

Dramatic Arts Integration Practices for Learning and Growth Across PK-12 Development

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Abstract. This paper features three demonstrations of practice using dramatic and visual arts approaches (*DIPSI*, *Academic Club*, and *Hope Project*) with preschool through secondary school age students with exceptionalities. The first section provides a unifying theoretical background for the use of these practices. The next section presents each of the three projects, including their methods and main findings. The last section highlights the depth and breadth of these approaches, and includes implications for research and practice to address improved access to arts and special education for students with disabilities.

The purpose of this paper is to summarize and synthesize three dramatic arts integration practices implemented across PK-12 education settings that included students with exceptionalities. These practices go beyond approaches found in conventional classroom settings and feature the use of integrated dramatic and visual arts activities to promote learning and growth among students. *Using Dramatic Inquiry to Increase Student Engagement and Positive Social Interactions (DIPSI)*, the first featured demonstration of practice, summarizes a special education teacher's experience using dramatic inquiry with her preschool students in a special education preschool classroom. The collaborative team included the

preschool teacher and researchers, Farrand, Oakes, and Deeg (Oakes, Farrand, & Troxel, 2017). The team examined the degree to which the teacher was able to implement dramatic inquiry with limited outside supports and focused on a professional learning partnership between the teacher and researchers and the social validity of the dramatic inquiry intervention for the teacher and students.

The second demonstration of practice presented in this article utilized *Academic Club* (Smith, 2005), a visual- and performing-arts integrated approach that researcher-practitioners Anderson and Valero (2019) adapted to support middle-school students

with language-based learning disabilities to learn social studies content and social-emotional skills. In the Academic Club, students learned social studies content related to the Italian Renaissance period through in-role characterization and visual-arts activities supporting academic vocabulary and reading comprehension. Students' language and social-emotional skills were assessed using a mixed methods approach that included vocabulary, self-report, and language sampling measures.

In the third practice snapshot, the *Hope Project*, practitioner-researcher Dobson used an arts-based intervention model to measure changes in adolescents' (Grades 6-10) self-reported levels of hope. This demonstration of practice utilized multi-media visual arts and theatre to promote connection and belonging among students in a community setting and to highlight sociocultural dimensions of students' learning.

Theoretical Background and Supporting Literature

The three featured demonstrations of practice are diverse in the populations they serve and approaches they use, as well as in their research methodologies; yet they intersect in their theoretical underpinnings. A robust literature base on dramatic arts integration in educational settings supports these practices, as well as research on the use of dramatic arts approaches to reach and teach individuals with exceptionalities (see Anderson & Berry, 2018 for a review). Findings from supporting literature bases emphasize a developmental approach to

understanding learner growth, highlighting strengths-based approaches to addressing learners' individual needs.

Drama-based pedagogies and theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin. One drama-based pedagogy that is especially well suited for early childhood and elementary age populations is dramatic inquiry, an instructional approach in which students and their teachers co-create real and fictional worlds in the classroom through the social imagination of play. Participants use dramatization to explore real-world types of problems and to develop possible solutions (Edmiston, 2014). Participants create these fictional worlds by incorporating students' interests, building upon their background knowledge, and engaging inquiry processes that are like what happens in the lives of people outside of the classroom. Similar to dramatic inquiry, in-role characterization and drama techniques such as 'Mantle-Of-The-Expert,' have been used throughout elementary and adolescent age students with learning and behavioral challenges to promote engagement and access to content learning (Anderson, 2012; Bosch & Anderson, 2015). For example, the DIPSI project utilized Mantle-Of-The-Expert to create fictional contexts for learning (Farrand, Oakes, & Deeg, in press); students took on roles as experts--a new, more powerful role than their traditional role as students--to collaboratively solve a problem (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). The Academic Club used a similar approach, with middle school age students who had learning and attentional challenges taking roles from the Italian Renaissance and embracing their

individual expertise while playing historical figures such as Galileo and Michelangelo.

The theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky broadly ground dramatic arts practices in social interactionism. In particular, Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogism relates to how students build upon the ideas of others through constant dialogue and negotiation and is similar to the Vygotskian theory of linguistic interaction as the cornerstone of language-, cognitive-, and social-development. These projects feature the use of dialogism, in which students collaborate and brainstorm possible solutions to problems through their new and unique perspectives (i.e., as self-selected experts or characters in role). They work "as one consciousness, voice, or perspective answers another, searching for meaning while connecting to prior understanding in the real world and/or in a real-and-imagined world" (Edmiston, 2014, p. 8). Vygotskian theory also suggests that while working to solve problems together, students are engaged in activities within their zone of proximal development (i.e., optimally challenging activities where students can do more with the support of others than they can do alone) and draw upon multiple tools (e.g., language, music, visual support, movement, gestures) to make meaning and solve problems (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, dramatic arts practices provide a method for teachers to expand the tools for meaning making, while providing students with increasingly diverse ways to demonstrate their knowledge (Edmiston, 2014).

Drama-based pedagogies and cognitive-linguistic engagement. The three demonstrations of practice described in this paper are informed by research that has highlighted the value of dramatic arts integration practices for increasing educational opportunities, showing reliable causal relationships between dramatic arts activities and verbal skills (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997; Catterall, 2002, 2009; Hetland & Winner, 2000; Podlozny, 2000), especially for students with exceptionalities, as well as those from low socioeconomic and English language learning backgrounds (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014; Ingram & Seashore, 2003; Robinson, 2013). In particular, the Academic Club approach draws on research supporting the relationship between dramatic arts activities and specific literacy skills, such as students' reading comprehension, oral and written language production, and perspective taking (Anderson, 2012; Hoyt, 1992; Mason & Steedly, 2006; Podlozny, 2000; Rose, Parks, Androes, & McMahan, 2001) for students with and without exceptionalities (for a review, see Anderson, Lee, & Brown, 2017). Dramatic arts integrated learning contexts that utilize specific drama conventions have been linked to improvements in students' critical and creative thinking skills (e.g., 'studio thinking,' Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007), which is another dimension of the three featured practices. For example, with dramatic role play, students may select an historical figure and assume its identity using body, voice, and mind to express and participate in episodes, vignettes, or points in time (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). In this approach, students take on roles as experts

who share knowledge, use contextual clues, and both high frequency and content area vocabulary to create scenes (Clyde, 2003; Paul, 2002). Students use gestures and body language to reinforce their understanding of historical figures' intentions, thoughts, and actions. These experiences enable students to communicate concretely their mental representations of dramatic elements (e.g., text, character, character's feelings; Brouillette, 2010).

Social-emotional engagement and drama-based pedagogies. The demonstrations of practice featured in this paper address students' social-emotional engagement and are supported by research that shows how language and literacy learning are mediated through cognitive and emotional-behavioral engagement (Anderson, 2015b; Anderson & Berry, 2014; Burnaford, 2007; Catterall, 2009; Eisner, 1998). These practices are supported by a model of interrelated linguistic-cognitive and emotional-behavioral engagement (Anderson, 2015b), in which students' learning experiences are transformed by providing an alternative to conventional learning contexts that tend to exacerbate their environmental and learning difficulties and pose motivational challenges (Anderson, 2015; Anderson & Berry, 2015). Although previous research (Anderson, 2012; Cornett, 2007; Gillam, Gillam, & Reece, 2012; see Deasy, 2002 for a review) has shown that dramatic arts integration practices support students' linguistic and behavioral engagement differentially, few studies to date have examined the interrelationships between cognitive-linguistic and behavioral

engagement in arts-integrated learning contexts to address the comorbid needs of students with exceptionalities (see Anderson et al., 2017 for a review).

Above and beyond a desire to use dramatic arts in classrooms and community settings to promote and sustain individualized learning outcomes, the three featured demonstrations of practice align pedagogies that create opportunities for shared social and emotional engagement (Lincoln, González, & González, 2008). For example, the third featured demonstration of practice, *The Hope Project*, incorporated the lived experiences of students as material relevant for study and exploration in order to foster fully inclusive spaces for students (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). Hope Project practitioner-researcher Dobson and her students collaborated to discover stories of societal inequity and marginalization, while building narratives of empowerment, thereby responding to and transforming students' learning landscape.

The Hope Project, as well as Academic Club and DIPSI, reflect the idea that change is possible if research is informed collaboratively through practice that is grounded in naturalistic inquiry about experiences of the participants themselves (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, the Academic Club approach positioned teachers, students, and researchers as co-creators of the dramatic arts environment, in which they learned collaboratively and shared expertise through in-role characterization and creation. In the DIPSI project, dramatic inquiry was grounded in

the real contexts and interests of the students. In the Hope Project, the collaboration between the researcher and student participants emphasized student participation and an approach of “researching-with” rather than “researching-for” that shaped the project’s participatory action methodology (Fine & Ruglis, 2009; Freire, 1970).

