout the study. After the symbolic story representation enactment, I gathered the cutouts. Other artifacts collected included the self-selected topic for the written research reports, and the totem pole project that was presented to the class upon completion of the novel. Archival school records were used for background data on the participants that included standardized test results and students' diagnosed learning disabilities.

Pilot Study with Seventh Graders

Preceding my data gathering with the 8th grade class I did a pilot study and used some of the drama enactments with my 7th grade literature students while reading the novel, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*.

At the beginning of the week, I modeled for the students how to use cutouts for the SSR activity and focused on the: who, where, when, why and how of the scene to be enacted. After the first experience with drama activities was completed, we reflected on what went well and what needed improvement. Interestingly, none of the students gave thought to what they did or where they put themselves as the reader until this activity. Comments reiterated the stance that students simply read the words without thinking

of themselves as inside or outside of the story. From the teacher's perspective, I noticed the students seemed captivated by both watching others and participating.

Two days later, we prepared a tableau to present to the class. During our class reflection following the activity, students commented on how it was fun to get to move around. One boy who struggled with comprehension said, "It was easier to get the meaning of the story when acting it out because you could ask your group members to help explain what you did not understand."

The next activity implemented was choral montage. Each student tried to write a line to express the actions or feelings of two different characters, the main character, Charlotte, and Captain Jaggery. The student groups took their group lines and integrated the lines into a poem. The result was one poem created for Charlotte and another for the character, Captain Jaggery. A student expressed surprise at how much information the class gathered with students contributing only one sentence for each of the characters. Some of the sentences offered an in-depth observation of the character such as one student's sentence about Captain Jaggery: "He was a weak, insecure leader," while another observation expressed a more literal observation, "He (Captain Jaggery) was mean."

The round robin monologue followed the character, Charlotte, witnessing the Captain shooting a man on his ship with the intent to murder him. Each student was asked to share how witnessing this event had affected Charlotte and what she would do

on the remainder of the voyage. Students began to turn and talk; some even argued with others about the dilemma. The discussion that followed the round robin was rich and extended the learning and offered different perspectives on the situation.

The final activity was the radio show. We decided Charlotte would be the guest on the radio show and be interviewed about women's equal rights to work on a ship, justice, and discrimination – all themes in the novel. These concepts served to frame the questions students called into the radio announcer.

The first question asked was why Charlotte didn't get off the ship when warned at the beginning she should not be there. This stirred heated discussion with some students eager to be given the nod to share their questions or comments. If anything, it was a challenge to keep the students from talking over one another. My observation was the conversations took many twists and turns with various perspectives offered.

Following the pilot activities with my 7th grade students, I reflected on notes I took during the activities along with my observations of the students' interactions. The activities flowed well and produced overall positive results. Students were eager to learn and engage in activities they had never experienced before, even the shy, reluctant students jumped in with a willingness to experiment with a new learning method. Handouts used to explain each activity were helpful, as well as, discussions of the purpose of the activities. Students were quick to share feedback when asked. My

favorite comment throughout this process from one of the student's was, "You mean class is over?"

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis in qualitative research are concurrent and recursive processes. The computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program (NVivo, Version 10) was used to assist in the data management and analysis for this study.

I portrayed the data using participants' words, where possible, to capture the students' voices, personal meanings, and stories. Narrative researchers, according to Polkinghorne (2007), gather storied evidence in the search for narrative truths. The narrative truths hold personal meanings reported in the stories not factual occurrence. The storied descriptions provided by the participants are the best evidence available to researchers about the realm of the participants' experiences. As the interviewer, I recognize that texts generated by the participants are co-created between the interviewer and the participants. No researcher, particularly an insider, can be a completely neutral, detached observer (Poller & Emerson, 1988). Narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationships; rather the narrative inquirers situate themselves in more or less relational ways with their participants (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Mishler (1979, p. 10) states that the researcher's perspective "is intertwined with the phenomenon which does not have objective characteristics independent of the observer's perspective and methods." Mishler (1986) acknowledges the ways in which the interviewer may affect participants' responses such as the interviewer's demeanor, gender, clothing, accent, speech pattern, speech intonations, and body movements. Having this awareness heightened my sensitivity to assuming an open listening stance and carefully attending to the participants' responses to assist in ensuring the participants' own voices were heard thus minimizing my researcher influence upon the responses. Clandinin and Huber (2010) caution that the voice of the inquirer should not write over the voices of the participants in the final research text by using an overly dominant "researcher signature."

Richards (2009) views the process of coding to consist of layers of analysis that are descriptive, topical, and analytic. The types of coding, according to Richards (2009) are defined by the function within the interpretation process. Coding is primarily an interpretive act rather than a precise science. It is a form of early and continuing analysis that provides the researcher an emerging map of what is happening and why (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

The descriptive coding is the first layer in which the researcher develops labels to describe the data. My data analysis began with a look across the data as a whole. I read the interview transcriptions, listened to the recorded interviews multiple times and

began to engage in “open coding” using free nodes. Nodes are the containers for organizing the coded material. Free nodes are nodes that stand alone with no apparent clear connection with the other nodes, nor do they fit easily into a hierarchical structure of overreaching themes. Upon completion of coding the interview data, I coded the data from each enactment after it occurred. These included both audio and video recordings of the enactments as well as the class reflective conversations, my researcher observational notes, and notes from the artifacts and reflective journal entries relating to the drama enactments. The individual student questionnaires were read and reread for numerical information and triangulation of data.

The next step was the topical layer (Richards, 2005) which was to find the relationship within the codes (Denzin, 2001). This is the level of analysis whereby the researcher places codes into categories after labeling the coded data. The emergence of categories and sub-categories allowed for the creation of tree nodes in NVivo which could be hierarchically structured. I began to engage in a preliminary organization of the free nodes into tree nodes, moving from a general category at the top identified as the parent node, to more specific categories identified as child nodes (QSR International, 2009). The tree nodes helped to organize the categories into conceptual groups. This process was interpretive and analytical in which thinking about the data extended beyond the descriptive to a more abstract level (Bazely & Richards, 2002).

The third layer of coding; the analytic layer (Richards, 2009) is the interpretive work. This was done through the process of reassembling the elements into a total picture and connecting the patterns of coded data, viewing the relationships in and between the patterns, and developing an understanding of the meanings that hold them together. See Appendix D.

Themes in qualitative research are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea (Creswell, 2013). I looked for patterns or common threads either within or across an individual's experience in the classroom setting (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Themes and sub-themes used the participants own words wherever possible. This process was followed when I analyzed the data for the remaining activities. At this juncture, theory construction began. This was the process of generating ways of thinking about the data, the categories, concepts, and ideas that came from interpretive reading and reflection. In theory construction the researcher is creating bigger ideas from the first categories by abstracting from the categories, exploring their relationships, and crafting an account of the data that offers not just a description of what was found but an analysis (Bazely & Richards, 2002).). Theorizing across a number of cases by identifying common patterns or threads is an established tradition with a long history in qualitative theory (Reismann, 2008).

The use of NVivo software added rigor to this study and permitted me to search the data for patterns within my coding and the text of the data (Richards, 2009).

Through these tools, I examined all of the data to ensure major concepts had been identified and coding for specific ideas occurred to ensure internal validity of the data. My advisor provided peer examination of the coding and analysis of the data in NVivo. My research journal was used to record personal reflections, inform, and document decisions throughout the study. I presented the data, as much as possible, as it was shared with me, keeping close to the participants' words to hear their voices and meaning constructed through academic genre editing practices.

Ethical and Political Considerations

Maintaining and reporting the ethical practices of a study is an important criterion for judging the quality of qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). The role of ethics in research focuses on how the researcher and participants interact in the setting. According to Smith (1990, p.260), "At a commonsense level, caring, fairness, openness, and truth seem to be the important values and undergirding of the relationships and the activity of inquiring." In this study, the language, learning style, culture, and dignity of the participants was valued and respected. Participants were provided confidentiality, and interactions took place as a normal part of the classroom structure, thereby easing the stress level or embarrassment of the students.

To protect the identities of participants, pseudonyms were used to replace names, including the names of the city and school. A code name, rather than the participants' real names was used on the audio recordings and transcription. I had sole

access to the interview recordings. In addition, I was the first person to handle all original documents to ensure all personal identifying features were removed. All identifiable data will be destroyed within one year of completion, and the research commenced during the spring of 2013.

Researcher Biography

Preceding my teaching experience, I was the parent of a son who encountered difficulties learning to read that resulted in a diagnosis of a learning disability. I sought the help and support of specialists within the educational setting and became a reading volunteer working closely with a reading specialist within my son's school for a period of three years. Learning to be an advocate for my son in a large public school system, I developed a genuine, heartfelt interest for students who struggled with literacy learning. My personal experiences as a parent led me to select a professional path that would allow me to work with other learning different students. Quality research requires a thoughtful understanding of the matter in question. My personal experiences as a parent, as well as a professional educator, facilitated my understanding of the participants' narratives in this study.

My classroom practices are based on the constructivist theory of learning where learning occurs through interaction with the environment and other people. Constructivists believe that learners make sense of their world by connecting what they know and have experienced with what they are learning. Students construct meaning

through these connections when educators pose relevant problems, structure learning around primary concepts, seek and value students' ideas, and assess students' learning in context (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

According to Short and Burke (1996), constructivism frees students of fact-driven curricula and encourages them to focus on larger ideas, allows students to reach unique conclusions, encourages students to see the world as a complex place with multiple perspectives and emphasizes that students are responsible for their own learning and should attempt to connect the information they learn to the world around them. My classroom climate attempts to encourage a positive view of the learner with my role as the teacher being that of a facilitator in the classroom.

I desire a student centered philosophy whereby a trusting relationship provides the opportunity for relationships to develop and become more central to the heart of the learning experience. Relationship building necessitates understanding the student's physical and emotional needs and how these needs impact the learning process. An Oklahoma educator, John Hubbard said it well, "Remember, most importantly, you teach kids, not a subject" (Carson, 1999).

