Theatrical Role-Play:

A Study on its Impact on Life Skills of Secondary Education Students

by

Timothy McCandless

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved July 2023 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Danah Henriksen, Chair
Mary McAvoy
Nicola Olsen
Jill Wendt

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2023

ABSTRACT

Performing arts curricula, specifically theatrical role-play, have aided in enhancing life skills of secondary education students throughout the past. This continues to be the case in the present education climate. However, the performing arts are still not viewed by some education policymakers at a level that helps those programs flourish and thereby be accessible to students. Despite the empirical evidence of life skill enhancement, both academically and socially, that can be applied in an interdisciplinary manner and to life outside of the school setting, the arts are often not considered as important as core content areas. These programs are subject to elimination to a greater extent compared to other education programs. This action research study sought to examine the ways in which high school theatre programs impact life skills, defined in this study by both academic and social contexts, learned by secondary education students. The innovation intervention consisted of theatrical role-play applied in an interdisciplinary manner. The innovation occurred over the course of two weeks in a senior English class at a southwest public high school. The likelihood of the English teacher using theatrical role-play in future lesson plans was also studied. The action research utilized a mixed-methods approach with a theoretical framework consisting of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Academic Risk-Taking (ART). Results indicated assertions related to the enhancement of the social skills of empathy and public speaking in student participants, as well as the English teacher planning on utilizing the innovation in future lesson planning. The academic skill of text analysis was possibly affected, however results were inconclusive.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my wonderful committee for all of their guidance and support. I am so fortunate to have the committee that I did as I admire each member tremendously and view them as role models. Thank you to Dr. Danah Henriksen, committee chair, for helping me incorporate an innovative design that was both fun and not too overwhelming. Thank you as well for your prompt and detailed feedback during the editing process that helped structure the writing effectively. Thank you to Dr. Mary McAvoy for your consistent guidance as a theatre education professor not just during this process, but throughout the years since my masters degree. Your feedback was so valuable. I am grateful to Dr. Nicola Olsen for including me on her PhD project that helped to inform this EdD research. Your writing and experience as a high school theatre teacher was so enriching during this process. Thank you to Dr. Jill Wendt for inspiring me with creative ideas on word choice and innovation design. I could not have asked for a better committee, so thank you all so much.

Thank you to the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University for orchestrating this high quality and exceptional program. I especially appreciate the commitment to providing real-time instruction for our cohort who elected for face-to-face instruction. I was nervous about entering the program in the summer of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic moved the entire education world to the digital platform. ASU was wonderful about adapting to this change in environment by providing live classes via Zoom. This synchronous real-time instruction was so important for my learning style, success, and enjoyment of the program. So thank you.

Thank you to all of the participants, both students and the teacher, for engaging with this new art form in meaningful ways. I so appreciate your best effort in trying something new with which you may not have initially felt confident. I hope that you had fun and learned something about the literature, as well as yourselves, along the way.

I could not have conducted this research without the love and support of my family. Even though they are scattered across the country, every phone and video call meant so much when discussing my progress in this program. Mac, Teri, Kel, Conor, Ryan, Riley, Jasmine, Kyllian, and Cassian-thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Lastly, I would like to thank my late grandparents. Evelyn and Leonard helped me to find my passion for theatre at a very young age and always supported me through life's many adventures. This adventure was no different as I could sense their presence and unwavering support as I continued toward my goal. Thank you, Grandma and Grandpa.

I am fortunate to have so many wonderful people in my life that have helped me get to this point. I cannot imagine doing this without that support. There are more people that I would like to thank, but there are so many that it would take up an additional chapter. So for those people please know I appreciate and am grateful for you and all the help you gave me in this program.

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PREFACE

What do you want to be when you grow up? This question is difficult to answer for many. Sure, children have grandiose ideas of being an astronaut, doctor, or President of the United States. The possibilities are virtually endless. As we grow up, passions often change, resulting in a change of mind regarding what we want to do with our lives. As the saying goes, "the sky is the limit". The "sky" is vast with many career options, and due to this overwhelming nature, decision paralysis (Heath & Heath, 2010) can occur. Heath and Heath (2010) describe decision paralysis: "more options, even good ones, can freeze us" (p. 50).

Towards the end of senior year in high school, I had an ambition to be a neurosurgeon. Within the same year, I intended on majoring in political science. By the beginning of the fall semester of college, I declared an undecided major. Decision paralysis had set in for me. This lasted until the end of my sophomore year. After enrolling in a variety of classes in an attempt to discover my passion, I ended up declaring the most unlikely major for my personality at the time: theatre. My parents were especially surprised by this as they reflected on my extremely shy personality. Pretending to be mute to avoid talking in second grade did not bode well for a future theatre major as this subject requires not just talking, but talking in front of an audience of myriad sizes.