Demonstration of Practice Snapshots

This section provides a detailed summary of each demonstration of practice’s methods and findings. First, the DIPSI early childhood practice using dramatic inquiry is presented. Next, the Academic Club approach using dramatic arts with elementary age students is presented. Last, the Hope Project involving theatre with adolescents is presented.

DIPSI: Dramatic Inquiry in the Early Childhood Special Education Classroom

The purpose of this demonstration of practice was to examine the use of dramatic inquiry by a special education preschool teacher in collaboration with a research team. The project examined implementation fidelity and social validity of dramatic inquiry for supporting young children’s engagement in learning and increasing social interactions and opportunities to respond to instruction. Farrand, Oakes, and Deeg asked the following research questions:

1. To what degree can the preschool special education teacher implement dramatic inquiry practices given limited outside support?

2. What do teachers and students think about the use of dramatic inquiry in the classroom?

Participants and setting. In her fourth year as an early childhood special educator, the participating teacher, Marie, taught 17 students in an inclusive preschool classroom. Marie reached out to the researchers because she was interested in learning about the research process and learning how she could best support students’ engagement in class. She was interested in trying dramatic inquiry as a class wide approach for circle time instruction. The university’s Institutional Review Board, school district, and principal approved the research project prior to researchers obtaining consent from educators and parents. Seven of the students were girls, and students ranged in age from 3.3 to 5.7 years old (median = 4.6 years). The inclusive classroom included three African American students, seven Caucasian students, and seven Hispanic students. Fourteen students were identified by the district preschool multidisciplinary team as having communication delays such as apraxia, articulation delays, or specific language impairments. To select focus students for this study, Marie reviewed classroom data including students’ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for related social and emotional goals and Teaching Strategies Gold (Heroman, Tabors, & Teaching Strategies, 2010). After reviewing the data, Marie identified four boys and one girl who she thought would benefit from additional support to increase engagement in circle time, because these five students all demonstrated difficulty consistently

participating and sustaining attention in whole group activities.

This study was implemented in an inclusive, afternoon-session, preschool classroom for students identified with communication delays and their peers without disabilities. The school utilized a morning and afternoon preschool model in which students attended classes four half-days a week. There was no school on Wednesdays to accommodate IEP meetings, student screenings, and teacher planning and professional learning. The classroom was located in a rural public school district in the Southwestern United States. The study took place in the afternoon class during circle time (~30 mins). Typical business-as-usual instruction followed a predictable routine and lessons often focused around a color and letter of the week. The routine included selecting jobs, saying the Pledge of Allegiance, naming days of the week and weather, counting friends, reviewing the question of the day, taking a 'wobble' break, sound practice, singing the articulation song, and having story time.

Intervention. The intervention to promote active student engagement was an instructional approach called dramatic inquiry. Dramatic inquiry encourages students and their teachers to co-create real and fictional contexts in which to explore real-world type problems and develop possible solutions through dramatic play (Edmiston, 2014). This approach stems from Dorothy Heathcote's work with process drama (i.e., drama focused on the learning process rather than on developing a theatrical production). Students are

engaged in process drama strategies that allow students and their teachers to imagine themselves in different roles as they construct knowledge together in real and fictional contexts created in the classroom.

For this study, the research team incorporated the process drama strategy referred to as the Mantle-Of-The-Expert (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) to frame students as experts (e.g., entomologists; authors) who were commissioned to solve a specific real-world problem (e.g., local farmers needed help to figure out how to stop insects from eating their crops; a local publishing company needed help creating a book on ocean life) (See Table 1.) Then, using specific active and dramatic inquiry strategies, teachers and their students collaborated in and out of role to explore solutions to the problem (See Table 2).

Dramatic inquiry strategies, such as Mantle-of-the-Expert, have been shown to benefit students with disabilities because they can collaborate with peers and engage in a variety of learning modes (e.g. spoken language, objects, movement, and music) to support meaning-making (Edmiston, 2007). Thus, dramatic inquiry practices offer a way for teachers to expand the use and variety of tools used for meaning-making, providing students with diverse ways to engage in learning and demonstrate knowledge (Edmiston, 2014).

Procedures. Marie taught two dramatic inquiry units with lessons during regular circle time using the Mantle-Of-The-Expert approach (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995)

Table 1. Mantle of the Expert Approach

Mantle of the Expert Elements	Entomologist Unit	Authors Unit
Fictional context	Teacher and students agree to pretend that their classroom is an Entomology Lab. Teacher uses classroom materials to set up the fictional lab such as magnifying glasses, insects in various settings for examination, and testing ideas.	Teacher and students agree to pretend their classroom is an Authors' Workshop. Teacher uses classroom materials such as varied writing materials, topical reference books, and student-written books to set up the fictional workshop.
Team	Entomologists	Authors
Frame/expertise	Teacher and students have expertise as entomologists.	Teacher and students have expertise as authors.
Commission	Farmers need help with learning about the insects eating their crops in order to identify how to safely get rid of the insects.	A publishing company needs authors to create a book for young children on ocean life.
Client	Local farmers	Publishing company

Source. Adapted from Aitken (2013).

and dramatic strategies. Researcher Farrand designed the dramatic inquiry activities and content using student interests identified by Marie. The researcher and Marie met before and after each unit to discuss and model strategies, lessons, activities, and materials, but Marie did not receive additional outside support (i.e., daily coaching or feedback) during the implementation of the dramatic inquiry units. Marie used outlines for each day of the approximately 8-day units that included suggested activities aligned with preschool standards and students' IEP goals.

During the first unit, circle time became an entomology laboratory where students took on the expert role of entomologists. To start

each lesson, Marie put on a lab coat and children 'stepped into the lab.' This action cued students that they were transforming from students to expert entomologists. To begin the unit, the teacher presented the commission to students. She shared a letter from a fictitious local farmer who was asking for help with insects who were eating his crops. Students engaged in the entomology unit with daily activities in which they learned about insects to help the farmer (Farrand, 2017). As examples, students participated in learning through movement (e.g., How do you think a cricket hops through the farmer's fields?). The student entomologists sang songs with motions to explore how insects moved and what they

ate. At the end of the first unit, parents entered the entomology lab and stepped in-role as farmers to engage actively in learning alongside their children about the ways they could solve their insect problem.

Throughout the second unit, students became authors commissioned by a publishing company to create a book about marine life for young children and their families. Then, students-in-role as authors along with their teacher-in-role as an author worked together to learn about ocean animals and plants while they brainstormed ways to create an engaging book for students and families. Marie invited parents to step-in-role at the end of this unit as publishers to listen to students-in-role as authors read the ocean book that they created.

Taking on these expert roles, students stepped outside of their student roles and engaged in perspective taking. They experienced learning through inquiry to solve a problem that was specific to their interests (insects and ocean animals) and contextually authentic. They explored learning and conveyed their knowledge and ideas through movement, spoken language, singing, drawing, moving manipulatives, pointing, and hand motions—all ways of showing what they knew was valued. Two specific dramatic inquiry strategies that promoted the use of multiple modes of response are *stepping-in-role* and *move like a character* (See Table 2). Dramatic inquiry transformed the learning space through the children's imagination in their fictional

laboratories as they collaborated alongside their peers to make meaning and to solve problems for a fictional client. The dramatic inquiry units also provided families with an opportunity to step-in-role as farmers and publishers to participate in dramatic play alongside their child.

Design. In this initial study of dramatic inquiry in inclusive preschool classrooms, the research team was interested in exploring the degree to which the teacher was able to implement the dramatic inquiry strategies and the perception of the teacher and students about dramatic inquiry. To address research question one, Marie and a research team member completed a treatment integrity measure for each lesson. The team used descriptive statistics to compute the daily and unit mean for the teacher and each participating student. The measure was a component checklist of the major elements of dramatic inquiry scores for presence or absence of each element (discussed below). To address research question two, Marie and the target students in her classroom completed social validity surveys before the entomologist unit and upon completion of the authors' unit.