This study had meaning for me because I was able to view the research through the lens of a parent who reared a child with LD, as well as, an educator. With 17 years of experience in educational LD settings, this history informed my knowledge of students with LD and facilitated my understanding, sensitivity, and ability to gather data from the

participants. As a doctoral student, my course requirements involved twelve hours of research courses two of which were qualitative research. I was exposed to various forms of qualitative research in the classroom setting, fulfilling requirements of fieldwork, and participating in exercises in the university qualitative research laboratory.

Summary

This chapter presented a description of the methodology that was followed in conducting this study. Data was collected from pilot drama activities with seventh graders, interviews, student/teacher interactions, audio recordings, video recordings, artifacts, student written responses, the researcher's reflective journal, and school archival sources. The qualitative research design for the study contributed to a deeper understanding of the adolescent with LD regarding literacy learning when engaged in literature activities using creative drama. Attempts were made in both data collection and analysis to ensure that emphasis was given to the voice of the participants' accounts. Results of this study are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

“Education is not the piling on of learning, information, data, facts, skills, or abilities – that’s training or instruction – but is rather a making visible what is hidden as a seed.”

~ Thomas Moore (1779-1852)

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore if creative drama instruction increases reading engagement for eighth grade students with learning disabilities?

This chapter presents the participants’ voices and describes their experiences and perspectives. Much of what the students said and did is reflected in the literature on engaged reading, even though they may not have used the term engaged or engagement. The discussion of the results begins with an overview of the pre-interviews that are set apart from the remaining data. I made this decision because, having taught many of the participants previously, I considered that students may have been using language into which they were socialized by my previous instruction. Therefore, the pre-interview data is presented separately to distinguish the influence of participating in the drama enactments. This is followed by a section on the class novel, *Touching Spirit*

Bear. Next are the themes of reading offered by the participants after and while utilizing the creative drama enactments during reading instruction. Those themes include: engaged readers are focused, take an aesthetic stance, interact with others, do not give up, and are aware of and demonstrate their thinking through visualizing, predicting, making connections, taking a reader's stance, and reflecting. I also included a case profile of Marcus so that I could look for patterns that may not have been apparent when looking across the group of participants as a whole.

Pre-Interviews: Adolescents Talk About Engaged Readers

Pre-interviews were done individually with each student asked to share observations of both themselves and others as readers. The purpose of the pre-interviews was to provide windows into the students' thinking about what an engaged reader looked like from the adolescent's viewpoint. I was pleased with the students' enthusiasm to share their thoughts and opinions. Randall frantically waved his arm in the air, as did three other students, wanting to be first and remarked at the beginning of his interview, "This should be interesting." When I queried what was it he thought would be interesting, he immediately replied, "I don't think a teacher has ever asked me what I thought about a subject or how it's taught. They just like tell you what you are going to do but don't ask what you think about it. This is different." As I worked through the interview process over the next couple of days with the students, they seemed to be

serious-minded in their responses to my questions and conveyed a sense of pride that their voices were being heard and recorded. Two of the categories, selecting good books and abandoning boring books will be discussed at the beginning. Other categories mentioned from the pre-interviews that also appeared in the data following the creative drama enactments will be combined and discussed under the themes of the drama enactments section.

Selecting Good Books

Each of the participants mentioned how essential it was for a book to grab your interest quickly, pulling the reader into the story. Once the book had your attention it needed to deliver good characters, an interesting plot, be understandable, and offer a good resolution to the story. In other words, for a book to engage a reader, it needed a good story. The students echoed the idea that engaged readers thoughtfully consider book selection.

My question to the students was how did they work through this process of selecting a good book to read? Students responded with a variety of approaches when selecting a book. One participant told how he would go to the teen section of a local book store and begin with his favorite genre, apocalyptic stories. The cover was the first thing that caused him to consider a book. If the cover looked interesting, he would read the back flap, followed by reading the first few pages. Another student relied on librarians or sales clerks at the book stores for guidance. Recommendations from friends

were important to him for he considered peers to have similar interests and trusted they would not recommend a book unless it was a good read.

Great care was exercised by one student in his book selections. He began with looking for a catchy title. If the title captured his interest, he read the summary on the back of the book. From the summary he moved to the beginning of the book to read a few paragraphs to familiarize himself with the author's writing style and whether it held his interest. He read reviews but admitted that publishers are in the business of selling books and could not be totally trusted. He had heard how an author had little control over the selection of the title or appearance of the cover and these elements could in fact be misleading to the reader. He recognized that sometimes the information perfectly conveyed the essence of the book, but the reader had to be wary.

Sticking with the classics was Melody's choice because these titles were recognized by many readers to be good books, making classics in her words "a safe selection." When asked to name a few of her favorites, she could not. The only classic text I observed her reading the entire school year was Shakespeare's, *Romeo and Juliet*. While she could read, she often chose not to read unless it was required and then did so reluctantly.

For one student book selection was problematic because he claimed he did not know how to select a book, and as a result, did not read. He preferred to spend his free time at home gaming but did not enjoy playing games that required a lot of reading. He

described how the librarian had recommended a book to him that happened to be a part of a series for a book report. He related how he enjoyed the book and decided to read the entire series. Once he completed the series he related that he simply stopped reading, it seemed easier than finding a new book of interest.

The participants agreed that if a book was not enjoyable to read it was difficult to remain engaged with the reading. The literature acknowledges that personal interest is a component of motivational engagement, and this personal interest reflects the student's intrinsic interest in the subject matter or task (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2008).

Abandoning Boring Books

Only one of the participants admitted he was reluctant to abandon a book that he was not enjoying. He recognized that some books may take a while to become interesting, and he continued reading hopeful that the book would become more intriguing with time. The remaining participants all said they would readily abandon a book that was uninteresting. "It needs an interesting story right off the bat, cause it's hard for me to drag on through a book and wait for it to get interesting," Carl remarked. He was willing to give a book a chance and seemed savvy enough to know that not every book read will necessarily be a great book, but he did expect a good story, or he would abandon the book. One student solved the problem of abandoning a book he did not particularly enjoy by offering it to his older brother to read saying he might return to the book in a few years to give it another try. One participant admitted to frequently

abandoning books replying, “What’s the point of reading something that’s not good?” Another student would read halfway through a book because his experience had been that many books did not get interesting until the middle of the story. If the story didn’t improve by the halfway mark, he abandoned the book. Marcus said he did not even know how to find an interesting book so he didn’t read at all. He shared that what he read he had to read, meaning it was a school assignment. One student exclusively read graphic novels categorized as Mangas and said these books were short, and you could easily read to the end even if it was not that interesting. Lewis reported when reading what he referred to as a “regular book” that he did not read a book in its entirety, even if it was required reading for school. Skipping chapters or lengthy sections of a book was something he claimed to do regularly. Melody mentioned reading scripts for plays she performed, though this could be infrequent, but she did little reading otherwise, including required reading for school. Two of the students mentioned it was a lot of trouble trying to find a good book to read, and frankly it wasn’t worth the effort. Even having more time in the summer for reading did not stimulate the reading of the group as a whole. They read only the school’s required summer reading but read little or nothing for pleasure.

This group of students did little reading outside of school. I was even more surprised when I asked the students if they read things on the internet, emailed, or texted friends often. Having been a homeroom teacher to seventh graders, I constantly

overheard students talking about texting one another. Surprisingly, all of the participants replied no, not very often.

Themes Overlapping with the Drama Enactments

Other themes that surfaced in the pre-interviews were also echoed during the drama enactments. Those themes include: engaged readers are focused, interact with others, and make predictions. These themes are discussed below.

Class Novel: *Touching Spirit Bear*

The novel, *Touching Spirit Bear*, by award winning author Mikaelson was selected because the story was a starred review from the School Library Journal saying it was the portrayal of an angry, manipulative, damaged teen that is an adventure story with strong moral underpinnings. I thought this type of novel would offer excellent discussion and could easily be completed in the allotted time of the study. Students in my literature class typically have a choice in the novels they are required to read. As a group we discussed the importance of working together in one text while we were learning how to implement the drama enactments. After a few book talks, a consensus was reached by the group to read *Spirit Bear*. Introducing the novel, I discussed the literary genre, author information, pertinent background information, and set a purpose to read. An important purpose for reading this text was learning to use the creative drama activities as a means of enhancing reading engagement. For each student I prepared a folder containing explanations of the creative drama enactments to be used

with the reading, along with discussion questions, extension activities, a totem pole and research projects. The overall timeline of the reading and division of the chapters for daily reading was included in the folder. Enactments were introduced in the following order: Choral Montage, Radio Show, Symbolic Story Representation, Hot Seating, Tableau, Round Robin Monologue, and another Symbolic Story Representation. Refer to Table 2 for a timeline of the unit. I analyzed data both across cases and within cases in an attempt to notice if any different themes emerged when looking at the class as a whole.

Engaged Readers are Focused

The most frequent characteristic described by the participants of an engaged reader was how the reader was totally immersed in a book and the attention was of an intensity that caused the reader to ignore others in close proximity or not to desire to engage in conversation. They just wanted to read. Reading trumped everything else including socializing. The Radio Show provided an example of the students' focus. During preparation for the drama enactment, students discussed the characters' personality attributes, motivations, perspectives and actions. They discussed cause and effect as I heard the group discussing how the main character's parents had contributed to the problems. My past experience showed me that student led discussions required close monitoring or there was a tendency for the talk to go off topic. This was definitely not the case as students shared ideas and created questions to call into the Radio Show.

Carl and Randall planned their parts to the smallest detail even inventing call letters for the radio station. A bit of humor was evident when they took to the air announcing the station was 103 B.E.A.R. on the radio.

Living the Experience - An Aesthetic Stance

The most frequently used word by the participants in describing the drama enactments was fun. During one of the class reflections I asked if having fun made a difference in being an engaged reader. Melody was quick to respond, “You have to remember that we are children. Our attention spans are very short. We want fun. No one is going to pay attention to anything serious. Half of us will fall asleep, no one will pay attention. If it engages us, people will listen; they will act and have fun. That’s how they are going to learn.” Points made by the students were that doing the drama enactments could support understanding, and they would be more engaged with the story, if they were having fun, rather than feeling as if forced to do an assignment. It was fun to do something other than worksheets to further understanding. Few worksheets were used in my literature class so I asked to which class(es) the students were referring. Students agreed that in social studies and science students read the text then answered questions at the end of the chapters.