So why the change in career ambitions? After taking some acting and improvisation classes, I discovered that I became more comfortable with my social skills. I became more confident in speaking with people who I already knew, as well as those who I did not. I was more confident, and excited, to speak in front of an audience. This

assisted in my desire to act as a character onstage in plays and musicals. I discovered an undying passion for the art of theatre, and this was largely due to the theatre courses I experienced.

Due to this confidence and passion for speaking in front of an audience, as well as my social skills that were enhanced as a direct result of the drama classes, I began looking at teaching theatre as a career. The job prospects out of graduation were not promising at the time. As such, I became an undergraduate admissions counselor for my alma mater, Creighton University. Armed with a bachelor of arts in theatre, I was concerned that I was not qualified for the position. However, I quickly learned that my skills enhanced from studying theatre were useful in being successful in the job. The position required recruitment of high school students to the university, which subsequently involved speaking with prospective families in a variety of formats. No matter if the format was individual meetings, a visit at my table at a college fair, or presentations to a large group of prospective students and parents, I always exuded confidence in what I was promoting and was able to display an authentic sociable personality that families appreciated in the stressful college selection process.

I was able to shift gears back into theatre education, and my experience as an admissions counselor with even more enhanced social skills aided in this transition. As I became educated on how to become a successful theatre educator, I learned that the content area was not viewed as highly by educational leaders as I viewed it. This partially explained the reasoning for a job shortage in the career upon my initial college graduation. As I completed my student teaching and first year of teaching high school theatre, I saw the opportunity for more in-depth exploration of specific empirical

evidence showing how drama education enhances life skills in students that are

applicable long after graduation. I know I am not alone in experiencing the benefits of a

theatre education. This action research is an attempt at highlighting other student

experiences and exploring any effects that theatre education has on students.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Theatre is all around us. It does not just occur on a stage. It is organically infused

in the teaching of numerous life skills, whether we are conscious of it or not. Sir William

Shakespeare in Act II, scene 7, of his play, *As You Like It*, once wrote one of the most

prolific commentaries on how theatre is a part of everyday life with the following line:

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players" (Shakespeare,

1623/2000, p. 62). The idea is that each person in society plays a role/character, whether

they are aware of it or not, in this production we call *life* on this stage we call *earth*.

Theatre is so infused with our everyday lives due to its variety of purposes and multiple

uses. It is utilized in storytelling, entertainment, career paths, and education. Through this

multifaceted utilization, theatre teaches a method of learning that extends far beyond the

content area of drama itself. The life skills enhanced by theatre are numerous, yet this

correlation is not always clear to other "players" on our "stage", specifically within the

lens of education.

Extensive research exists that secondary education theatre curricula and its

relevant extracurricular programs teach life skills to students that last well beyond

graduation (McCammon et al., 2011; Watson, 2011; McLauchlan, 2010). These life

skills, defined in both academic and social skill contexts, are often overshadowed by

common views that see theatre as solely an elective course and thereby expendable. As

they are not viewed as part of the core curriculum, fine and performing art programs in

general often are the first to be eliminated from schools due to budget constraints and

lack of knowledge regarding benefits associated for student learning. Education decision-

makers must make difficult decisions, and the arts often end up on the wrong side of those changes (Fowler, 1996; Davis, 2008). Davis (2008) reports that the arts have had challenges in obtaining a secure place in the American education curriculum and that they are often the first item to be eliminated due to difficult decisions.

There is no universal method of assessing content within the subjective art form of theatre, so education administrators and instructors are not held accountable for standardized testing requirements in the subject (such as state exams within specific content areas). School district administration and high school counselors are often pressured to ensure their students achieve high standardized test scores to meet state requirements. As such, this can affect advising of course selection for high school students. It is important for the sustainability of the arts, specifically theatre in this context, to inform these education stakeholders about how theatre teaches life skills that accentuate a student's ability to perform well on those standardized exams. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize how theatre can be a valuable interdisciplinary learning frame to support teaching and learning of other subject matters.

This mixed-methods action research study aims to inform education stakeholders, specifically those in administrative and teaching positions, of the value that a specific method of theatre education teaches students, both in their learning of other disciplinary content and also life skills beyond the content area. This method is defined as theatrical role-play. Theatrical role-play will be implemented as a pedagogical innovation in an English II course in order to teach a unit normally taught via lecture style. The unit examines a section of literature relevant to the state standards, and students are assessed on their text analysis skills. For the purposes of this study, text analysis skills will refer to

a student's ability to comprehend the story being told in the literature and onstage in the scene. In order to gauge if and how theatrical role-play supports learning in this context, I will use pre- and post-test Likert scale surveys to gauge student self-reported levels of confidence in public speaking and empathy, as well as their text analysis skills. To supplement this quantitative data, I will conduct interviews with the English teacher and students to better understand their experience with the theatrical role-play innovation in learning course content, as well as whether the teacher will use the innovation method in future lesson planning.