Measures. A treatment fidelity checklist was used to assess fidelity of Marie's dramatic inquiry implementation (Barton, Meaden-Kaplansky, & Ledford, 2018). It included major components of the dramatic inquiry intervention (adapted from Oakes, Lane, Jenkins, & Booker, 2013). Marie recorded her observations of 16 teacher

Table 2. Dramatic Inquiry Strategies and Examples from Authors' Unit

Drama Strategy/ Description	Example	Providing Differentiation
<i>Stepping-in-Role:</i> Teachers and/or students signal with a sound effect, movement, or specific action that they are about to step-in-role and take on a fictional role as an expert that is designed based on the context for the inquiry.	The teacher begins by placing a lanyard around her neck with a pen and tells students that when she puts on her lanyard she is stepping-in-role as an author. Next, the teacher invites students to put on their lanyards and say "author" to signal that they are stepping-in-role to become expert authors.	Students who may have difficulty saying the word author are invited to make the visual cue of putting on their lanyards and making the 'a' sound for author. The visual cue lets all students and adults know that the individual is entering the fictional space created in the classroom to taking on an expert role for inquiry learning.
<i>Move like a character:</i> Students and teachers take on a role to experience and identify how the character, animal, or object moves.	Teachers and students step in role as fish to swim in the fictional ocean space created in their classroom. They move their hands like a fish as they <i>swim</i> around the classroom.	All participants are invited to use multiple modes, such as movement, sound, and sight to understand and explore the perspective of the character they are becoming for this strategy. Students are able to use different parts of their body and select the mode or modes that they want to use to experience and participate.

Source. Adapted from Oakes, Farrand, and Troxel (2017).

items and 14 student items. Some examples are *Teacher positioned students with authority by labeling them as an expert using the dramatic context of the lesson; Teacher joined in and pretended with students. Teacher adapted the physical space (removed chairs or furniture, moved furniture to create small groups or structures, used existing space to create a fictional space of text; (See Table 3). Items were marked as expected and not completed (0), expected and completed (1), or*

purposefully omitted (7). Researchers calculated scores by dropping omitted items, summing all expected items, dividing by total number of expected items, and multiplying by 100 for a percentage of expected, not purposefully omitted items.

A research team member observed and independently scored 100% ($n = 15$) of lessons using the same treatment integrity protocol as Marie. Researchers calculated interobserver agreement (IOA) using a point-

Table 3. Example Fidelity Checklist Items and Sample Coding By Score

Item to be Observed	Completed Item (1)	Not Completed Item (0)
Teacher positioned students with authority by labeling them as an expert using the dramatic context of the lesson.	Teacher referred to each student as ‘author’ preceding their name (e.g., Author Rosie) throughout the entire in-role experience to position students as expert authors.	Teacher referred to everyone collectively as authors when they first stepped in-role, but then used only their first names throughout the lesson.
Teacher joined in and pretended with students.	Teachers and students, in-role as fish, swam around the classroom. Teacher modeled the movement.	Students, in-role as fish, swam around the classroom, while the teacher watched students from the circle time rug.
Teacher adapted the physical space (removed chairs or furniture, moved furniture to create small groups or structures, used existing space to create a fictional space of text).	Teacher told the class to swim around the ocean as fish. She encouraged students to go beyond the circle-time carpet to imagine they are freely swimming in the ocean.	Teacher told students to swim like fish in their spots on the carpet. Although she allowed them to imagine they are fish, they were restricted to the typical classroom space for circle time.

Source. Fidelity checklist adapted from Oakes et al. (2012). See Oakes et al. (2012) for the example form.

by-point method. The research team computed the number of agreements divided by the sum of agreements and disagreements multiplied by 100. IOA was 82.14% (*SD* = 12.24) and 59.82% (*SD* = 12.24) for units 1 and 2, respectively, with an overall average of 70.98% (*SD* = 18.08). Due to the low agreement, both teacher- and researcher-reported fidelity scores are reported in the results section to follow.

Target students completed social validity surveys after the introduction of the entomology unit (pre) and after the end of the author unit (post; adapted from Lane,

Menzies, Ennis, & Oakes, 2015). To minimize concerns with the accuracy of self-report measures by young children with disabilities, Marie administered the survey to each participating student individually by reading each of the seven questions aloud and asking students to color in a smiley face to show their level of agreement on a 6-point scale (1 = *sad face* to 6 = *happy face*). The research team interpreted student surveys in conjunction with students’ comments about the lessons for a better understanding of their feelings about the dramatic inquiry intervention. Items included *I think I will like learning through drama*. Some items were

negatively phrased and so were reverse coded. Scores ranged from 7 to 42 with higher scores indicating greater acceptability. Marie completed an adapted Intervention Rating Profile – 15 (Lane et al., 2015; Witt & Elliott, 1985) pre (after consenting) and post (after conclusion of the second unit). The 15 items are rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*). Total scores ranged from 15 to 90 with higher score indicating greater acceptability of the intervention goals, procedures and outcome.

Findings and discussion. The first research question was, to what degree can the preschool special education teacher implement dramatic inquiry practices with limited outside support (i.e., initial training and materials but without ongoing coaching)? The teacher-completed fidelity scores ranged from 62.50 to 87.50% ($M = 77.50$; $SD = 9.38$) for the insect dramatic inquiry unit (7 lessons) and 18.75 to 68.75% ($M = 46.88$; $SD = 25.22$) for the oceans author unit (8 lessons). Researcher-completed fidelity data also showed the insect unit was implemented with higher fidelity ($M = 92.86$; $SD = 4.31$; range = 87.5 to 100%) than the oceans author unit ($M = 81.25$; $SD = 14.56$; range = 50.00 to 93.75%). This data showed Marie's difficulty in fully implementing all elements of the dramatic inquiry activities, with all teacher-reported scores below the ideal 90% implementation level to have confidence in any measured student outcomes (thus, student outcomes are not reported for this study). There are several potential reasons for lower than ideal fidelity.

First, the intervention strategy choices may have been too great, adding additional complexity to the intervention (Baker, Kupersmidt, Voegler-Lee, Arnold, & Willoughby, 2010). The complexity of the intervention may have led to Marie feeling a lack of confidence in her use of the overall intervention and its specific elements. Future studies could explore intervention fidelity with fewer dramatic strategy choices or with the introduction of one strategy at a time to build the teacher's fluency.

Second, teacher and student interest in content could influence treatment fidelity between the two units. The topic or related activities for the authors' unit may not have been as interesting to Marie or the students as the insect unit. In this practice demonstration, the research team measured pre- and post-intervention social validity across both units; however, future studies could measure social validity for each unit to explore the influence of interest on implementation (Lane et al., 2009).

Third, Marie expressed difficulty with shifting regular routines in order to implement dramatic inquiry. For example, Marie began by inviting students to *step-in-role* and become experts with her to begin circle time, and she and completed one or two activities connected to the theme, such as *walk like a character* where students were invited to swim like a fish. However, Marie retained circle time routines unrelated to the inquiry, such as calendar or choosing jobs. While preschool circle time routines may be theme-based, an important mechanism for engagement is the connection to the inquiry

(Aitken, 2013). For example, students discussed the size of different ocean animals; connection to the inquiry would extend this activity to relate animal size directly to the inquiry question for the unit. Future research could address how additional coaching supports, such as daily email or co-teaching, might increase implementation fidelity and support teachers in rethinking and reteaching conventional early childhood classroom routines to enhance connections to the inquiry process.

The second research question was, what do teachers and students think about the use of dramatic inquiry in the classroom? Marie rated the dramatic inquiry intervention as acceptable (i.e., mean score of 5, *agree*, or greater) with a score of 87 (96.67%; item $M = 5.80$; $SD = 0.40$). Although the post-intervention score was slightly lower (83; 92.22%; item $M = 5.53$; $SD = 0.50$); the score indicates an overall favorable perception of the intervention (Wolf, 1978). As stated previously, future research could examine social validity from the teacher after each unit to see if views vary based on the topic of interest for both teachers and students. This may also inform issues of fidelity, as social validity is a predictor for fidelity (Lane et al., 2009).

Students expressed hesitancy about the intervention initially, as indicated by pre-intervention social validity scores ($M = 26.80$; $SD = 7.60$). Post-intervention social validity scores suggested the intervention exceeded students' expectations ($M = 33.40$; $SD = 3.65$) or that they felt more confident in

sharing their opinions with more experience in the learning activities. Marie shared that "students came to class excited every day." She also shared that parents commented, "My child wants to be an entomologist and an author when he gets older" and "My child showed me how to step into her role." Readers should interpret students' social validity scores with caution, as young children's self-report scores may not be an accurate reflection of their true feelings. Consistent with research on self-report measures broadly, self-report of social validity may also be influenced by social desirability; that is, the participant wanting to report a favorable feeling (e.g., teacher to researchers, students to teacher). Future research should consider utilizing multiple measures to examine social validity of the intervention from multiple stakeholders' perspectives, including parents'.