When I asked the students how they could tell if others were having fun with the drama, the students answered that they were energetic, happy, enthusiastic, and

smiling. Another indication that the book was enjoyed was that students discussed the book outside of class and shared with one another.

My observations concurred with those of the students along with a few additional comments. When drama presentations were being performed, the students gave good eye contact, quietly gave their attention to the performers (something that can be a rarity in a class of students with ADHD), often two of the students leaned forward in their chairs during the presentations. Students with smiling faces readily burst into applause at the completion of the enactments with no prompting as if affirming a job well done. After the radio show enactment, Randall leaped from his chair, threw both arms overhead and let out a whoop wearing a big smile. He was obviously pleased with his effort. At one point during the presentation of the symbolic story representation scenes, Lewis dropped out of his chair and moved forward to sit on the floor in front of the table being used for the presentations. With elbows propped on his knees, face cupped in his hands, he leaned forward and was observed to frequently be smiling throughout the performances.

However, on one occasion the sense of fun turned to being silly rather than focused on the purpose of the enactment. Upon reflection, Lewis recognized that he became silly when doing his SSR enactments, completing his scene with knocking his characters off of the table. "It was just us so I felt okay with being silly. It was fun." He also admitted he got behind on the reading when preparing his SSR scene causing me to

wonder if part of his silly behavior was lack of adequate preparation. Another thought that occurred to me was what Edmiston (1998) called “the curriculum of enthusiasm.” This is the unbounded energy that can be infectious among the students as they discover the simple joy of learning when experiencing the drama activities. Two of the students in particular, Lewis and Marcus, were actively participating and sharing in the discussions, something that did not typically occur.

Interacting with Others

Creative drama provides students the opportunity to prepare enactments throughout the reading. Randall often repeated that he appreciated that the students had the opportunity to move around and be physically active resulting in learning. Often he remarked, “I learn better by doing stuff.”

The atmosphere of fun created with the drama enactments seemed to contribute to building a closer sense of community within the classroom. You could think about the story alone, but it would be boring; an idea repeatedly voiced by the participants was that working with others was much more entertaining. Not only did the students have fun, I too was experiencing a sense of renewed energy as I was learning alongside my students.

Students viewed themselves as engaged because in their words they were “having fun and really involved.” They described their peers as being lively, happy, and

energetic and expressed how the drama enactments helped them get into the book and be more engaged.

This sense of fun helped to create enthusiasm where the students supported and encouraged one another with this evolving into a process of collaboration. Time and again the participants mentioned how the collaborative process contributed to better understanding of the novel. Students frequently voiced the positive effect that collaboration had on extending the learning. The students considered that doing an activity independently was boring because you didn't have anyone to talk with about the story. It was the conversation that improved the learning. The use of drama stimulated more conversation in the literature classroom than what ordinarily occurred. Students mentioned talking about the book a lot, even outside of class.

I asked myself if the element of performance was a contributing factor to the serious nature of the discussions. Students were making connections from the story world to the real world as they explored issues of child abuse, anger, guilt, blaming others and oneself, speech impediments, brain injury, and physical versus psychological scars. Both Melody and Randall wanted to know more about child protective services and emphatically stated how the main character was not afforded the protection he needed from an abusive father.

Behavioral engagement was evident as the students engaged in terms of effort, not being easily distracted, and asking for help when needed (Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004; Lutz, Guthrie & Davis, 2006; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Wilhelm, 1994).

Students claimed the discussions helped them to focus on specific ideas and details of the story. Marcus, when confused about the story events, would talk with the other students to clarify understanding. Students supported one another through discussion.

Students mentioned in the pre-interviews how engaged readers often talked about or recommended the book they were reading to others. The students engaged in book talk with earnestness as they created scenes to be enacted. When cutouts for the Symbolic Story Representation were created, they walked about the room gathered supplies and noticed how the other students had chosen to portray a character or setting. Often students stopped to share a comment. Jack told how he was stuck trying to represent the character Peter. I asked him to describe what the character was like from the information he had read. He replied, I think he's skinny and weak." I told him to think of something that could portray this description. He chose a thin rectangle because he saw the character as non-descript, hardly noticeable. Diversity was apparent as Carl chose a crutch to represent the victim, Peter. Another student chose a red splotch to represent the blood from the brutal beating Peter suffered.

Preparations for the drama enactments helped the students as they discussed personality attributes, motivations, perspectives, and actions. The students noted how

this experience provided more insight into the character(s). It helped one to see characters differently because you got the perspectives of classmates alongside your own interpretation. Simon eloquently described going from a two dimensional view of the character to a three dimensional view because of the more in-depth explorations with the drama. He explained that the drama enactments afforded the opportunity to “treat the character with greater substance. In preparing to act out the part, you get at the character’s personality, their soul.” I was reminded by these comments that in learning, oftentimes it is the process rather than the product, where the most learning occurs. I was unaware at the time that I was echoing words from the 1920s by John Dewey whereby knowledge is the means rather than the end product of education (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

However, as with any instructional approach, it was not a magic bullet. In the final class reflection about our class experiences with using drama enactments to enhance engagement, Melody shared some negative comments. She admitted the book had not been interesting to her, and she could not identify with anything in the book. “I just didn’t get into it,” she proclaimed. “I thought it (drama enactments) did help me understand those people a little better. I thought the enactments worked great, but it didn’t work so well with this particular kind of novel,” Melody explained.

Randall began to question what she meant because he stated with soberness that he did not find that to be true at all. Melody began to explain how acting out the

scenes did help with comprehension and learning. Randall pushed back telling her she was contradicting herself. She then said there was not sufficient time to plan, and this resulted in her doing a poor job performing the enactments. Carl, who is a peaceable go-along to get-along kind of guy sat bolt upright in his chair emphatically stating that lack of time was not an issue. He told Melody she needed to say what was behind her thinking because no one else in the class agreed with her comments. Heads nodded in agreement.

Melody explained that acting things out was a good way to comprehend and learn from the reading. She shared her love of acting and how this instructional method allowed her the opportunity to act. She said she loved getting up and performing her scenes. What was interesting to note was that of all the participants her execution was the weakest, and yet she had real world background experience in children's theater. When questioned about her performance, she said she was not good at improvisation. When I recalled the preparation phases and how this was not improv because it was prepared and sometimes rehearsed, she then admitted to getting behind on the reading and not being able to plan effectively. Finally she admitted to mostly skimming the book and not reading carefully. This may have explained her poor performance during the enactments. Without careful reading, she could not contribute productively to the collaborative or enactment process. What was surprising about this incident was how the remainder of the class became defensive about doing the enactments and wanted

me to understand this did not represent their thinking. Both Carl and Randall were angered by the comments, and I wondered if they were afraid I would stop the drama activities as a result of Melody's comments. This was the most emotional response I had witnessed from these students the entire year.

What Are You Thinking?

As the class reflected on a drama enactment, Randall said, "This helps us to think about the scenes in the book better, what we think, about the book, what happens in our own minds." Randall was acknowledging the mental activity or cognitive awareness that was transpiring as a result of the drama activities. Marcus explained how the drama caused him to think about the elements in the story. "I processed the words and turned them into something instead of just listing off the words," he explained. Marcus seemed to be saying that he was not simply reading the print on the page but the story was coming to life for him. This is an area with which he had struggled in the past. He could easily confuse characters and get plot events mixed-up, making it difficult for him to build comprehension as he read.

A closing comment from Lewis was that the drama activities allowed one to see how "the kids process the information. You know what they are getting out of it by doing the scenes." I thought this was a perceptive comment on his part to be considering how others are thinking about the reading. He was my most difficult student to engage yet he was thinking about how others were thinking about the reading. Carl

shared how the drama activities helped him to catch details that he may have missed. He compared it to watching a movie two or three times, and how he would catch something that he never noticed before.

Making a Movie in my Head

Participants recognized some of the mental activities or cognitive engagement that occurred during the reading process. Each one mentioned visualizing as an important aspect of being engaged with a book, although the specifics of how this occurred varied slightly among the students. Lewis who enjoyed drawing described how he drew or created elaborate scenes in his head much like an artist would do. “If they (the author) give me enough stuff for the character I can see it and draw it out in my head.” What he is unable to see clearly, he fills in by doing what he calls “free styling” the drawing.

Visualizing was one of the most enjoyable parts of reading for Carl because it allowed for creativity. For him it was like making a movie in your head. Several of the students echoed this idea of seeing the book like a movie or television show. Interestingly, two of the participants said they saw detailed settings but did not picture the main character with detail. Melody who had experience acting in children’s theater described how she costumed the characters in her head if it was a good book but was unable to do this if the book was boring.

After completing the tableau, Jack remarked, “I don’t visualize a person. I just see a stick figure for the character. I don’t picture people. It’s kind of weird, but this (drama activities) helps to visualize it.” I asked Jack if he could explain how the drama helped with the visualization. He responded that by watching his peers present tableaux of scenes from the reading he could see the character and also got a sense of the characters’ emotions by watching the enactments. The drama helped to create a visual and to see the details of the story.

Similarly, Lewis observed a fellow student portraying the character Garvey. Upon completion of the tableau Lewis said, “I thought Garvey was fat, but that’s not how you acted it out.” A fellow student pointed out that Garvey seemed comfortable in the outdoors and knew how to use survival skills, inferring that it was not likely that Garvey was a couch potato. He was an active, physically fit type of guy. Lewis considered what he had witnessed in the scene and agreed.

Alter Ego: Inside the Character

When acting in a character’s role Simon felt he was bringing the character to life, giving a soul to the character. Drama, afforded the opportunity to experiment with the characters, why they do certain things, and their experiences. I noted that students were discussing the characters attributes, motivation, perspectives, and actions. They were comparing/contrasting and considering cause/effect. In their group discussion of the main character they tried to establish a back story for the main character in an

attempt to get at the feelings of the character. Drama provided insight into seeing the characters differently because the characters could be enacted a little differently by each student. Each student might choose to focus on a different character attribute. Simon explained how preparing for his enactment caused him to have a dialogue with the character while thinking about what the character could have done to improve the situation. In his own way, Simon seemed to be bringing the character to life.