For the purposes of this study, theatrical role-play is defined as the art of acting out a scene, or telling a story/making a point, as a different character or with a different personality. Improvisation is defined by Viola Spolin, thought to be the *Mother of Improvisational Theater* (Backstage Staff, 2022), as "Playing the game; setting out to solve a problem with no preconception of as to how you will do it; permitting everything in the environment (animate or inanimate) to work for you to solve the problem" (Spolin, 1963). The basic concept underlying improv is that actions and/or speech are carried out in an unscripted nature to resolve a conflict.

Larger Context

Human beings enjoy being entertained and frequently seek opportunities that accomplish this. Performing arts encompass one popular form of entertainment and can be presented in the form of live versus recorded settings. Performing arts can entertain in real time through plays, musicals, and concerts (music and dance). They can also entertain through pre-recorded productions in the form of film and TV shows. This type of entertainment is particularly important during times of trial and tribulation, such as the

COVID-19 pandemic that forced people into quarantine. Performances once live were being streamed through online services, such as the popular musical *Hamilton* on Disney+. I have observed that more people relied on the performing arts for entertainment during that difficult time, yet arts education responsible for this was not universally supported. This is evidenced through some school districts in the U.S. scaling back or eliminating arts programs due to the priority shifting to core classes, along with budgetary reasons (Dik et al., 2021).

Despite the vast number of life skills, both academic and social, that the arts teach to high school students, arts programs are still among the first to experience declines and funding and to be cut from schools in the United States (even prior to the current coronavirus pandemic) (Israel, 2010). I argue that this may stem from the perception that standardized tests are the most important measurement of student achievement, and thus the classes that teach the content represented on those assessments are of the highest priority. The external pressures, such as political and societal, that school leaders experience on their students achieving successful standardized test scores, causes a shift in academic focus (Dunstan, 2016). This academic shift, along with demands of accountability, have resulted in school leaders scaling back their arts programs (Anne, 2010, as cited in Dunstan, 2016). One could assert that the measurement of student learning has become a number reflected in SAT and ACT exam results, instead of the education of the whole person: mind, body, and emotional well-being. However, according to a 2005 College Board study reported by Ruppert (2006), a correlation was discovered between the SAT scores earned by students, and the number of years those students were enrolled in high school arts courses. Students with four years of arts

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courses scored 58 points higher on the verbal section and 38 points higher on the math section than students with one half-year or less of arts courses (Ruppert, 2006). While a direct causation cannot be found here, the correlation seems to be clear.

Ample evidence has demonstrated that theatre curricula are effective and value techniques for teaching life skills (Cowart, 2013), and the empirical evidence is out there to support it. In a qualitative study examining the impact of high school theatre participation in life after secondary education, McCammon et al. (2011) found that adults greatly benefitted in terms of enhanced development of academic and social skills. Increased self-confidence, public speaking skills, communication skills, collaborative teamwork, leadership experience, time management, social awareness, emotional intelligence, and empathy were some of the skills that adults reported as being enhanced as a result of high school theatre participation, regardless of the current occupation that those participants held (McCammon et al., 2011).

Watson (2011) examined a difficulty that medical students and physicians often struggle with related to the profession: the social element of doctor to patient interaction. In response, she created a medical improv, or *Playing Doctor,* intervention course that teaches academic and social skills needed for doctors. Some of the skills learned by students in the course included public speaking, communication, collaboration, creative thinking for diagnosis, and self-esteem building. Results indicated that students felt more confident in these skills and that they felt like better doctors in direct response to the improv intervention (Watson, 2011).

A role-play intervention was conducted at an Australian high school utilizing the Theatre as Education method designed by Vallack (2015). In this study, high school

students interviewed a group of middle school students regarding bullying and cyber-bullying. They utilized information gleaned from the interviews to write an original script about the topic. This script would be performed in a role-play environment for the middle school students. Results revealed high school students experienced higher order thinking skills and emotional empathy (Vallack, 2015). Since they were acting out scenarios as various characters, they felt more connected to the story and issues that middle-school students were facing since they were able to see through the eyes of the middle-school students (Vallack, 2015). Thus, theatrical role-play was influential in teaching a concept that students could see, hear, and experience in person, which resulted in a deeper level of learning.

Based on the summary above, it is difficult to comprehend how arts education is not already more universally supported and viewed in a more core integral way in education. Multiple life skills (academic and social) were learned through high school theatre participation that were reported by adults of myriad arts and non-arts related occupations (McCammon et al, 2011). The theatre art form of improvisation, a life skill that may be widely used in daily life, has been used to improve skills in a non-arts related profession (Watson, 2011). The drama method of role-play, a common teaching tool, has been implemented to teach a concept that resulted in more effective and engaged learning of the students involved (Vallack, 2015).