Issues of treatment integrity and social validity are central to the work of promoting new practices within classroom settings. This study highlights the need for considering implementation data prior to making decisions about the effect of the intervention on student learning and engagement outcomes. Findings also indicate that traditional professional learning (e.g., workshops or presentations, access to materials) may be insufficient to promote change in practices, even with highly motivated teachers. Coaching and other ongoing supports may be needed for teachers to feel confident in their knowledge about and use of new practices.

Academic Club Approach and Students' Linguistic and Social-Emotional Engagement

Similar to the collaborative research-practitioner team in the DIPSI practice, Anderson and Valero (2019) examined the influence of a visual and performing arts integrated social studies intervention on students' linguistic engagement. In this practice, the influence of the intervention was measured by academic language skills (i.e., expressive language productivity and receptive vocabulary). Students' social-emotional engagement and arts skills were also assessed. Participants were middle-school aged students with language-based learning disabilities (LD). Language-based LD refers to primary difficulties with understanding and/or using verbal or written language (Swanson, Harris, & Graham, 2013). Researcher Anderson and practitioner Valero investigated whether Academic Club participation supported students with LD to (a) learn grade-level social studies academic vocabulary, (b) improve their expressive language skills, and (c) improve their learning attitudes toward arts and social studies content learning. This project's primary research question was whether participation in Academic Club over an 8-week period influenced the academic language (receptive and expressive) of fifth-grade students with language-based LD.

Participants and setting. The project focused on the integrated use of visual (perspective drawing) and dramatic arts (Mantle-Of-The-Expert, Reader's Theatre, and Tableau) strategies across four self-contained classrooms taught by Ms. Valero at an urban, self-contained, nonpublic day

school in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. The research team explored two dimensions of engagement: (a) cognitive-linguistic engagement, in which students understand and use complex vocabulary; and (b) emotional-behavioral engagement, in which students show self-efficacy, interest, and on-task behavior during academic tasks. Students with language-based LD have been considered among those at highest risk for school failure due to struggles in acquiring language and literacy (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006; Scott, 2004) and academic language (Westby, 1994).

The teacher, Ms. Valero, had 10 years of teaching experience as a classroom teacher and as a visual and performing teaching artist. She collaborated with the research team to develop all intervention procedures and measures over 25 weeks. The research team included the researcher, Ms. Valero and a master's level graduate research assistant, who conducted interviews, transcribed, coded, and analyzed all data collected in the study. Student participants included 25 fifth graders (12 boys, 13 girls) between ages 11 and 12 ($M = 11.2$, $SD = 0.5$) who (a) were identified as having a specific language-based LD; (b) had specific academic language and/or vocabulary goals in their IEPs; (c) had IQ scores of 85 or above; and (d) exhibited frequent off-task behaviors such as calling out, interrupting, getting out of seat, and not following directions. Table 4 summarizes the cognitive and linguistic descriptive characteristics of participating students.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of full-scale IQ, Verbal Comprehension, Perceptual Reasoning, Working Memory, Processing Speed, and Visual-Motor Integration Scores of Participating Students with Language-Based Learning Disabilities.

	Female (N=15)			Male (N=10)		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Age (in years)	12.13	.51	11.1-12.1	12.23	.66	11.1-12.3
WISC-IV Full Scale IQ	104.54	10.48	89-119	99.44	11.48	86-118
Verbal Comprehension	108.6	9.99	95-121	106.4	17.61	89-128
Perceptual Reasoning	104.27	11.78	84-119	100.7	11.98	82-121
Working Memory	96.8	10.73	74-110	91.6	12.46	74-116
Processing Speed	101.3	12.85	78-126	87.6	10.32	73-103
Visual-Motor Integration	88.5	8.6	66-102	84.22	6.11	75-94

Note: All scores are standard scores with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.

Intervention. The Academic Club approach is a cornerstone of the curriculum at the elementary school where the study took place. Academic Clubs (Smith, 2005) are known to embed highly structured, multi-sensory (visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic) learning activities within a simulated historical time and place to teach targeted social studies content (e.g., Italian Renaissance, Middle Ages, American Revolution). Students enact roles of major historical figures and learn about the history and events of the period through the perspective of their characters/figures. The Club cultivates collaboration through participant membership and ownership, as students and teachers take on significant historical and cultural roles within time periods such as the Italian Renaissance (e.g., Galileo Galilei, Leonardo da Vinci).

The Academic Club classroom was transformed into a themed space by club members, in which students participated in project-based and simulated explorations of history, literature, geography, science, archaeology, and sociology, through visual and performing arts activities. The instructional text of Dante's *Inferno* was the focus of the drama practice demonstration. This unit comprised an 8-week intervention period that featured the use of drama strategies (Mantle-Of-The-Expert, previously described; and Tableau, or pictures frozen in time and space using bodies, see Figure 1) to understand and enact concepts from social studies text of Dante's *Inferno* and visual arts.

For example, students created perspective paintings (see Figure 2) and visual guides (see Figure 3) corresponding with Dante's *Inferno* to understand and recall key

Figure 1. Students Creating Tableau to Show Understanding of Vocabulary through Enactment



Figure 2. Progression of Student-Created Perspective Paintings from Photographs to Watercolor Paintings.

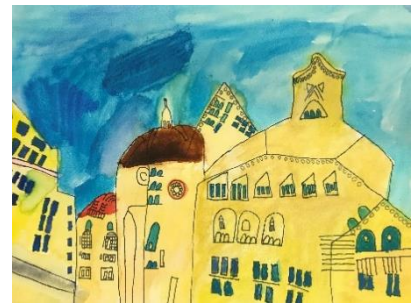
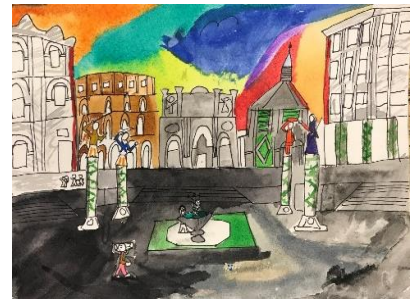
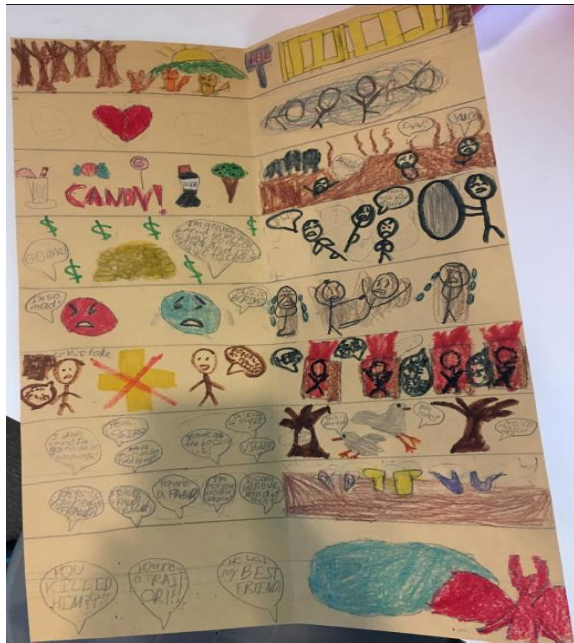


Figure 3. Student-Created Visual Guide of Key Concepts and Vocabulary from Dante's *Inferno*.



academic concepts (e.g., technological innovations, key themes from Dante's *Inferno*).

The following chart (Table 5) shows the intervention sequence using the dramatic approaches.

During Weeks 1-2, Ms. Valero introduced students to Mantle-Of-The-Expert and tableau to target expressive language through highly contextualized activities using bodies, gestures, expressions, and props to convey ideas. In Weeks 3-4, students developed two-dimensional visual guides to accompany their reading and enacting of Dante's *Inferno*, along with enacting scenes in-role from the Renaissance using key vocabulary terms. In Weeks 5-6, students developed and performed tableau to depict story and action sequences from the social studies text. They continued to develop and

refine their visual guides corresponding with targeted concepts from the reading and vocabulary, with teacher feedback. In Weeks 7-8, students created props, scenery, costumes, and scripts for their character-based dramatic enactments, completed their visual guides, and participated in interviews with the research team.

Design and data analytic procedures.

This mixed-methods design involved language sampling, vocabulary, and self-report measures across the intervention period to understand the relationship between the arts learning context, cognitive-linguistic engagement, and emotional-behavioral engagement for students with comorbid learning and behavioral challenges.

Measures.