Lewis related how he identified with the character on a personal level, saying that he too felt “looked down on and stepped on.” “I built a barrier around myself, kind of like Cole, the main character,” he lamented. He commented that the book made him think about what he would do in a similar situation. I asked him how the drama contributed to this self-awareness. Acting out the scenes made me think about how Cole really felt. I kind of had to be Cole.” Lewis told how the drama enactments helped him to better understand parts of the book. He continued to make comments of how the drama helped him.

The book was described by Simon as “relatable” because everyone has an angry side and human nature is to blame others rather than accept responsibility for one’s behavior. He pointed out that the activities helped with focus on the story because he actually saw what other people were thinking about the reading. He said it was easy to tell a lot of the students enjoyed the book because of the discussion, both in and out of class.

The Crystal Ball

Another element of engaged reading mentioned during the pre-interviews was prediction. Carl shared that his favorite genre was mystery, and he described how the plot needed to intrigue the reader, but it also needed a twist. Carl asserted that he began making predictions at the beginning of the story, but if the plot was too simplistic or didn't have a twist then the reader soon had the story figured out, and there was no reason to continue reading the book. Plot twists, Carl emphasized, were what kept the reader making predictions until the end of the story. He viewed predictions as an essential element to hold the reader's interest, and a story without this, in his opinion, would be boring to read. Carl viewed predictions as a vital part of remaining engaged with a book. One student maintained that his predictions increased with the drama activities because he wanted to act out his part with a sense of where the character was going.

How's the View?

Students were able to discuss their reader perspective during reading, demonstrating an active stance when entering the story world. A student commented that he could see himself in the story, walking around. He was in the world that was created. Another participant noted that he would become a character, but it was a character of his own creation, not simply a character from the story, that could join in the story. Simon related that he tried to see himself as the main character in order to

better understand the character's thinking and to personally identify with what the character felt. He even explained that if he read a particularly good line in a story, he would stop and repeat the line in a soft voice to himself to see how it would sound if the character was actually saying the line aloud.

One student said he followed the main character around in the story, and another verbalized that he stood next to the character. Only one of the participants saw himself as a spectator on the outside of the story watching the events unfold. I was a bit surprised at how the students actively entered the story and recognized this increased their understanding of the reading.

Reflection

Reflection usually occurred after completing the reading. Simon thought a good book caused the reader to think about how the various pieces fit together to create the whole. Students revealed somewhat of a method for evaluating the books they read. One student mentioned creating a mental timeline to review the book, and this act could help clarify certain parts of the story or allow you to enjoy again things you read in the story.

The majority considered the ending to be the most critical consideration. They wanted the ending to offer a good resolution to the story for the book to be satisfying. The ending was viewed as the key part as to whether the book was a good book. Another said the resolution was important, and he did not want to be disappointed.

Marcus laughed and said that if he even made it to the end of a book that was a good sign in itself. Besides the ending, students offered a variety of methods for evaluation. Did they look forward to reading the book at certain times? If the answer was yes that was an indication it was a good book. How did the book compare to other books the student had read? Did the story make you want to read the sequel if there was one? Upon completing the book, did it make you want to read it again? One insightful comment noted that a good book stays with you for several days. You reflect upon the events of the story and what was enjoyable about the book. Even though you may have finished reading the book, the story lingered on in your mind.

Students acknowledged they liked the ending of the book, *Spirit Bear*; however Jack and Carl were quick to share that when connecting the book's ending to life it seemed a bit simplistic. Jack focused on the injuries of the character, Peter, explaining how the traumatic event Peter experienced would likely scar an individual for life if this really happened to them. Carl explained that many people today may not feel justice was served and be angry that the character Cole did not serve time in jail even though he was a juvenile. The project of the totem pole offered students an opportunity to connect the symbols from the novel to their own lives. Lewis shared about confronting his personal issues with anger. Simon recognized that all people have fears even if they don't want to admit they do. In his opinion, a book like *Spirit Bear* could cause an individual to exam what causes fear in their life.

Don't Give Up!

Throughout the novel unit study, employing the drama enactments for the most part elicited positive student responses. Talk flowed freely among the students as they talked and planned the various activities. Before the drama enactments, Lewis often wanted to put his head down on the desk or was known to fall asleep in his classes. Yet when doing the drama enactments he participated in discussions and eagerly took on the role of a character. Lewis and Marcus often moved their chairs or selected a spot on the floor to watch the enactments. The students were anxious to perform the enactments, and a level of excitement and anticipation was observed. Each day when they entered the classroom a student would ask, "So what are kind of scene are we doing today?" When it was time to perform an enactment several of the students would desire to be first. Simon, who could be shy and not very talkative expressed interest in doing the scenes. He frequently offered to be a supporting player in other students' scenes. I asked if he had ever participated in drama before. He responded that he had not but found it to be fun because of the creativity involved in constructing the enactments.

Profile of Marcus

Data was analyzed across cases looking for common threads or themes, I also analyzed the data on each student individually to see if any patterns emerged that may not have been noticeable when looking across the group of students as a whole. I

selected Marcus for an individual case profile because reading had been a challenge for him during the years he had been enrolled at this school. He struggled with comprehension and often became confused when attempting to sequence story events. Interpretations tended to be literal, reflected confusion in sequencing of events, and demonstrated difficulty with inferences and drawing conclusions. It was frequently necessary to scaffold information to enable him to move beyond the literal level of interpretation of text. Organizational skills were one of Marcus's greatest challenges and without constant support, he would fail to complete or turn in assignments. He asserted that reading was not his thing, and no one could make him like it.

Another reason I selected Marcus to profile was because he lacked a metacognitive awareness of what he knew and did not know and failed to ask questions that would support learning. Written expression did not reflect eighth grade level thinking, frequently lacking details or an inability to summarize the text. He did not participate in discussions and remarked, "I just don't get it." Whenever I attempted to assess Marcus's understanding he told me he understood perfectly. There was an apparent disconnect between what he said and what he demonstrated through his participation and written work.

In spite of the challenges, Marcus came to class each day wearing a big smile. He seemed to be a happy, upbeat young man who enjoyed telling or hearing a good joke. He worked well both independently and with others. He got along well with all of his

classmates perhaps because he was respectful and displayed good manners. If ever he irritated someone or made a mistake, he accepted responsibility and apologized.

“Reading is not my thing:” Marcus’s Initial Views on Engaged Reading

In the pre-interview, Marcus told me with a solemn expression that he did not read for fun, finding reading neither engaging nor satisfying. He explained that a lot of the time he did not understand what he was reading so there seemed little point in spending time reading. He did acknowledge that he read a “little news online.” I asked if he enjoyed reading things on the computer, and if he viewed that the same as reading books. He said that news was often in brief clips, not lengthy stories, and if something didn’t make sense you could skip it and read the next item. Besides, he explained, a lot of the time the pictures could help you fill in the gaps. He emphasized again that he didn’t read at home; finally stating, “I don’t think there is anything that could encourage me to read books.”

When I asked why he thought he didn’t like to read if it was primarily a matter of understanding what he was reading he explained that he did not know how to find good books. His idea of a good book was an adventure book, but his primary requisite was that the book be understandable. He admitted to avoiding entire genres like science fiction because it was confusing.

In trying to explore the moves Marcus made as a reader, he discussed, “trying to turn the elements in the story into something instead of just reading the words.” I asked

him to elaborate on this idea. “I like to turn the words into something instead of just listing off the words. I have pictures in my head of what is happening. The pictures are realistic. I am outside the story looking at the story. I don’t think I’ve ever read a book where I imagined I was in the story or a part of the story.”

Marcus claimed he did not really know what an engaged reader looked like. He thought perhaps it was a person who would keep reading, stay focused, and not be easily distracted. He added that an engaged reader would not look bored. After a brief pause, he continued by saying that individuals can look focused yet not like what they are reading. He gave a personal example of reading a history book, “We have to learn it (history), and we have to stay focused to absorb the content, but no one likes reading a history book!” Marcus finally decided that an engaged reader was an individual who showed interest in the book being read.

Marcus’s View of Engaged Reading and the Drama Enactments

Marcus emphasized that he understood the story in the novel and had a 100 per cent grasp of the events. He claimed the drama activities could help you to better engage with the story if you happen to be confused. The drama activities, according to Marcus were good in that there were different personalities and in his words “mindsets” that offered the best of everything.

It was interesting to note that Marcus repeatedly reiterated that he had a 100 per cent grasp of the class novel. The drama activities he felt could be useful to those

who might not understand the story, but he was confident in his understanding. My observations of having taught Marcus in the past were that he struggled with comprehension beyond the literal level. The sequencing of events of the plot often left him confused and missing the outcome of the story. He would have little or no understanding of the plot resolution, theme or author's purpose.

When creating cutouts for the symbolic story representation, he was unable to think of ways to represent the characters. He told me, "I just don't know enough about the characters to make a symbol for them." I directed him to begin with the setting because that might be easier and would give him more time to think about the characters. He agreed that would be easier and set about to make a tree to symbolize the island.

As the class worked on the cutouts there was discussion among the students of the symbols. Marcus again said he didn't know how to portray Peter. A classmate said, "Well he's a victim. He's seriously injured. Use that. I'm doing a red splotch to represent his blood." Marcus politely thanked the student and quickly decided to use a cane to symbolize the victim in the story. He wandered around the room noticing what others had chosen for their symbols then returned to his desk and again set to work. Within a few minutes he created a red open heart for the main character, Cole, which represented an empty heart. He decided to portray the scene of Cole returning to the island to serve out his term set by the Circle Justice. Later upon completion of his scene

he admitted that he didn't recall many of the details from the reading causing him to talk with his classmates about the story to learn the details he thought were valuable to acting out his SSR scene.

Marcus finally stopped telling me that he understood the story. "I'm the kind of person that needs direct directions like the five year old edition. I think the drama activities can help you remember. It helps you get things into your long term memory," he proclaimed.