The literature thus far provides empirical evidence that academic and social skills are enhanced in the arts. The dependence on performing arts as not only entertainment but part of the social and cultural lives of humans seems to be common. So why would

there not be universal support and integration of the arts as a core education subject? The mystery remains unsolved for the time being.

Local Context

It is my firm belief that there is one universal life skill that theatre helps to enhance: improvisation (also known as improv). Each person does this every day, whether they are conscious of it or not. Many people do not actively seek to improve their improvisation skills, however doing so has been proven to benefit individuals in myriad academic and social situations. For example, the everyday conversations between doctors and patients are not scripted ahead of time. Thus, the dialogue is improvised. Sawyer (2011) notes that the practices of skilled teachers are inherently acts of 'structured improvisation', and that such skills are valuable for professional teachers to develop.

Role-play is another key life skill that is frequently used throughout life, and is common in the human experience (Kusnierek, 2015). I have frequently observed this in my own practice as a teacher. This has been used in a variety of ways, such as teaching and emphasizing a serious point. Enlisting theatre students to act out an anti-bullying skit as a part of new student orientation has occurred at former schools in which I was employed. I believe that requiring new students to read about anti-bullying in a textbook does not have the same impact as being able to see, hear, and experience the concept in person.

The educational institution at which the innovation was hosted is a medium-sized high school with approximately 1300 students and is a part of a large suburban school district in the Southwest. During my employment at the school, I have observed profound

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support of arts programs from the school district leadership, school administration, faculty/staff, families, students, and the school learning community in general. During the time I have served as the school's theatre director, theatre teacher, and department chair for the fine and performing arts. The environment has been a wonderful place to carry out my theatre education career.

It is worth noting that this level of support from the school district for the arts is somewhat unique among many secondary education institutions. This is often due to a range of unfortunate reasons that are highlighted throughout this research.

As I have experienced is true with all aspects of life, nothing is perfect. There certainly is room to grow in the area of arts programs with both my school district and high school. The COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected not only the education of the performing arts at all levels of schooling, but the performing arts in general. Arts teachers had to innovate and reinvent the wheel, so to speak, on methods of teaching an in-person-by-nature concept in a remote digital environment. This transition was not easy, and many educators struggled (and continue to do so).

The pandemic was especially difficult on the class of 2020 as the entire school district had to shift to an online learning platform in March of 2020. While there were many challenges with the online transition, students and faculty were adapting well by the middle of the 4th quarter. Suddenly it all changed. Teachers across the school were observing a lack of assignments and assessments being submitted and grades began to plummet. To address this problem, the district mandated a new grading policy for the rest of the quarter that dictated students could not receive less than the grade they had earned at the end of the 3rd quarter as long as they showed signs of attempting to engage in the

content material. This was to be determined by the teachers on an individual professional judgment basis.

With this new school district grading policy in effect, students began to be less motivated to submit assignments since most had already shown the required attempts to engage in class content. However, the class of 2020 still needed to meet graduation requirements, which meant passing all of the core classes. Students in my theatre and film/TV courses struggling in their core classes were encouraged by the guidance counselors to withdraw from my arts classes to focus instead on those core classes. This meant disengaging completely from the school arts programs.

Aside from the life skills learned, these elective courses were an important and needed break from demanding core class requirements. They serve a valuable set of purposes for students, even outside of the theatre skills they learn. This is partially due to the light-hearted and non-intimidating classroom atmosphere in theatre classes. While I understand the need for a focus on certain core classes or material, as a researcher I find the priority shift in academics both interesting and disheartening. Why are those core classes more important than the arts classes when there is astounding evidence of life skills taught by the arts curriculum (McCammon et al., 2011)? Why is it typical for secondary education students to have taken only one fine arts course throughout their four-year curricula? I believe that a disconnect exists between educational leaders and the true value of arts education in the development of the young adult, and it is staggering.

The state of Arizona has made productive strides toward the preservation and continuation of arts integration in public school curricula. Based on the 2015 curriculum map for state standards in the arts (see Appendix A), Arizona educational leaders

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established a thorough blueprint for the topic of theatre. Standards are detailed for grades K-12, with high school divided into proficient, accomplished, and advanced categories (Arizona Department of Education, 2022). Despite the evidence that a fine arts course is required for graduation in public school curricula per the Arizona State Board of Education (High School Graduation Requirements, 2020) and the general perception that the arts are important to a young student's education, there still exists a gap to the extent in which the arts contribute to the overall learning process (Foley, 2020). The categorization of arts courses as special and convenient to have when possible does not aid their preservation. Budget challenges, standardized testing requirements, and priorities placed on core classes (such as STEM courses) come to the forefront of educational leaders' minds when making crucial curriculum decisions (Foley, 2020; Israel, 2018).