The research team interviewed students while in role on social studies content as well as on their experience and feelings about dramatic arts and social studies at the beginning and end of the 8-week intervention period. The interviews lasted between 3-5 minutes ($M = 4.5$, $SD = .24$) in length in week 1; and between 4-6 minutes ($M = 5.8$, $SD = .33$) in week 8. Students completed a 20-item vocabulary assessment at the beginning and end of the intervention period (see Appendix A). The assessment included grade-level and social studies vocabulary that corresponded with visual guides and dramatic enactments. Students completed self-reports of their learning attitudes towards social studies and arts at the beginning and end of the

Table 5. Sequence of Academic Club Intervention Lessons Integrating Visual and Dramatic Arts

Weeks	Arts Activities	Contextualized Language Activities	Outcomes
1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mantle-of-the-Expert • Tableau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of bodies, gestures, expressions, and props to convey concepts and ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive language (vocabulary, concepts)
3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/enacting Dante's <i>Inferno</i> • In-role characterization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressive language (use of key vocabulary)
5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tableau • Visual Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing/performing tableau using peer editing and feedback • Developing/revising visual guide with targeted concepts and vocabulary from teacher feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depiction of story and action sequences from text • Revision of visual guides for accuracy and understanding of concepts
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating props, scenery, costumes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating script for character-based dramatic enactments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview • Completion of visual guide • Script for character-based enactment

intervention period (see Appendix B). Ms. Valero assessed students' visual and dramatic arts skills using a criterion-based rubric, based on the neighborhood public-school district's Common Core Arts Standards for Grade 5 in visual and performing arts, which was co-developed by Ms. Valero and the research team.

Data collection. Language and behavioral data were collected at beginning and end of the 8-week intervention period. All Academic Club lessons were conducted in the participating students' fixed length 40-minute small group sessions, which included six classes of 5-9 students). At pre-post

intervals, the research team used a video digital recorder to capture students' interviews, examining students' oral language by transcribing and analyzing samples for the presence of academic language features. To better understand the potential influence of the intervention context on each student's unique language functioning, language data were evaluated within each student across time, as well as pooled by students and time (pre-post).

Procedurally, the research team directed students individually to a quiet area directly outside the classroom to administer the in-role interviews (see Appendix C for interview

protocol). If students did not mention any characters or events in their initial responses, the researchers provided initial prompts. If students stopped talking and made eye contact with the researcher, the researcher provided a follow-up prompt, “Is there anything else you want to tell me about [name of event/character]?” When the student stopped talking and made eye contact again, the researcher stopped the digital recorder and the session concluded. Students completed pre-post vocabulary measures and self-report measures in small groups, in which items were read aloud, including practice items.

Students’ language samples were transcribed and coded for linguistic productivity and specificity. At the end of data collection, two secondary data coders (two master’s-level graduate students) were trained on scoring procedures for the language variables under consideration and maintained an overall inter-rater agreement of at least 90% during each fidelity scoring session. Two trained research assistants and authors completed transcriptions to 95% reliability. The analysis set contained complete and intelligible utterances, excluding dysfluencies. If reliability had dropped below 90%, the two secondary data coders would have met to review their discrepancies before scoring additional language samples (Kennedy, 2005).

Students’ oral language skills were assessed for linguistic productivity and specificity from beginning to end of the Academic Club intervention period. Students’ linguistic productivity was measured within and across

students, defined as the number of total words produced by each student per oral interview and expressed as a rate of use over duration of total time of interview. Students’ language specificity was measured through semantic diversity, or number of different words as a proportion of the total number of words (Greenhalgh & Strong, 2001). Receptive academic vocabulary was measured by pre-post assessment score changes. Self-efficacy was measured pre-post self-report changes on a 4-point Likert scale rating of social validity (1 for “strongly disagree”, 4 was “strongly agree”).

Findings. Table 6 shows students’ mean language changes from pre- to post-interview sampling context along with changes to students’ self-report ratings and mean vocabulary scores from beginning to end of the Academic Club intervention period.

When comparing students’ expressive oral language from pre- to post-interview samples, students’ mean linguistic productivity (total words per utterance, Pre = 5.57 vs. Post = 6.34), total words used (Pre = 214 vs. Post = 452), as well as total time in minutes (Pre = 4.5 vs. Post = 5.8) increased significantly ($p = .00$). Academic Club participation appeared to influence students’ academic vocabulary acquisition, as indicated by significant increases on mean number of academic vocabulary words known (Pre = 13.7 vs. Post = 16.9, $p = .00$). Students’ self-reported attitudes toward social studies learning and self-efficacy increased significantly from beginning to end of the intervention period (Pre = 2.9 vs. Post

Table 6. Students' Mean Language, Learning Attitudes, and Arts Skills from Pre-to Post-Intervention

Outcome Measures	Pre-Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Post-Mean (<i>SD</i>)	<i>p</i> -value
Receptive language: Academic Vocabulary (raw score)	13.96 (.22)	17.64 (.13)	.000***
Expressive language: Linguistic Productivity	5.57 (.54)	6.34 (.63)	.024*
Total words per utterance			
Number of total words	214	452	.000***
Learning Attitudes: Social Studies Learning	2.96 (.47)	3.5 (.33)	.000***
Learning attitudes: Learning Efficacy	2.9 (.44)	3.4 (.37)	.001**
Arts Skills			
Visual Arts	1.2 (.5)	3.2 (.7)	.014*
Performing Arts	1.1 (.7)	2.9 (.5)	.003**

*** $p=.000$ ** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$

= 3.4; $p = .001$). Visual and performing arts skills were assessed using a performance rubric corresponding with the National Core Arts Standards (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014). Students' rubric scores increased significantly from beginning ($M = 1.5$, emerging) to end ($M = 3.2$, progressing well) of the intervention period ($p < .05$). Collectively, these findings support the conclusion that Academic Club influenced content area vocabulary acquisition, expressive language productivity, improved self-efficacy toward learning and social studies, as well as visual and dramatic arts skills growth over the course of the intervention period for students with significant language-based LD. An area for future research could include a comparison with typically developing peers to better understand the unique contribution of the dramatic arts and contextualized language approaches to learning for students with and without disabilities. Students with language-based LD

are not expected to make significant gains in receptive and expressive academic language skills, so the results indicate the influence of the Academic Club approach on students' language and social-emotional/behavioral learning outcomes. In order to determine that student outcomes directly resulted from the Club intervention, additional study is necessary. For example, future research could investigate matched peers with and without language-based LD on language and social outcomes across intervention conditions (e.g., Club v. business-as-usual instruction) to strengthen these findings.

The Hope Project

The Hope Project featured the use of supportive experiences based in drama involving perspective-building and empathy to support adolescents in understanding and accepting differences (Goodwin & Deady, 2013). Participating students in the Hope Project were among many adolescents at this critical age who have reported feeling

marginalized by socio-political issues such as ethnicity/race, socioeconomic status, ability, and gender identity (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). Practitioner-based evidence from this demonstration supports the significance of opportunities for adolescent student expression in efforts to promote socioemotional skills such as resilience, engagement, and empathy (Debnam, Johnson, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2014).

Hope construct. Snyder and colleagues (1991) define hope as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals)” (p. 8). Hope theory is subdivided into four thought categories: (1) Goal thoughts, which provide direction and an endpoint for hopeful thinking; (2) Pathway thoughts, or the routes to achieve goals and perceived ability to produce these routes; (3) Agency thoughts, or the motivation to undertake the pathways towards goals; and (4) Barrier thoughts, which block goal attainment and can result in giving up or the use of pathway thoughts to create new routes.

Hope and theatre. This demonstration of practice assessed adolescent students’ reported levels of feelings of hope following participation in an arts-based intervention model using theatre and photography. Theatre practitioners have recognized the value of creative processes to facilitate healing, growth, empathy, and hope, among other inter- and intra-personal benefits; however, theatre work in the context of educational pedagogy aimed at

social change is relatively underexplored (Perry, 2011). Researcher-practitioner Dobson used *Devised Theatre* and photography collection debriefing based on *Photovoice* (Wang & Burris, 1997) to elicit collaborative groupwork among participating students in a one-week intervention period.

The Hope Project drew on Freire’s educational philosophy, which emphasizes the gap between audience and actor, in the same way that researcher Dobson scaffolded students toward their own empowerment, suggesting that “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other” (1970, p. 72). Theatre has been identified as a culturally responsive tool drawing on Freire’s critical, hopeful, and liberating educational pedagogy, which has been adapted to theatre-based pedagogy by Boal (Boal, 1979; Freire, 1970). Examining education for critical consciousness, Freire’s ideas emphasize students as partners in their own empowerment. *Devised Theatre*, in which students are working without a script and creating knowledge together, was an important element of this pilot project.