When participating in the Radio Show, Marcus called the radio station and his comments revealed insightful growth in his observations. "I want to clarify what the Circle Justice program is about. Rather than just putting someone in jail we put them through a process of healing and becoming a better person and in this way they won't be going back to jail, but could possibly save someone's life or impact their community. This program needs people to be willing to do it, to improve it, and get it into other cities," he solemnly shares. Later during the enactment, Marcus interjects a couple of additional comments as he questioned the main character Cole about becoming a better person and the necessity for him to understand that being angry was no solution to his problems.

When asked later what the book was saying to him at this point in the reading, he explained that it was a book about morals and ethics. How people should not do bad things, and if they do, a healing process is needed to restore the individual. This was a

most insightful observation for Marcus. He appeared to be connecting with the reading and moving beyond just a literal understanding.

Marcus's personal reflection revealed he felt comfortable with the performance of the Radio Show enactment; the collaboration with the other students helped him to get into the story a lot more, the preparation phase helped him focus significantly more on the specific ideas and details of the story, and he found the drama to be a lot of fun. In spite of these positive comments he noted on the reflection that his understanding stayed the same, and then interjected, "I understand it (the story)."

During the class reflection for the Radio Show, Marcus made eight contributions to the discussion which was a significant increase from his one or two comments that sometimes required prompting. He explained to the class how to capture the essence of a character by thinking about the character's role. Using the example of the attorneys in the book, he described how you must think like a lawyer. Your job is serious, dealing with serious situations that can have a long-term effect on people's lives. Your questions and contributions to the drama must keep that in mind so that you are realistic in the portrayal of a lawyer. In Marcus's view this was how you portrayed a character, with seriousness or the enactment would be fun with little learned from the activity.

During the Tableau, the second video recorded enactment, Marcus became more of a bystander rather than a participant. At the end of the enactment he explained his role was a bystander who watched as Cole viciously attacked Peter. In the group

reflection that followed the enactment, Marcus was critical of his group stating that the planning was not well executed. He complained the two other students in the group became caught up in thinking about costumes rather than what they would portray for the tableau. He felt this hindered the performance. His seriousness toward the drama enactments continued to be apparent.

The continuing personal reflections revealed that Marcus saw his understanding as staying the same. While he felt comfortable doing the enactments, he did not feel the collaborations made a significant contribution to his learning nor did the activities help him to focus on the specific ideas and details in the story. He did reiterate at the conclusion of each enactment that the performance was fun, and he encouraged me to continue teaching literature using drama.

In my researcher's journal, I noted that Marcus often sat leaning forward on the edge of his chair as if to not miss anything. When others presented drama scenes, he sometimes moved his chair saying that he needed a good seat for the performance. He enthusiastically applauded and complimented his fellow students on their drama scenes. His comments made during the Radio Show enactment as a Circle Justice member reflected a deeper level of understanding of the reading than he had previously shared.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study. The pre-interview data was presented separately from the remaining data in order to distinguish the influence of participating in the drama enactments upon engaged reading. This was followed by a section on the class novel, *Touching Spirit Bear*, and then the descriptions of reading offered by the participants after utilizing the creative drama enactments during reading instruction. An individual case profile of Marcus was included to see if any patterns emerged that may not have been noticed when looking across cases. In the pre-interviews the students stated that engaged readers attempt to select good books and abandon boring books. Other themes that were revealed and echoed during the creative drama enactments were: the following: engaged readers are focused, take an aesthetic stance, interact with others, do not give up, and are aware of and demonstrate their thinking through visualizing, predicting, making connections, taking a reader's stance, and reflecting. A summary and discussion of these findings follows in chapter five.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter will present a review of the Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Research, Research Question, Review of the Methodology, Summary and Discussion of Findings, Conclusions, Implications for Future Practice, and Implications for Future Research.

Statement of the Problem

The majority of classrooms have relied upon the traditional information driven approach for instruction. Teachers share the information with students being the passive receptacles of that information (Wilhelm, 2007). Allington (2001) proclaims that schools have done a better job of teaching the basic literacy skills, such as word recognition and literal comprehension, rather than teaching the higher-order thinking skills and strategies. Sadly, the patterns in schools in the U.S. of recitation, questioning and discussion have served to reinforce unengaged readers' passivity and the attitude that meaning is to be received from the text rather than constructed (Pianata et al., 2007; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998; Wilhelm 2008).

The emphasis in many classrooms is on the mastery of skills. This bottom up approach has had the longest influence on basal readers and reading programs,

continuing to dominate many classrooms, particularly the LD classroom (Heward, 2006). Motivating these adolescents to read critically from an engaged stance is an indispensable requirement of literacy instruction because adolescent readers face increasingly complex material, may risk aliteracy (Brinda, 2007), need to develop a positive reader identity to facilitate life-long reading (Strommen & Mates, 2004), and they live in a world with increased literacy demands (Allington, 2001).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore how creative drama instruction increases the reading engagement of eighth grade students with learning disabilities. A marked decline in the interest of adolescents for reading in school, along with a commonly expressed theme of boredom and disengagement (Steinberg, 2005), makes hearing the adolescents' perspectives about reading engagement of value (Brinda, 2007; Mizzelle, 1997; Oldfather, 2002) when addressing the literacy needs of these students. Once teachers can understand how their students feel about reading, they can help students to engage in successful learning (Vlach & Burcie, 2010). When monotony and task completion characterize classroom instruction, students are less likely to engage intellectually (Schussler, 2009).

Research Question

The following research question that guided the study was interpretive in nature.

How does creative drama instruction increase the reading engagement of eighth grade students with learning disabilities?

Review of the Methodology

Narrative inquiry with its power to elicit voice was used in this study to explore the participant stories about reading engagement. Pre- and post-interviews, student reflective questionnaires, group reflective conversations, audio and video recordings of the creative drama enactments, artifacts, researcher journal, and archival school records were sources of data. I analyzed data both across cases and within cases in an attempt to notice if any different themes emerged when looking at the class as a whole. The qualitative research design enabled me to use narrative approaches for data collection to understand the way things are and what it means from the perspectives of the research participants (Merriam, 1998, 2002; Mills, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) particularly when participating in creative drama enactments. Narrative inquiry provided the framework through which I explored and sought to understand the lived literacy experiences of the participants. Numerous researchers (Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Paris & Oka, 1986; Schunk, 1985) assert that the attitudes, values, expectations and beliefs that individuals possess play a vital role in engagement with reading and other literacy processes.

Pre- and post-interviews were conducted individually with each student asked to share observations of both themselves and others as readers. We followed a seven

week timeline for creative drama enactments (see Table 2). Enactments were introduced in the following order: Choral Montage, Radio Show, Symbolic Story Representation, Hot Seating, Tableau, Round Robin Monologue, and another Symbolic Story Representation.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The voices of eighth grade students in this study emphatically demonstrated that creative drama instruction increased reading engagement in multiple ways. Themes that occurred when creative drama was used as an instructional tool to foster reading engagement were: engaged readers are focused, interact with others, take an aesthetic stance, demonstrate their thinking, recognize a reader's stance, and don't give up. These themes fit within the framework for engagement by Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) with some themes fitting into more than one dimension. Using this engaged reading framework, a brief discussion of each of these themes follows in the next section.

Listening to the students' voices in this study revealed that they wished to have a selection of interesting reading material, found working collaboratively extended learning, employed some reading strategies, were willing to work hard when enthusiastic about the learning, and engaged in dialogue about the story that reflected deeper thinking. The most important characteristic they expressed was a desire to enjoy

reading. I was pleased with the interest and effort given by the students toward the collaborative preparations for the drama enactments.

Each day the students came into class enthusiastically asking, “So what are we doing today? Will we be planning and presenting?” When it was time to present the drama enactments several of the boys would wildly wave arms in the air, requesting to be chosen first to present to the class. The enthusiasm was contagious. I sensed that the students were seeing that reading was much more than answering questions and taking tests. It could be a pleasurable experience.

Caine and Caine (1991) drew correlations between reading and drama.

Effective learning always involves the alternation of several states of arousal. One of the fundamental reasons schools fail is that they impose on learners a single state of unrelieved boredom. The comparative importance of states of arousal can be seen in the power of entertainment and the arts....Intelligent orchestration in teaching includes an understanding of these states of arousal and borrows from theater such elements as timing and the ability to create anticipation, drama and excitement. (31-32).

I was pleasantly surprised at the sophisticated comments shared by the students regarding reading engagement. This group of adolescents willingly partnered with me in this learning journey to discover more about reading engagement, and the experience deepened our respect and strengthened our relationships with one another. Having utilized the drama enactments as an instructional tool to improve reading engagement, I cannot imagine moving forward without regularly implementing this instructional

approach into my lessons. Smith and Herring (2001) assert that we need to foster the creative attitudes and activities rather than putting the focus on teaching sets of skills or teaching texts.

Behavioral Engagement

The most frequent characteristic described by the participants of an engaged reader was how the reader was totally immersed in a book and not easily distracted. During preparation for one of the drama enactment's students discussed the characters' personality attributes, motivations, perspectives and actions. They talked about cause and effect as I listened to the group discussing how the main character's parents had contributed to their son's problems. My past experience showed me that student led discussions required close monitoring or there was a tendency for the talk to go off topic. This was definitely not the case as students shared ideas and created questions for the Radio Show drama enactment.

These qualities were evidence of behavioral engagement. Behavioral engagement, according to Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003), may be viewed as the active performance of academic tasks. Behavioral engagement involves observable behavior whereby the teacher can see students engaged in terms of their effort, working hard, instead of being easily distracted, not giving up when the work becomes more difficult rather than giving minimal effort, and asking for help when needed. Higher achieving students give good effort, are persistent with tasks, and ask for help when needed

(Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004; Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Wilhelm, 1994). As the students collaborated on the drama preparations, I would occasionally overhear one student ask another for clarification on a passage of the reading. Marcus sought Carl's help when he confused two of the minor characters in the story. Jack asked for help when he did not know how to represent a character for the Symbolic Story Representation. Students seemed to develop a network of support and encouragement among themselves.