I argue that the desire to assess student learning using a universal method is a mirage that educational policy makers continue to chase. Since every student learns in a unique way, and every teacher teaches in a unique way, the idea of a standardized assessment where one size fits all is truly beyond a pipedream. One such attempt at this mirage is via the standardized tests required by federal and state governments. This is the closest that our educational system has come to a universal learning assessment method, which has been shown to be ineffective at assessing other skills beyond content knowledge. Higher order thinking skills that assist in success beyond formal school, such as analysis and creativity, are not measured in the standardized exam design (Bhattacharyya et al., 2013; Turnipseed & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Ignoring these requirements would lead to government funding being rescinded and the subsequent

closure of schools. Thus, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), for example, is under constant pressure to assure these standards are being met. When the ADE updated the arts standards (defined in the content areas of music, theatre, visual arts, dance, and media arts) after the passing of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, arts education advocates proposed having arts learning included as a metric for school quality (Foley, 2020). This was rejected on the basis that there is no universal standardized testing design with the state. Thus, schools could not be held accountable to a non-existent uniform metric for arts success (Foley, 2020). The lack of a standardized assessment for the arts is affecting the progress at the local level as well.

As mentioned previously, Arizona has achieved success in improving arts integration in education. In partial response to the challenges mentioned above, the Arizona State Seal for Arts Proficiency was signed into law by Governor Ducey in 2019 after an ADE educator advisory group submitted extensive proposals (Foley, 2020). As long as students meet specific arts guidelines throughout their four years in high school, they will earn the seal and have it officially represented on their diplomas. A total of 1,250 Arizona students have earned the seal since its inception (Arizona Department of Education, 2021). Foley (2020) describes the intents of the seal to include: enhancement of the view of the achievements of secondary education arts students in both curricular and extracurricular activities, and the highlight of the contribution that arts education makes to college and career success (focusing specifically on how the arts connect directly to workforce readiness). The Arizona Department of Education discusses additional intentions to include the identification of artistic literacy pathways that cultivate skills for success in the 21st century, and to promote increased accessibility to

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high quality and well-rounded arts education across the state (Arizona Department of Education, 2022).

As an educator, I experienced the effects of the Fine Arts Seal firsthand with the class of 2020. I advised a small group of high school theatre students in the development of their digital portfolio showcasing their arts achievements. The students had fun designing their digital portfolios as they collected evidence of their past achievements. They enjoyed writing about how they overcame various challenges to accomplish what they did, as well as critiquing their work in a constructive manner. The project provided both students and teachers with a summative reminder of what was learned and taught in the arts over the course of four years, and how students were affected directly by the content. The portfolios highlighted life skills learned by the students, and the self-reflection they experienced was beneficial as they took what they learned with them into their future endeavors. This capstone project was submitted to our district fine arts coordinator for approval, who then submitted to the ADE. Once approved at the state level, the seals were applied to the respective student diplomas and recognized at commencement ceremonies. This was not only a victory for the arts students, but it was a massive accomplishment for Arizona arts education. Armed with this new policy, I believe that the problem of practice has momentum in the right direction-and that further research focused on broader learning opportunities and life skills enhanced by theatre training can add more support to these endeavors.

As part of the Cycle 0 reconnaissance research stage, I conducted two qualitative interviews examining the problem of practice in my local context. Two teachers from the SUSD school district from two different high schools participated in the Cycle 0

interviews. One participant (Participant 1) was employed for 15 years at a large high school in the southwest, as the theatre director and teacher. The second participant (Participant 2) was employed for 4 years at a medium-sized high school in the southwest, as the band director and teacher.

Both participants are female and have lived in Arizona for a number of years. Both teachers have lengthy experience with the Arizona education system and have advised students in their respective disciplines in the Arizona State Seal for Arts Proficiency. Both have served as the directors of their departments, and thus are leaders in the arts education sector.

It is important to note that the Cycle 0 research questions ask how student skills are impacted through the specific performing art of *theatre*, yet only Participant 1 is a theatre educator. The interview questions exhibited in Appendix C do not focus solely on theatre, but instead refer to the *performing arts* that include theatre/drama, band, orchestra, choir, and dance. The band teacher (Participant 2) selected also has extensive knowledge in theatre education and is heavily involved in the annual high school musical through her conducting of the orchestra pit musicians. Thus, she is qualified to speak on the topic.