Participants and setting. The Hope Project included students with and without disabilities who attended a middle school or high school in a midwestern university town, during summer. Reported challenges shared by parents, caregivers, and participants included ADHD, depression, and anxiety disorder. The group consisted of 11 students: 9 girls and 2 boys in grades ranging

from 6th to 10th grades. Two identified as African American or mixed-race, one identified as LGBTQ, and two students disclosed mental health concerns. Dobson recruited participants in an all-inclusive manner, welcoming all individuals regardless of race/ethnicity, social class, gender, or ability. This participant group was not representative of the surrounding midwestern population. Inclusion and diversity were cornerstones of this project, as students came from different backgrounds, with different levels of experience in creative process work, and with varying levels of comfort in working within groups.

Procedures. Dobson used *Devised Theatre* and *Photovoice* to explore with students their expressions, feelings, and experiences of hope. She investigated whether students' perceived feelings of hope could change as the result of participation in the project.

Devised theatre. Devising a piece of theatre incorporates the individual talents and builds upon the collective inspiration of a group of participants in developing a performance or play (Oddey, 2013). The culminating project is created not in a linear line but one in which we encounter "well-trodden paths, blind alleys and sudden surprises" (Graham & Hoggett, 2014). The first step to devising together is playing together, so Dobson invited students to play games and engage in trust building exercises daily to build trust and group cohesion. Over the week, students created scenes, monologues, and vignettes, culminating in a

public performance or project. Acting games, writing prompts, drawing and collaging, writing scenes, creating sculptures, devised theatre, and music were all used with the goal to build a culminating project to be shared with families and public. Dobson took notes daily on what transpired and how students reacted to prompts and games. For instance, Dobson used story-building in various exercises by starting with a prompt and sending the story around the circle, each participant adding a sentence or two. The students employed independent writing, responding to Dobson's requests to share a time "I cried and cried" or "hope is...." The group worked in small teams to create scenes, crafting vignettes about themes such as "saving the world" or "the best day ever." The group worked together to build on several theatre activities over the week, culminating in a final performance. The students identified elements they deemed important and created a variety of activities, such as including musical accompaniment during the final performance.

Photovoice. Dobson employed photography in the project, adapting Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), in which students captured and shared pictures taken in their community to create stories based on themes that they identified as most important to them. Students took pictures of "hope" using mobile phones and personal cameras in the surrounding neighborhood vicinity. They were instructed to photograph natural and physical objects and spaces, rather than people. They debriefed the group on their photographs and developed monologues from these debriefing sessions.

Figure 4. Sample of Student (Evie) Photograph and Corresponding Monologue about Hope



“The cracks in the sidewalk represent the loss of hope and resilience. It first represents how a person may seem tough and unbreakable but may be more fragile than they appear. The cracks in the sidewalk could have been caused by a random event, such as a car crash, or something as simple as a brick falling and hitting the ground too hard. This relates to how a wide array of events can cause a person to give up hope and crack. However, the grass growing through the cracks represents how if you are resilient, you can fix your problems, and push through and continue to thrive”. (Evie).

Figure 5. Sample of Student (Lara) Photograph and Corresponding Monologue about Hope



“This picture is hopeful because it shows the future that I’m fighting for. OBVIOUSLY. (points to the rainbows she drew on her arms) In the picture, there’s an American flag alongside a gay pride flag, and I took it because it shows that these 2 groups go hand in hand. There are queer Americans and there are Americans that support queer rights, and whichever category the owner of the pride flag falls into doesn’t matter. We don’t know if the two flag owners were trying to contradict each other, maybe the American flag belongs to somebody who is against queer rights, but in putting both the flags up it gives me hope that people will realize that these groups aren’t as different as people think.” (Lara)

Figures 4 and 5 show a sampling of students' photos and corresponding monologues.

Table 7 shows the schedule of activities that students participated in throughout the intervention week. For example, students participated in free journaling based on photographs and writing prompts following their community-based photography collection. They also participated in collaging, drama games, group sculptures, scene-building, improvisational vignettes and individual performances, which were incorporated into the final performance.

Measures. Dobson administered the Hope Scale to the group on Day 1 and Day 5 of the pilot intervention period (see Appendix D). Snyder's Hope Scale (1991) is an 8-item Likert scale of a respondent's level of hope ranging from Definitely False to Definitely True. The scale is divided into two subscales that comprise Snyder's cognitive model of hope: (a) Agency (i.e., goal-directed energy) and, (b) Pathways (i.e., planning to accomplish goals). Of the 12 items, 4 make up the Agency subscale and 4 make up the Pathways subscale.

Design and data analytic procedures. Methods for collecting data included Snyder's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) conducted pre-and post-intervention and pre-and post- focus groups (see Appendix E) to measure change in students' self-reported levels of hope. Arts-based processes (photography and theatre) were used as the creative intervention. Drama games, story building, narratives and the photography component allowed students to take their

own pictures of hope, create scenes, monologues, and "getting them on their feet" vignettes, thereby creating a public performance, the culminating project.

Dobson conducted pre- and post- Hope Project focus groups with the group and various themes emerged. Day 1 topics included *Struggle* and *Hope* as well as themes that emerged, unexpectedly, such as *Resilience* and *Worry*. Focus groups were videotaped for transcription purposes only. The initial focus group was a springboard that served to discuss students' perspectives of the world and how they coped (ecological conditions and resilience practices), with a goal of devising creative strategies that would support the group. Dobson asked open ended questions and encouraged all students to speak freely (see Appendix F for excerpt from focus group transcript). Dobson also took field notes over the course of the week (see Appendix G for an excerpt from Dobson's Day 2 field notes).

Dobson coded focus group discussions, students' writings, artwork, the devised script, and all artifacts associated with the project, including photos, for emerging themes. Dobson enlisted a colleague to code for themes in the visual and written data to ensure reliability, with agreement set to 80%. Disagreements were resolved through conferencing. Qualitative codes were composed from artifact analysis, including focus group transcriptions, writing samples, and the devised script (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

Table 7. Daily Activity Schedule of the Hope Project

Day	Activities
Day 1 Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Focus Group 1 • Snyder’s Hope Scale administered (Snyder et al., 1991) • Ice breakers: <i>The Winds are Blowing, Build a Story, Move, Freeze, Melt, What’cha Doin?; Pass the Prop</i> • Hope collages, painting and drawing • Write a note to yourself in 10 years • Planning for the week
Day 2 Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice breakers: <i>The Winds are Blowing, Build a Story, Move, Freeze, Melt, What’cha Doin?; Pass the Prop</i> • Journaling: “one day I cried and cried;” “the best day ever...;” sharing circle • Photovoice activity: taking pictures, debriefing, writing about key photos • In between activities: collages, drawing, group mural
Day 3 Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm up games: <i>Pass the Prop, Freeze! Build a story</i> • Continued work on monologues from photos • Group Sculpture Themes: <i>You got this!; Useless; Burning Down the World</i> • Scenework on those themes: writing, rehearsing, performing • Discussion on performance order and shape
Day 4 Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm up games: <i>Pass the Prop, Freeze! Build a story</i> • Work through performance, scenes, connecting lines, “hope is”; photos and monologues, group sculptures and movement, closing monologue and music
Day 5 Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm up games: <i>The Winds are Blowing, Build a Story, Move, Freeze, Melt, What’cha Doin?; Pass the Prop</i> • Focus Group 2 • Snyder’s Hope Scale administered (Snyder et al, 1991) • Dress Rehearsal • Performance for friends and family

Findings. Students' initial feelings of worry and fear over world and political problems at the outset were counterbalanced by a heightened sense of self-efficacy and creative empowerment over the week. Students expressed an increased sense of hope after one week of collaboration and interdependent play-building.

The Hope Scale. Results showed that mean differences for students' scores on Agency and Pathways subscales were statistically significant at the .05 level. The total mean difference from pre-post measures was statistically significant ($p=.02$). The findings indicate that the intervention increased the group means for the two subscales by nearly .75 of a standard deviation and the total mean by nearly a full standard deviation (see Hope Scale, Appendix D).