Creative drama provided students the opportunity to prepare enactments throughout the reading and through these activities to have conversations that made comprehension more visible. When drama presentations were being performed, the students gave good eye contact and quietly gave their attention to the performers (something that can be a rarity in a class of students with ADHD). Frequently two of the students leaned forward in their chairs while they watched the presentations. Students with smiling faces readily burst into applause at the completion of the enactments as if affirming a job well done. On one occasion after the radio show enactment, Randall leapt from his chair, wearing a big smile, threw both arms overhead and let out a whoop. He was obviously pleased with his effort. Randall time and again repeated that he appreciated the students had the opportunity to move around and be physically active because he felt it resulted in improved learning.

Rosenblatt (1978) asserts that “the benefits of literature can emerge only from creative activity on the part of the reader himself” (p. 276). Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) acknowledge that talking about a book is very different from acting as if you are the characters. I observed this unfold before my eyes as students took on the voice, mannerisms, thoughts, and actions of the characters through the drama enactments. Rosenblatt (1978) asserts that “the benefits of literature can emerge only from creative activity on the part of the reader himself” (p. 276). Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) acknowledge that talking about a book is very different from acting as if you are the characters. I was having the opportunity to watch this unfold before my eyes as students took on the voice, mannerisms, thoughts, and actions of the characters.

Cognitive Engagement

Students demonstrated their thinking through the following processes: taking an aesthetic stance, visualizing, predicting, making connections, thinking and acting like a character, taking a reader’s stance, and reflecting. These processes demonstrate cognitive engagement.

It is more difficult to ascertain if a student is cognitively engaged because a student can appear behaviorally engaged but not be cognitively engaged, that is, the student can be thinking about something else even when looking at the teacher. Cognition is difficult to know because we cannot observe the internal process of a student’s thinking. Language is one way to assess cognition (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2008).

Cognition focuses on what students do when they read and the content that is expected to be learned by the reader. Cognition involves using prior knowledge, questioning, applying necessary reading strategies, and constructing meaning from text through interaction with the text (Afflerbach, 2004).

Cognitive engagement was evident as students took an aesthetic stance toward reading which is to experience or live through the text. For many readers they tend to read everything from an efferent stance, approaching literature with a goal of gathering information, and this attitude distances the reader from the text. The reader is unable to discover what the text means to them because they cannot successfully enter the story or focus on how they are feeling, their emotions, and pictures that enter their mind while reading (Hall, Burns, & Edwards, 2011). It is through the aesthetic stance that the reader experiences joy while reading. Drama, according to Wilhelm (2008), is able to support students in this purpose by helping them to enter the story, live in the moment as they read, and develop a deeper understanding of the characters and story events.

I was reminded by these comments that in learning, oftentimes it is the process rather than the product, where the most learning occurs. I was unaware at the time that I was echoing words from the 1920s by John Dewey whereby knowledge is the means rather than the end product of education (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

Hall and associates (2011) state that teachers often simply assign chapters to read without explaining what the students are to learn. Drama can provide knowledge goals when they attempt to identify the setting or portray the character in the story. Similarly, Schunk and Rice (1993) demonstrated that when students had knowledge goals for reading, their comprehension increased as well as self-efficacy. Students with LD often fail to see reading as an active process. These readers fail to hear what Beers (2003) calls the “internal dialogue” a good reader has with the text or with himself while reading. They do not understand that reading requires activity on their part or what Rosenblatt (1978) calls the transactional nature of reading.

Participants recognized some of the mental activities that occurred during the reading process such as visualizing, relating to the characters, making connections, and predicting. Prediction was viewed as an enjoyable process, and if a book did not intrigue the reader to make predictions then it was likely not a good book. One student maintained that his predictions increased with the drama activities because he wanted to act out his part with a sense of where the character was going.

When cutouts for the Symbolic Story Representation were created, they walked about the room gathered supplies and noticed how the other students had chosen to portray a character or setting. It seemed the act of thinking about and preparing the scenes for presentation contributed directly to increased understanding.

Students began to bring the characters to life. When acting in a character's role Simon felt he brought the character to life and was giving a soul to the character. Drama, afforded the opportunity to experiment with the characters, their experiences, and why they behaved in particular ways. Students discussed the characters attributes, motivations, perspectives, and actions. They were comparing/contrasting and considering cause/effect. In the group discussions about the main character, they tried to establish a back story for the main character in an attempt to get at the feelings of the character. Drama provided insight into seeing the characters differently because the characters could be enacted a little differently by each student, according to the attribute they chose to focus upon.

As the class reflected on a drama enactment, Randall said, "This helps us to think about the scenes in the book better, what we think, about the book, what happens in our own minds." Randall was acknowledging the mental activity or cognitive awareness that was transpiring as a result of the drama activities. Marcus explained how the drama caused him to think about the elements in the story. "I processed the words and turned them into something instead of just listing off the words," he explained. Marcus seemed to be saying that he was not simply reading the print on the page but the story was coming to life for him.

Motivational Engagement

Each day when they entered the classroom a student would ask, “So what kind of scene are we doing today?” When it was time to perform an enactment several of the students desired to be first. Simon, who could be shy and not very talkative, expressed interest in doing the scenes. He frequently offered to be a supporting player in other students’ scenes. In the beginning, Marcus sometimes struggled to understand the characters actions or confused the sequence of the story line. He discovered that when he talked with his fellow students it supported his understanding and helped him to know how to envision his drama enactment. He then performed with more confidence. He took responsibility for his efforts, demonstrating that he was a motivated learner.

According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), motivation is crucial to engagement because it guides cognition and activates behavior. Motivation refers to the goals that students are striving to reach, the choices they select among several actions, and their persistence when difficulties are encountered in pursuing their goals (Bandura, 1997; Reed, Schallert, Beth, & Woodruff, 2004; & Schunk 1989, 1991). Smith and Herring (2001) assert that we need to foster the creative attitudes and activities rather than putting the focus on teaching sets of skills or teaching texts. Encouraging this creative approach is more conducive to genuine learning.

Students were engaged in terms of their effort, hard work, not being easily distracted, and not giving up when the work became a challenge. Students became adept at asking one another for help when needed. Higher achieving students give good effort, are persistent with tasks, and ask for help when needed (Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004; Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Wilhelm, 1994). Guthrie and colleagues (2006) assert that providing a variety of interesting texts and allowing struggling readers choice in what they read, the tasks they complete using the texts, and the peers they interact with while reading, increases motivation and supports engagement.

Social Engagement

The atmosphere of fun created with the drama enactments contributed to a closer sense of community within the classroom. Not only did the students have fun, I too experienced a sense of renewed energy as I learned alongside my students. There was a sense of enthusiasm whereby the students supported and encouraged one another as this evolved into a process of collaboration.

The social dimension recognizes the engaged reader has both individualistic and collective dimensions, attending not only to the motivations and knowledge of the individual, but also to the interactions with others inside and outside the classroom (Fresch, 2008). Within many classrooms, engaged readers are interacting with peers socially to construct meaning of texts (Almasi, 1995; Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006) and

participate in communities of discourse as a natural part of schooling (Gee & Green, 1998; Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, & Rice, 1996).

Time and again the participants mentioned how the collaborative process contributed to better understanding of the novel. The students engaged in book talk with seriousness as they created scenes to be enacted. Bakhtin (1986) acknowledges the need for multiple viewpoints when trying to achieve complex understandings, and collaborative relationships permit multiple viewpoints to be part of the learning process. The discussions helped the students gain entrance into the story and provided them a way to understand and value multiple perspectives (Minnick & Mergil, 2008). Drama preparation involves both teacher and students in a different kind of relationship that leads to a more democratic, responsive, and effective kind of learning that helps students to do what they cannot do alone (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Students experienced being a team player, a sense of community. Students mentioned in the pre-interviews how engaged readers often talked about or recommended to others a book they were reading. The use of drama stimulated conversation. Students mentioned talking about the book, even outside of class. On one particular day they were lined up outside of my classroom door awaiting permission to enter. As I went out the door to the classroom I overheard two of my students engaged in conversation with students from another class. They were discussing our novel. Randall told me they were telling

the other students about the book they were reading and offered recommendations of the book.

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Emotional Engagement

The most frequently used word by the participants in describing the drama enactments was fun. During one of the class reflections I asked if having fun made a difference in being an engaged reader. Students claimed they would be more engaged with a story, if they were having fun, rather than feeling as if forced to do an assignment. Affirmation of this sense of fun was evident in the smiles, laughter, eagerness to participate, and appreciation with applause when they watched fellow students perform. They described their peers as “being lively, happy, and energetic” and expressed how the drama enactments helped them get into the book and be more engaged. A climate of joy for learning was present in our classroom. Students viewed themselves as engaged because they were “having fun and really involved.”

Emotional engagement describes enjoying academic tasks and expressing enthusiasm about learning (Fredricks, Blumenfield, and Paris, 2004). Long and Gove (2003) report the need for students to connect with texts emotionally by becoming avid

and enthusiastic readers and writers. This emotional connection leads to sharing thoughts about what is read with others. One of the most important characteristics of emotional engagement is fostering positive attitudes to enhance a sense of belongingness and respect.

This was what Edmiston (1998) called “the curriculum of enthusiasm.” This is the unbounded energy that can be infectious among the students as they discover the simple joy of learning when experiencing the drama activities. An example was two of the students, Marcus and Lewis, actively participated and shared in the discussions, something that they did not typically do without teacher prompting. These two students eagerly engaged in the enactments and sat on the edge of their seats when watching fellow students perform.

This behavior exemplifies the reader’s intrinsic motivation and enjoyment of reading activities that are performed for their own sake (Deci, 1992) and pursued during free time (Morrow, 1996). Wigfield and Guthrie (2008) describe this as representing the personal or individualistic dimension of engaged reading.

Smith and Herring (2001) claim that we need to foster the creative attitudes and activities rather than putting the focus on teaching sets of skills or teaching texts. Encouraging this creative approach is more conducive to genuine learning. When observations of classrooms reveal that students spend over 90% of their class time

passively listening to the teacher and little time working together, the classroom becomes a dull uninspiring place.