The data suggests the life skills of time management and collaboration are learned by high school students participating in performing arts classes, and that the observation of these learned skills is evidenced across multiple performing arts disciplines. In this case, the two disciplines were theatre and band. Since theatre and band are both collaborative by nature, it tracks that both the theatre teacher and the band teacher cited collaboration as a key skill learned by students. From my own experience, I can attest

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that the familial atmosphere and community signature to performing arts programs that Participant 2 referenced are legitimate, and that tight bond helps to increase trust among team members in order to achieve common goals.

Creativity was referenced by both participants to be crucial in what it means to be *human*. Based on this and other responses from the interview participants, the following statements can be concluded. Since performing arts teach students not just how to create, but how to appreciate and constructively critique creativity, it is essential in developing the whole human. Because artists need to create, there is a need for an *audience* of people who can experience and appreciate the art. One cannot exist without the other. Thus, the Cycle 0 data shows that performing arts are essential to the learning and development of a secondary student.

Arizona State University Institutional Review Board documents for this Cycle 0 action research are available in the appendix. The recruitment letter of consent is available in Appendix B, and the interview questions available in Appendix C.

Problem of Practice & Research Questions

Performing arts curricula have been demonstrated to teach life skills to students of all grade levels. These life skills are defined in academic and social contexts that apply not only to their current school environments, but also to life after formal education. Despite the overwhelming evidence of these benefits for students, arts education programs in secondary schools are subject to elimination to a greater extent compared to other education programs due to budget constraints. The traditional public school funding, such as Title I funds used to support these programs, has been on a steady decline as it has been reallocated in other channels (Dunstan, 2016).

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In order to address this problem, it is necessary to conduct and provide research that offers supporting evidence to show how academic and social skills are enhanced when students experience the arts, specifically theatre/drama (these two terms will be used interchangeably). McCammon et al. (2011) showed adults that participated in their high school theatre programs, regardless of their current occupation, reported increased self-confidence, public speaking skills, communication skills, empathy, emotional intelligence, and many more important social skills. Wright (2006) conducted a role-play drama intervention for students that resulted in participants' enhanced vocabulary skills, showing that specific academic skills learned through theatre can be applied in an interdisciplinary manner to other content areas.

This action research study seeks to examine the ways in which high school theatre programs impact life skills, defined in this study by both academic and social contexts, learned by secondary education students. The innovation intervention will consist of theatrical role-play applied in an interdisciplinary manner. The action research utilizes a mixed-methods approach over the course of two weeks at a southwest public high school. The research questions to be answered include:

1. How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical role-play, impact the text analysis skills of secondary education students in interdisciplinary contexts?

2. How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical role-play, impact the social skills of empathy of secondary education students in interdisciplinary contexts?

3. How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical role-play, impact the social skill of confidence in public speaking of secondary education students in interdisciplinary contexts?

4. How and to what extent will a high school English teacher adopt the teaching method of theatrical role-play into future lesson plans?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Literature analyzed in this study will first address the theoretical framework

guiding the study. The literature then addresses arts effectiveness in teaching academic

and social skills. Next, the proposed research methodology effectiveness in secondary

education is addressed. Lastly, literature will highlight the efforts of arts integration in

schools.

Theoretical Frameworks Guiding Research

Theoretical frameworks, in any research, are crucial to the understanding of the

research topic at hand. Grant and Osanloo (2014) liken theoretical frameworks to that of

the blueprint for constructing a house. A blueprint provides structure, clear direction, and

an organized plan for accomplishing the goal. Similarly, theoretical frameworks provide

foundation and an anchor for how the researcher will build their research (Grant and

Osanloo, 2014):

> (Theoretical framework) serves as the structure and support for the rationale for
>
> the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research
>
> questions. The theoretical framework provides a grounding base, or an anchor, for
>
> the literature review, and most importantly, the methods and analysis (P. 12).

Two theories frame this action research: Experiential Learning Theory and

Academic Risk-Taking Theory. Theatre courses, especially performance activities,

require students to fully immerse themselves and thus encounter a hands-on learning

experience in order to meet learning objectives. Experiential learning theory has been

linked to successful learning outcomes, and due to its methodological nature connects directly to theatre teaching methodology. Acting courses and activities within the theatre curriculum, especially theatrical role-play, can be intimidating for many students. It requires students to take the risk of facing this intimidation in front of a live audience of classmates. While there is a possibility of failure in this process, the benefits of taking that risk are substantial in meeting learning objectives. By creating a safe and supportive environment (Olsen, 2021; Water et al., 2015), the process of taking these risks in theatrical performing can lessen the intimidation factor. As such, academic risk-taking theory serves as an important foundation for this study. Each theory is discussed further below as to how it relates to this action research study.