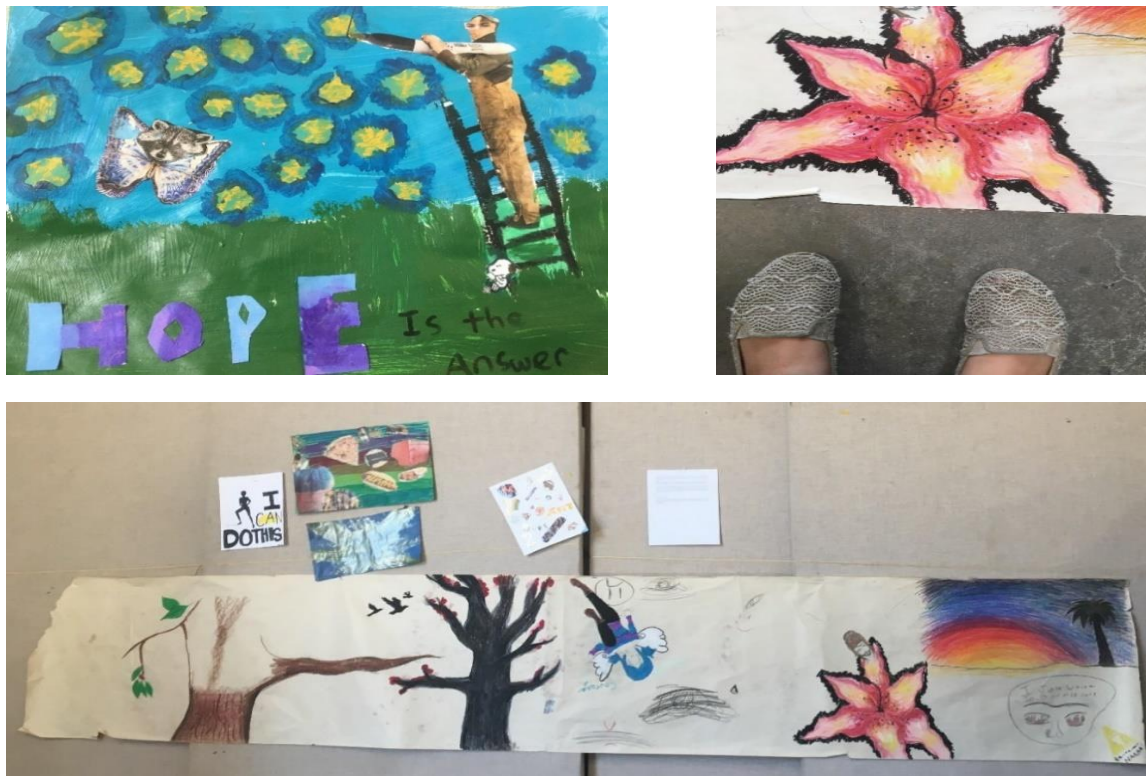
Artifact analysis. Dobson identified themes that emerged from both inductive and deductive coding strategies related to relationships, loss, identity, communication, and support (Miles et al., 2014). Through the data culled from students' discussions, along with artifact analysis across the intervention, Dobson identified how students constructed hope from their experiences and connections to peers in an empowering, inspirational, and creative environment. Figure 6 shows student-created mixed media art about hope.

Summary of findings. Overall, Dobson noted students' increased openness to share personal narratives as they became more comfortable from the beginning to the

end of the week. For example, the first focus group was a springboard for students to discuss perspectives of the world and how they coped. Dobson asked students open questions and encouraged them to speak freely. She guided the dialogue; however, students were free to change topics at any time. In the first focus group, students shared a collective sense of worry about the larger political landscape and its impact on their lives. Students raised concerns about the recently-elected president and his stances, including defaming LGBTQ military members and racial epithets they heard from the media or from family members. By the end of the week, students focused their conversation on the freedom and fun they experienced over the intervention week; how they appreciated the opportunity to be creative in many forms; and how they hoped to work together again, indicating authentic, collaborative, and meaningful growth in hope (see Focus Group Transcript, Appendix E). The devised script served as an encapsulation of some of the themes discovered over the week (see Devised Script, Appendix H).

The Hope Project's practitioner findings support the use of theatre as a tool to engage students' sense of belonging, and to support increased feelings of hope. As the community members faced uncertain futures across multiple domains (e.g., financial, political, cultural, etc.), the arts played a critical role in offering them positive and constructive opportunities for expression in the forms of collaboration and performance.

Figure 6. Student-Created Mixed Media Art about Hope in the Hope Project



Discussion of the Three Demonstrations of Practice

The theoretical backgrounds, methods, and findings of DIPSI, Academic Club, and The Hope Project highlight the diversity of integrated dramatic and visual arts integration approaches to address unique and individualized developmental and educational goals for students with exceptionalities. Notably, these demonstrations of practice shared principles such as learner-centered instruction through drama-based activities, which enabled researchers and practitioners to collaboratively focus on unique contributions of the dramatic learning context on individual students' developmental outcomes (e.g., social-emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and linguistic).

Limitations. This collective practitioner summary highlights important considerations related to assessing the quality and rigor of the current evidence base on the arts and special education approaches. While the goal of this practice synthesis is to showcase and detail three researcher-practitioner collaborative partnerships featuring dramatic and visual arts approaches, significant limitations exist in terms of special education methodological rigor (e.g., randomized control trial, true or quasi-experimental design). While the methodological limitations of each practice demonstration exist from a conventional special education research lens (e.g., CEC Practice Standards), the value of these approaches to the students and teachers that created them should not be

underestimated. These limitations point to the need for innovative inquiry approaches that marry special education and arts research methods. A similar point has been raised in the arts and education research, with some arts researchers advocating for arts-for-arts-sake rather than arts as subservient to the aims of educational research (see Loughlin & Anderson, 2015 for a discussion).

Nevertheless, in finding its footing in both research and practice, arts and special education researchers can strengthen the current findings and approaches presented by moving beyond descriptions towards evaluations to glean more evidence for teachers and researchers. Despite these methodological limitations, this synthesis offers important implications for the allied field of arts and special education.

Implications and directions for practice.

Implications and future directions for practice include increased emphasis on teaming and collaboration (e.g., between drama-based teaching artists and special educators) to develop and implement innovative practices with students and families in educational settings. This form of innovation has the potential to advance special education practice to address students' developmental needs within naturalistic, culturally responsive, and strength-based frameworks.

In shifting practices to implement innovative practices such as those that employ dramatic arts integration with fidelity is challenging. Along with these innovative practices, there

is increased need for coaching and support, as well as resources and structure for practices to be implemented with fidelity. A future direction for practice that exists is the role of the researcher (e.g., as a co-teacher alongside the classroom teacher, co-creator). For example, researchers can model or collaborate with the teacher on the use of dramatic arts strategies; or brainstorm different student grouping options. With increased support such as modeling and coaching of dramatic arts strategies, researchers have the potential to support teachers in actively observing and participating in the development of the practice, as well as to develop their skills alongside the students. In addition, teachers could participate and explore with different sensory modalities for knowledge construction and expression (e.g., movement, song, pictures/visuals) as they develop their experience with implementing dramatic arts approaches in supported environments.

Another implication of these demonstrations is the teachers' diverse conceptualizations of engagement in their classrooms that informed the teaching and learning experiences of students. For example, a teacher who viewed student engagement as sitting silently (i.e., "criss-cross-applesauce," or at desk listening to the teacher) was likely to resist incorporating activities that fostered multiple modalities for student responses. The practices featured in this paper support teachers to adopt strategies that emphasize different ways that students can show *how* they are engaged (e.g., in-role characterizations, collaborative project work,

hopeful reflections). Thus, teachers may be supported to recognize and advance the ways that students learn, particularly as they collaborate and explore possibilities for knowledge construction and demonstration.

Implications and directions for research.

These demonstrations of practice collectively emphasize the role of the research team as inclusive of the teacher in design and implementation of the studies. Implications for future research include the use of diverse and multiple mixed methodologies, including quantitative, qualitative, and ethnographic approaches for studying the influences of these practices on participants, as well as in the diversity of the measures developed by research teams to examine influences on student development and learning (e.g., interview protocols, performance-based rubrics, observation scales, self-reports). While these methodological innovations exist, they are empirically limited in the extent to which they can provide direct causal data. However, the breadth and depth of practitioner-based evidence showcased in this synthesis, along with procedural fidelity considerations, support

the positive outcomes identified in each practice. Still, future research studies could consider empirically testing intervention conditions using control or comparison groups in conventional educational learning contexts to better understand the unique contribution of drama-based pedagogies to student learning and engagement.

Additionally, these findings indicate that classroom teachers could benefit from coaching and professional development to support their implementing innovative arts practices that are different from their current teaching practices. Future research studies using dramatic arts practices could employ online, virtual, and face-to-face formats to best meet the needs of individual teachers in developing innovative practices. For example, teachers and researchers could engage through the use of classroom videos and feedback or modeling procedures on a routine basis to ensure that teachers have the tools and resources necessary to implement drama-based practices with fidelity, which would ultimately contribute to the quality of both practice and research.