Our journey of learning and implementing drama enactments came to an end. Students had overwhelmingly reflected that they felt comfortable doing the enactments, shared how the experiences had helped them to enter into the story, improved understanding, supported focus with ideas and details of the story, and provided opportunities to have fun with reading. Drama had added a needed spark of creativity to our literature class. It had put the fun back in learning. While some may shake their heads that fun is hardly a worthy attribute to justify using drama in the literature classroom, students voiced the importance of enjoying learning. Drama supported us in finding a sense of wonder and energy within our curriculum.

Conclusions

Students were able to demonstrate what they knew using creative drama by being required to perform, write, discuss, listen, problem-solve, reflect on thinking, think critically, interact, create, build relationships, play, have fun, yet be powerfully engaged with the novel study (Smith & Herring, 2001). Drama became a learning process that eliminated students' passivity and fostered individual, as well as, collaborative learning.

The participants in this study displayed to varying degrees an awareness of the elements of engaged reading. Students revealed that engaged readers are focused,

engaged readers interact with others, demonstrate their thinking, take an aesthetic stance, attempt to select good books, and abandon books that are boring. According to Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003), engagement is viewed as the active performance of tasks where the teacher observes students to give effort, work hard, and not be easily distracted. Engagement is demonstrated through language (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2008) and the use of reading strategies that may reveal students' thinking (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Additionally, engagement possesses a social component whereby students interact with others and participate in a community of discourse (Gee & Green, 1998; Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, & Rice 1996). Emotional engagement was apparent as students enjoyed the creative drama tasks and expressed enthusiasm about learning (Fredricks, Blumenfield, and Paris, 2004).

Upon reflection of the novel unit drama enactments, I had observed the students take an aesthetic stance toward the reading as they experienced the text by taking on the role of story characters and developed a deeper understanding of the story events. The participants interacted with one another regarding the text both in and out of the classroom. Inside the classroom the interactions fostered both a collaborative process and a sense of community. The cognitive dimension was demonstrated as students shared their thinking. Thought processes revealed visualizing, connecting with the characters, predicting, awareness of the reader's stance, and reflecting. Effort was evident as students completed the activities and conferred with

one another or asked me questions when clarification was needed. Processes I observed with the participants are reflected in the literature on engaged reading.

For example, the profile of Marcus revealed that he had an insightful revelation at the end of the drama enactments. “I’m the kind of person that needs direct directions like the five year old edition. I think the drama activities can help you remember. It helps you get things into your long term memory,” he proclaimed. When asked later what the book was saying to him at this point in the reading, he explained that it was a book about morals and ethics. How people should not do bad things, and if they do, a healing process is needed to restore the individual. This was a most insightful observation for Marcus. He appeared to be connecting with the reading.

Marcus’s personal reflection revealed he felt comfortable with the performance of the Radio Show enactment; the collaboration with the other students helped him to enter the story and gain understanding, the preparation phase helped him focus significantly more on the specific ideas and details of the story, and he found the drama to be a lot of fun. In spite of these positive comments he noted on the reflective questionnaire that his understanding stayed the same, and then interjected, “I understand it (the story).”

I had selected Marcus for the case study because of his struggle with comprehension and reluctance to participate in text discussions. When he participated in the drama enactments Marcus solicited help from his classmates to clarify story

elements in preparation for the enactments. He interacted with peers more often than did the other students as he attempted to gain improved understanding. He took his roles seriously and expressed a desire to perform his enactments well. I noted that Marcus's participation in class discussions increased during the seven week time frame of implementing creative drama, counting eight comments during one class discussion. Not only did he contribute more frequently to the discussions, but his interpretations reflected improved understanding rather than his typical remark of "I just don't get it." Whenever I complemented his worthy contributions to the discussion he beamed and thanked me. Marcus seemed pleased that he was an integral part of the group rather than withdrawing to the sidelines of the class. Like several of the other students Marcus was observed to smile and even posture himself on the edge of his seat during the drama enactments.

Two components of this journey that were particularly noticeable throughout the study were the social nature of learning and the sense of enjoyment. Learning that is relational is always more engaging than learning alone (Wilhelm & Smith, 2007). According to Guthrie and Davis (2003), collaboration creates interdependence among students as they work toward a goal. The planning and preparation of the drama enactments provided interactions with texts and peers that contributed to their interpretations. These discussions were not merely occasions for sharing answers or one's interpretations but rather opportunities for students to begin transforming

themselves as readers and thinkers (Hall, Burns, & Edwards, 2011). Beers (2003) says it is more critical to have struggling readers talk about texts during the reading experience than after it. Drama preparation involves both teacher and students in a different kind of relationship that leads to a more democratic, responsive, and effective kind of learning that helps students to do what they cannot do alone (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). As the students supported, encouraged, and collaborated with one another, engagement was the result.

Cambourne (1995) stated, that efforts may result in little or no engagement in reading unless the students agree to “have a go” at participating (p. 185). We cannot “fix” struggling readers, but we can provide the environment, structure, content, opportunities, and encouragement for them to join discussions, collaborate, and improve. Doing so can support the students in learning to value reading (Hall, Burns, & Edwards, 2011).

Another important component was the joy experienced by the students and myself as we discovered the fun in doing the drama enactments. A sense of fun is often sadly absent from many classrooms. The teacher who feels the role of teaching is all about the work or meeting standards through curriculum implementation misses out on the fun of teaching. Routman (2003) poses a relevant question to all of us who each day stands before students. “What am I doing to ensure that kids are joyful about reading and writing?”

Wilhelm's (2008) work provided the general framework for this study as he recognized resistance and lack of engagement were compelling issues and sought to discover how less engaged readers might be helped to reconceive of reading as a creative and personally meaningful pursuit. He believed that drama and art could help develop response and awareness of readerly activities in his less engaged readers. This study confirmed Wilhelm's findings in that my students with LD discovered that reading could be enjoyable and engaging. Equally important was the fact that some of the students moved beyond literal comprehension to demonstrating higher-order thinking skills and strategies.

As the researcher, I was aware of the Hawthorne Effect that refers to a phenomenon in which participants alter their behavior as a result of being part of an experiment or study. Participants may change their behavior due to attention they are receiving from the researcher (Levitt & List, 2011). While I cannot disregard this effect with total certainty, I felt it likely had minimal effect in this study for a number of reasons. One is that I had a lengthy relationship with all but one of the participants, and I do not believe that students are as apt to attempt to impress someone they have known over time, an insider, as they may be to impress an outsider doing the research. Another reason was the fact that many of the participants had ADHD with a tendency toward impulsivity and social skills that could be delayed resulting in brutal frankness

and honesty on their part (Dendy, 1995). Finally was the possibility that middle school students in general are not as likely to be teacher pleasers as are younger students.

I also had past experience of implementing techniques I found in professional journals or through professional development activities. What I observed was students would be willing for a brief time to try something new but rarely would incorporate the technique into their learning where application would occur independently. Some of the approaches I attempted were think alouds, reciprocal teaching, concept oriented reading instruction, story structure, and multiple strategy instructional methods. While each approach could offer some benefit to my students, none provided the response I hoped to achieve from the students regarding an enthusiasm to apply the technique to reading with improved reading engagement being the result.

Creative drama seemed to work better for my students than anything I had tried. It encouraged collaboration and application of learning toward developing higher-level thinking skills with a heightened sense of fun. Did all of the enactments work equally well? Students exhibited an excitement to try all of the drama enactments introduced. However, based on the independent student reflections and the class reflective conversations, the activities enjoyed the most were the radio show, hot seat, and tableau. The reasons the students offered for this selection of activities were that these particular enactments called for more intense role playing and more time in collaborating with others in preparation for the performance of the scenes. Intense role

playing for the students meant greater physical involvement in performing the scenes. Students expressed how they enjoyed physically moving about during the learning process. For students with LD many of whom are also diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD), creative drama affords them the opportunity to physically move around. This method of instruction fits the students' learning styles to a greater degree than trying to keep them sitting still and quiet. Their abundance of energy is channeled in a creative, constructive way, which may have been a reason for the students' engagement.

Implications for Future Practice

I realize this is a small class of seven participants in an LD setting and results cannot be generalized beyond these students. However, the students do have important stories to tell. Conley and Hinchman (2004) suggested that adolescents "can contribute immeasurably to the diagnoses of their literacy-related needs" (p. 44). We need to listen to the voices of the students and begin to share in conversations in accordance with what we hear.

The setting for this study was unique in that it was a school for students with learning disabilities. The school seeks to prepare the students for college entry. With this comes the responsibility to provide instruction that offers meaningful opportunities for success with the broader curriculum (Heward, 2006). This begins with instruction that has the potential for changing readers with LD into eager, active readers. Drama

can serve as the medium to motivate the students to read critically from an engaged stance which is indispensable to literacy success.

Perhaps the most intriguing discovery was that the responses to the creative drama are similar to responses to this instructional approach from non-LD students. This is important in that it says something about the assumptions of students with LD in the literature. The positive results found in this study were not simply comparable to other students with LD but similar to students in regular classrooms (Heathcote, 1990; Wilhelm, 2008). Drama was an equalizer. This went to the heart of the research question of how results indicated that drama could improve reading engagement in for students with LD.

Alvermann (2003) suggested the temptation to “fix” learners when instead the central objective should be on creating learning conditions to meet their needs. This becomes paramount when we consider that Biancarosa and Snow (2004) reported eight million adolescents who struggled with reading. It is believed that little more than one third of high school seniors now read proficiently. “Reading ability is a key predictor of achievement in mathematics and science. Youth today need more advanced literacy skills than those required by any previous generation” (Kamil et al., 2008, p. 1).

For the students with LD, reading can be a passive exercise with students holding negative attitudes toward reading, expressing boredom, and doubting their intellectual abilities to achieve success (Klassen, 2007; Litch & Kirstner, 1986; Oldfather, 2002;

Steinberg, 2005; Roberts, Torgesent, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008). This can reinforce a negative view of reading for these students. Drama proved beneficial in engaging students in thoughtful literary discussions about what they were reading and learning with enthusiasm. As Wilhelm (2002) aptly states, the point of all reading, and of all learning activity, “is to change our understanding, and as a result, our ways of thinking and being in the world” (p. 98).

According to Wigent (2013), while there are clear expectations for what high school students should do when they read; there is a lack of research on what they actually do when they read. Listening to the student voices provides a window into the students’ reading processes.