Experiential Learning Theory

There is a reason that the United States Department of Transportation has designed a two-part assessment for obtaining an official driver's license. One assessment is a written test, and the other is a physical test. The latter is the final step in obtaining the license by way of a driving test. To study for both assessments, driver's education students must learn not only in a lecture-based format but also in a hands-on experience. If one were to only study how to drive a car utilizing books and videos, he or she would likely not pass the final driving test due to lack of actual driving experience. Thus, experiential learning is an absolute necessity in learning how to operate a motor vehicle.

David Kolb understood that this important *learning by doing* education style has helped humans comprehend concepts throughout history, in the present, and will help us in the future. He formally developed the *Experiential Learning Theory*, which

encompasses the central idea that students gain knowledge through concrete experiences (Kolb, 1984, as cited in Cherry, 2020).

The learner experiences four stages of experiential learning in a cycle: a concrete experience acquired through participation, reflective observation of the experience, abstract conceptualization to conclude what was learned from the experience, and active experimentation involving application of the learned concepts in the learner's life (Cherry, 2020). Kolb further described two different groups of learners in this learning style as the *watchers* (reflexive observation) and *doers* (active participation), and that the personal preference of the learners dictates the group with which they identify (Kolb, 1984). In the world of theatre education, based on personal experience, drama teachers provide examples for students by modeling what is expected in a specific activity. Thus, theatre students first maintain the role of *watchers* through observation of what the teacher does, then as *doers* through actively participating in the activity.

Theatre concepts are best learned through full immersion and experiencing the topic. Thus, experiential learning is a key tool in meeting drama learning objectives. Sawyer (2004) when discussing effective teaching methods through improvisation states that "learning is more effective when students participate actively, and all experienced teachers involve students in some way" (p. 14). Etheridge et al. (2017) corroborated this sentiment through the concept of embodiment as experiential learning. Embodiment is defined as the full bodied "doing" of something, rather than reading, thinking, hearing, watching, or reading about it (Etheridge et al., 2017). This embodiment engages the student more fully and allows for the best possible chance of the students meeting the drama learning objectives (Etheridge et al., 2017):

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We argue that the embodiment of newly acquired insights and understandings, achieved and reinforced through dramatic play, offers a fuller range of sensory engagements and the potential for serving multiple learning styles – cognitive, physical, affective, visual, aural and so forth (pp. 473-474).

As alluded to previously, experiential learning enhances learning beyond the meeting of academic learning objectives. Social skills are enhanced as well. A qualitative study by Larson and Brown (2007) analyzed the effect that a theatre program had on the emotional development of adolescents. The students observed were participating in a school production of the musical, *Les Miserables*. The researchers used observation and interviews of students and adult leaders throughout the study's timeline. Larson and Brown (2007) concluded that the experiential setting of the theatre production provided students with the ability to identify and manage their own emotions through internalization, observation of peer behavior, and emotion culture of the setting.

This experiential learning method is observed in areas beyond theatre, such as in the medical field. As mentioned previously, Watson's (2011) medical improvisation class, *Playing Doctor*, was implemented to help medical students practice the social aspects of the profession. This mainly focused on proper bedside manner between doctors and patients. This academic channel of medical humanities uses the experiential learning method as a major strategy in honing specific skills, such as communication and understanding between doctors and patients. The goal with this method is to "use arts methods to build concrete skills needed for medical practice" (Watson, 2011, pp. 1263-1264).

In a similar way, Finnish medical students were evaluated on how their communication skills, which are essential between doctor and patient, can be affected using three experiential learning methods: theatre in education (TIE), simulated patients (SP), and role-play (RP) (Koponen et al., 2012). They were also evaluated on their attitudes toward learning communication skills before and after the experiential methods. Theatre in Education is defined as an interactive innovative application of theatre/drama methods to amplify the learning process (Raj, 2021). Koponen et al. (2012) implemented these three methods in a pilot course on communication to help students learn analysis skills of doctor to patient communication, practice interpersonal communication skills, and assist students in understanding and appreciating the meaning of communication and interpersonal communication skills in the doctor to patient relationship. The TIE workshop used theatre performance and drama techniques to practice fictional contexts, based on real-life scenarios, of the doctor and patient roles. The short play of a doctor to patient encounter was performed and watched by all members of the workshop (Koponen et al., 2010). The SP and RP exercises focused on doctor interviews of patients with amateur actors and fellow medical students. The SP exercise involved a live interactive simulation of specific medical situations in a safe learning environment where there is no chance of harm to real patients (Kurtz et al., 2005). RP exercises required fellow trainees to assume the roles of patient and doctor in a scenario, and proved to be an effective and financially affordable method to practice communication skills (Lane & Rollnick, 2007; Kurtz et al., 2005). Students then spent two days observing and analyzing these interactions in health centers between real doctors and patients. After the 3-month course, results indicated that, overall, there was an increase in students' positive attitudes toward

the experiential process, and a decrease in the negative attitudes. Thus, the experiential learning process may have a positive impact on student perception of the learning method (Koponen et al., 2010).