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Appendix A

5th-6th Grade-Level and Social Studies Vocabulary Assessment

Directions: Circle the word that matches or means the same thing as the first word I say. I will repeat each word and its choices as many times as you need me to. If you do not know a word, just take your best guess.

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Allegory (parable) | fruit | <u>parable</u> | list |
| 2. Symbol (sign) | <u>sign</u> | animal | book |
| 3. Gluttonous (greedy) | grateful | gloomy | <u>greedy</u> |
| 4. Desire (want) | need | <u>want</u> | give |
| 5. Wrathful (furious) | dim | mighty | <u>furious</u> |
| 6. Witness (see/observe) | <u>see</u> | sneeze | felt |
| 7. Risky (dangerous) | perfect | <u>dangerous</u> | crowded |
| 8. Dread (fear) | mark | trade | <u>fear</u> |
| 9. Sullen (miserable) | <u>miserable</u> | endless | absent |
| 10. Hoist (lift) | <u>lift</u> | supply | glue |
| 11. Cowardly (afraid) | thrifty | <u>afraid</u> | uneven |
| 12. Abandon (leave) | sweat | defend | <u>leave</u> |
| 13. Circular (round) | least | <u>round</u> | steady |
| 14. Limbo (uncertain) | uneven | unkind | <u>uncertain</u> |
| 15. Emotion (feeling) | <u>feeling</u> | habit | action |
| 16. Wasteful (excessive) | careful | <u>excessive</u> | mean |
| 17. Heretic (pagan) | judge | <u>pagan</u> | child |
| 18. Violent (brutal) | calm | gentle | <u>brutal</u> |
| 19. Fraud (fake) | <u>fake</u> | <u>true</u> | fail |
| 20. Traitor (betrayed) | character | pulley | <u>betrayed</u> |

Appendix B

Student Self-Report of Learning Attitudes towards Social Studies and Arts

I enjoy Social Studies.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Social Studies is boring.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Studying Social Studies is important to me.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Studying social studies helps me understand the world around me.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

I enjoy using drama to study social studies.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

I enjoy using visual arts to study social studies.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

I enjoy socializing/working with classmates to study social studies.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

I enjoy working independently on projects to study social studies.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

I am often bored during this social studies unit.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Appendix C

Student Interview Protocol

Pre-interview questions

1. Do you know about the Renaissance? Can you tell me about it?
2. Had you heard of the Renaissance before this year?
3. Do you have connecting ideas to the Renaissance?
4. Who is your Renaissance Club character? Can you tell me about him/her?
5. Who is/was Dante? Can you tell me about him?
6. Are you interested in social studies? Do you find it interesting? Why?

Post-interview questions

1. Can you tell me about the Renaissance?
2. Who is your Renaissance Club character?
3. Can you tell me about him/her?
4. Who is/was Dante?
5. Can you tell me about Dante?
6. Are you finding Club/social studies interesting? Why/why not?

Appendix D

Hope Scale Survey Participant Survey

1. I think I am doing pretty well.

- None of the time
- A little of the time
- Some of the time
- A lot of the time
- Most of the time
- All of the time

2. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.

- None of the time
- A little of the time
- Some of the time
- A lot of the time
- Most of the time
- All of the time

3. I am doing just as well as other kids my age.

- None of the time
- A little of the time
- Some of the time
- A lot of the time
- Most of the time
- All of the time

4. When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.

5. I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.

6. Even when others want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.

Adapted from: Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, S. T., . . . Harney, P. (1991). The will and the ways: development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(4), 570.

Appendix E

Focus Group Prompts and Questions

1. Let's talk about hope in your life.
2. Let's talk about creativity.
3. Is there a connection between creativity and hope?
4. Let's talk about photography.
5. Let's talk about theatre.
6. Why is it important to share creative work?

Appendix F

Excerpt from Focus Group 1 Transcripts

CHRISTIE: Close your eyes think about your future. What image first comes to your mind? How long does it take to see that image? Everyone see your image of your future? Open your eyes, now we're going to talk.

CHRISTIE: Hope, most people think, is the overall perception that one's goals can be met. Does that make sense to everybody? Some people think that hope has two necessary components. Agency is the will power or energy to get moving toward your goal--the stuff you're using to get to your goal. And pathways is the perceived ability to generate routes to achieve those goals. Do those two concepts make sense to you guys? Let's talk about what hope means to you guys. Who has thoughts? What's hope?

ERIN*: What Pandora left in the box.

CHRISTIE: Explain that.

ERIN: When Pandora opened the box, the Gods, as a little bit of a practical joke, left a little piece of hope, inside the box at the bottom of it. So she opened—when she opened the box, most of those monsters got out, she shut it just in time for Hope not to get out.

CHRISTIE: Hope was in Pandora's box?

ERIN: Yeah.

CHRISTIE: Thank you. Other thoughts on hope when we start our work this week? Yes, Tara.

TARA*: It makes you believe that things can get better.

CHRISTIE: So what does that mean about how things are now?

TARA: Uhm, what do you mean by that?

CHRISTIE: So why would they need to get better?

TARA: Uh because we have a bunch of world problems and if we actually start trying to fix those problems, then we'll start having hope that they can be solved.

CHRISTIE: So we have problems, right, in the world right now? How do we get to even having the hope in the first place? Do you understand that question?

TARA: Mmhmm.

*Student names are pseudonyms.

Appendix G

Excerpt from Day 2 Field Notes

Day 2: Writing prompts. The time I cried and cried and the time that I was most happy. Students share a lot about more personal moments. They fear meanness, cruelty, helplessness, losing respect, lack of respect, lost loss of an animal, friend, or loved one, loss of control, lack of control, PTSD, triggering abandonment, self-image, issues with parents, issues with growing up and 'shit happens' moments when we have no control and we just have to ride with it. Second-guessing ourselves. There is the story for everyone where we have lack of hope or despair and then we start to put pieces in place and wait search for hope and we try to find resilience we have obstacles in our way and we have endings (either happy or sad) but maybe we are stronger. We start to talk about visualizing these pieces of our lives in these moments of hope or despair and how we could visualize objects and things and how we will take pictures to represent hope and change and resilience and creative self-efficacy. Things that come up in this writing: no one liked me; I was a tiny speck; I had an existential crisis; I needed to make a change; I wanted to kill myself; I was in therapy I needed to change places I needed a new beginning. Students are really brave and vulnerable and careful with one another. We talked about our safe space and how we are working together to possibly help other kids in the future through this creative process to work through some of their stories--the happy stories: the sleep over; the junk food; the thrilling liberating moments of childhood: swimming, looking at stars and skies, being outside; being in the mountains; being in our happy place using humor and with family; being safe, being cozy, being silly when people are mean-- killing them with kindness; traveling; sleeping; grandparents; animals. We spent the rest of the day with pictures. Students take cameras and phones and iPads and walk around for an hour and take pictures.

Appendix H

Excerpt from Devised Script, Burning Down the World

TARA*: Ok, everybody, welcome to angsty teens anonymous, this is our first meeting, um, so, here's what we're gonna do.

ERIN: Why am I here? Oh my god!

TARA: See how you're screaming? You need to vent.

ERIN: Vent this. (throws a notebook at her)

TARA: Ok. Also, probably because your parents signed you up. Um, anyway so here's what we're gonna do we're gonna go around in a circle, and we're going to say why we're all angsty and mad. You go first. (points at Connor)

CONNOR: I just hate it, when my mom puts the peanut butter on the wrong side of my PB&J. I mean, it's not called jelly butter and peanut, it's peanut butter and jelly.

TARA: I know, I've been there. Ok, now you go. (points at red jacket girl)

ERIN: I just hate it when my cats eat my socks. Sure, they're soft and they're fluffy and they smell like hamburgers, but that doesn't mean you can eat them. Is there like, food in them or something? Oh my god!

TARA: I know, right? That happens to me so often.

CONNOR: Same thing happened with my goldfish.

TARA: Ok, so, now you go. (points at OLIVIA)

OLIVIA: Are any of you actually thinking about the political situation of our country?

Everyone but OLIVIA: No.

TARA: No, not really. But you know what, whatever you say, uh, you can say it. It's fine, this is a safe space. There will be no judging.

OLIVIA: Alright, well, all the discrimination and hate going on, just, sometimes I feel like I wanna burn down the world.

ERIN: Woah, Ms. Arsonist.

TARA: (long Ok). YOU GOT THIS

EVIE: Alright girl you got this! There's no way he's gonna say no.

*Student names are pseudonyms.