Considering instructional approaches that would support students with LD to develop a positive reader identity and build life-long reading habits are essential. A benefit of creative drama is that it does not require special materials or extensive training of the teacher for implementation. It can be implemented across curricula supporting students in building higher-level thinking skills while engaging in thoughtful literacy discussions with enthusiasm.

Implications for Future Research

As the study wound to a close, I was left with one question. Once we hear the voices of the students where do we go from here? The reason for this question was that in 1999, the International Reading Association’s position statement on adolescent

literacy suggested that adolescents deserve a wide range of materials, instruction that includes both skill development and motivation, assessment that identifies strengths as well as weaknesses, comprehension strategy instruction, and reading specialists to help struggling readers. Ten years later, according to Alvermann (2003), few of these recommendations are being met in schools. After another ten years, authors of the 2012 revisions of the International Reading Association Adolescent Literacy Statement maintain that, although there has been progress. Sadly “there is still work to be done” (p. 13). Therefore, it is not enough to hear the voices of the adolescents; we must be willing to implement changes to meet the literacy needs of the students. As Wilhelm (2002) eloquently stated, the point of all reading, and of all learning activity, “is to change our understanding, and as a result, our ways of thinking and being in the world” (98).

Another implication for research is the element of physical movement. To what degree might the physical activity in creative drama enhance learning particularly for the students with LD? It may increase engagement through enjoyment of the activities, but what is the impact of movement on memory or the remembering of learning. Along this same line is the connection to virtual gaming. Gee (2007) argues that educators and researchers can use what we know about how gaming engages students to improve their school instruction. Since creative drama and virtual gaming are both essentially

role playing, future researchers might examine if creative drama is engaging to students for some of the same reasons that video games are engaging.

A good place to begin is for individual teachers to do their own research within their own classrooms. They can observe what the students say and do, note the problems, talk with the students, give drama or other forms of creative learning such as art or music a try and observe whether the students are excited and empowered by the changes. Students with LD frequently require multiple repetitions to commit learning to memory. Drama provides a creative means for repetition or reteaching when needed.

Summary

Literacy learning does not need to be limited to reading and answering questions at the end of a chapter. Other sign systems like drama and physical movement may provide an opportunity for reluctant students or students with LD to become more engaged in reading activities. Having experienced the changes in my own classroom over a seven week period, I cannot envision teaching without using the creative tool of drama to enhance reading engagement. Drama in literature encourages students to engage in independent, spontaneous, and reflective thinking (Smith & Herring, 2001). If students with LD are to learn higher-level thinking skills, then instruction needs to offer ways in which students have opportunities to develop and exercise these skills. Drama enactments in the classroom provide a basis for learning by doing. According to the voices of my participants they all endorsed the use of drama as a fun activity that could

extend learning. Through listening to the students' voices I experienced a shared sense of openness and trust or what Marshall and Rossman (2011) call a process of sincere collaboration. Our drama preparation involved both teacher and students in a different kind of relationship that led to a more democratic, responsive, and effective kind of learning that helped students do what they could not do alone (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

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APPENDIX A

PRE- AND POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Data Collection Instruments

Pre-Interview Questions

1. How often would you say you read in a week? How much of that time is for pleasure and how much is for school related assignments?
2. What would a person who is really interested in a book look like to you?
3. How do you go about selecting a book you think you would be interested in reading?
4. Tell me about your first impressions of a book. What do you notice? Does it influence your reading, maybe how you read it or if you want to read it?
5. Once you have that book, think about what it is like when you begin reading the book. Tell me about the process you go through at the beginning of a new book, your thoughts or feelings.
6. When you were reading it, did you see pictures in your head? Please explain.
7. Did you feel as if things in the story were happening to you or were you on the outside, more of an observer?

8. How do you decide if the book measures up to what you thought it would be or maybe how you evaluate the book?

Post-Interview Questions

1. Did you feel that you were able to get into this book? Please explain?

2. Could you tell me about your experiences/feelings/thoughts while reading this book?

3. Did the drama help you in any way to get into the story or better understand the story? Explain.

4. What did you like or dislike about the creative drama process?

5. What are your thoughts or impressions about your classmates being engaged or not engaged with this book when experiencing the drama activities? What did you notice?

6. What else would you like to tell me?

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIVE DRAMA QUESTIONNAIRE

Individual Reflective Drama Questionnaire

- a. During the preparation of the creative drama enactment I felt
 - (1) very comfortable (2) comfortable (3) slightly uncomfortable (4) very uncomfortable
- b. Collaborating with other students about the story helped me get into the story
 - (1) a lot more (2) slightly more (3) didn't make a difference one way or the other
- c. The preparation of the drama activity helped me to focus on specific ideas and details of the story
 - (1) a lot more (2) slightly more (3) not at all
- d. Presenting the drama enactment to the class was
 - (1) a lot of fun (2) slightly fun (3) boring and not enjoyable
- e. As a result of doing the drama activity, my understanding of the reading
 - (1) improved a lot (2) improved a little (3) stayed the same (4) was more confused
- f. Are there any other comments you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX C

GROUP REFLECTIVE CONVERSATION QUESTIONS

Group Reflective Conversation Questions

Questions are grouped in the order of the weeks they will be used.

Entering the story and knowing the characters

1. Could you tell me about your first impressions of this book? What are you noticing? Is it influencing your reading, maybe how you read or if you want to read this book?
2. Can you tell me what your experience has been upon beginning this book?
3. What clues do you use for seeing the story world?
4. How do you go about creating the character in your mind?
5. Do you create a relationship with the character? Does the character feel like a friend, or are you watching the character?
6. What clues do you have about the character's personality?
7. Do you like the character? For what reasons?
8. What problems do you see for the character?

Character and Perspective

1. What personal experience have you had that helps you better understand these characters?
2. What do you feel about the character? Setting? Incident?
3. Did you feel the same as the people in the story?
4. Did you feel the story happened in the past?

Taking Perspective

1. Do you ever feel like you become the character?
2. Do you feel empathy with the character?
3. Do you feel emotion in relation to the character, activities and situations?
4. Do you make judgments about the character and character actions?

Comparing/Connections

1. Do you connect the story experience to your own life?
2. What things in your life are similar to some of the things that are happening to characters in the story?
3. Do the characters remind you of anyone you know?

4. Is there anything happening in the book that makes you aware of your own life?
5. Have you learned anything important about other people?
6. Has your understanding of others increased?
7. Has the book influenced what you believe in or what you think is right or true?

Actions and Events

1. How do you use the book's (text) clues to create images of situations in the story?
2. Did you feel you were an observer or as if things were happening to you?
3. What is the point of a particular event or description? (Will cite a specific event from the novel)
4. What idea was the author exploring through this story?
5. What is the connection between events that are seemingly unrelated? (Will cite a specific event from the novel)
6. What did the author leave for you to explain or fill in?
7. Why was a certain character or passage included in the story?

Author/Reader Transaction

1. What kind of person is the author?

2. How do you feel about the way the story is told?
3. Is there anything you enjoyed or were irritated with about the way the book is written?
4. What do you feel is the most significant word/passage/event from the story?
5. If the author asked you to improve the story, what would you say?

Understanding One's Reading Processes

1. What kind of reader was the book written for?
2. Are you that kind of reader?
3. Where were you as you were reading? Did you hear the words being said in your head?
4. Whose voice did you hear?
5. What is the most important thing about the story for you?
6. What might you do differently the next time you read?
7. What are your goals for the next time you read?

APPENDIX D

DATA ANALYSIS: AN EXAMPLE OF TWO PATTERNS THAT DEVELOPED FROM THE DATA

Data Analysis: An Example of Two Patterns That Developed From the Data

Descriptive Coding

The first level of coding was developing labels to describe the data (Richards, 2009). Below are examples of the participants' words that were entered into NVivo 10 software. The first three groups of comments related to the idea of seeing the story or characters. The last set of comments was labeled "understands the character."

Seeing the Character

(List relevant comments)

I see pictures.
I make a movie out of the story.
I draw pictures in my head.
In a good book, I saw that, I was there.
I see detailed pictures.
I have realistic pictures in my head.
I can imagine landscapes but can't see the characters faces.
I can see the characters.
I don't visualize characters that well.

Understands the Character

I could relate to the character's anger.
It (drama) helped me understand the character.
You get at the character's personality.
You think about the character's personality.
It (drama) helps you get the perspective of the character.
Gives insight into the character.
You need to be able to think like the character.

Topical Coding

The next step was the topical layer which was to find the relationship within the codes (Denzin, 2001) and place the codes into categories or trees. A tree titled, "Entering the Story" was created. Participant comments that related to visualizing characters or story were placed on this tree along with the comments labeled as "understands the character." This step was a preliminary organization of the free nodes to more specific categories.

ENTERING THE STORY

Sees the Character or Sees the Story:

I see pictures.
I make a movie out of the story.
I draw pictures in my head.
In a good book, I saw that, I was there.
I see detailed pictures.
I have realistic pictures in my head.
I can imagine landscapes but can't see the characters faces.
I can see the characters.

Understands the Character:

I could relate to the character's anger.
It (drama) helped me understand the character.
You get at the character's personality.
You think about the character's personality.
It (drama) helps you get the perspective of the character.
Gives insight into the character.
You need to be able to think like the character.

Analytic Coding

The third layer of coding; the analytic layer (Richards, 2005) is the interpretive work. This was accomplished through the process of reassembling the elements into a total picture and viewing the relationships in and between the patterns while developing an understanding of the meanings that hold them together.

Upon closer examination the tree titled “Entering the Story” revealed the participants were cognitively aware of the reading strategies of visualizing and connecting with the character or story. This process revealed the participants used strategies, were able to think deeply, reflected on their thinking, actions, and behavior. Together this was an indication of one of the elements of engaged reading – cognitive engagement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). This also reflected the participants’ ability to take an aesthetic stance to be able to enter the story while imagining the mental and relational lives of others (Rosenblatt, 1978). The result of this layer of coding was the participants revealed cognitive engagement and took an aesthetic stance which are essential ingredients to engaged reading.