A review of communication skills training in the Finnish study showed that experiential methods were more effective in teaching communication skills versus instructional methods (Aspegren, 1999, as cited in Koponen et al., 2012). The social skill of communication is important in providing high quality medical care, and this experiential learning process with the use of theatrical methods proved to be successful.

Experiential learning can be observed in another theatre teaching method, *Narrative Inquiry*. Narrative inquiry involves a focus "on stories of lived experience and acts of telling, retelling, and listening" (Olsen, 2021, p. 25). Chan (2017) used this design when studying how Theatre in Education (TIE) affects the acting practices of nine actors in Hong Kong by exploring their experiences in interactive TIE methods. The key was for participants to engage in dialogue about their lived experiences "both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect[ed] upon life and explain[ed] themselves to others" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4, as cited in Chan, 2017). This process of experiencing and reflecting aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, and its application to TIE and how the actors learned through narrative inquiry proved to be successful. One teacher participant in the study praised the experiential learning design as a different way to view education in that it was organically sensory (Chan, 2017). This mode of learning, combined with the theatrical elements of TIE, allowed her to see the importance of applying visual and sensory details to the character she was playing onstage in order to connect images of the story clearly to

the audience (Chan, 2017). Thus, a key component for this deeper meaning learning, such as in the previously mentioned health sciences applications, involves listeners connecting themselves experientially to participant stories (Taylor, 2013, as cited in Olsen, 2021).

Another theatre teaching method that involves experiential learning by nature is the innovation of *Interactive Drama* (Boggs et al., 2007). Boggs et al. (2007) define interactive drama as "a style of live theater wherein a scene is performed by trained actors and then stopped so the audience can interact" (p. 835). This type of theatre allows for audiences to be actively engaged through interaction with the actors, which allows them to fully experience the situation being portrayed (Boggs et al., 2007). The results from this method show enhanced student learning in a variety of situations. Specifically, the findings indicate that interactive drama enhanced student engagement with participation in discussions, connecting vivid acting scenes effectively to their own experiences, written assessments, and/or reflective journals (Boggs et al., 2007).

Not dissimilar from interactive drama is the *Immersive Theatre* design, which also provides an experiential learning experience. Immersive Theatre is "a form of contemporary performance that usually includes elements of one or more site-specific theatre, improvisational theatre, interactive/participatory theatre, environmental theatre, performance art, and promenade theatre" (Cash, 2021, para. 1). This design involves more interaction between actors and audience to the point that the audience is often considered as one of the characters in the performance. Instead of the traditional theatre experience where audience members are merely spectators in seats watching the story unfold onstage, they are participants in an intimate space actively engaging in the story and interacting with the actors. "The participatory aspects of many immersive theatre

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shows can involve both a physical and sensory experience" (Cash, 2021, para. 9).

Examples include audience participants handling props, joining actors at dinner tables or on furniture, taking on one of the roles with guided instruction, and/or listening or witnessing a part of the story in extremely close proximity (Cash, 2021). Through this design audience members are both observers and participants, and are experientially part of the story of the production.

Students in a political science class in London experienced the immersive theatre method firsthand through a simulated environment in their classroom. Dacombe and Morrow (2017) detail a simulation where a classroom was reconfigured to represent the inside of a parliament assembly in which students played the roles of politicians. Dacombe and Morrow (2017) elaborate on the process and the immersive theatre elements incorporated via the following: students were divided into small groups across the room that represented different regions within a fictional nation. They were provided certain materials prior that gave them a framework from which to work in order to meet learning objectives. These materials included social and economic history, as well as a written constitution. Each region elected a representative to attend the national assembly in the middle of the room for a term of 10 minutes. During this time legislation, which focused on themes from past reading and writing assignments, was deliberated upon and passed before returning to their respective regions. The teacher acted as the Speaker of the parliament assembly as the simulation was facilitated, who students interacted with as the activity progressed. Dacombe and Morrow (2017) report results indicating students' significant understanding of the topic from the experience, as well as their reaction to the activity. Students reported an average of 4.7 on a 5-point scale when scoring the exercise,

and highlighted that they favored this learning technique over their previous classroom experiences (Dacombe & Morrow, 2017). The debriefing sessions allowed for the reflective stage of the experiential learning process as they dissected their experience of the activity and the value of the immersive theatre technique. Evaluations indicated that students felt it was beneficial to act out the theories learned in class and that they felt more engaged in the course as a result (Dacombe & Morrow, 2017).

As the literature above shows, experiential learning significantly benefits students through enhanced engagement and understanding of academic and social content. This theory is organically inherent in theatre education, and the drama techniques within this teaching and learning method present an environment in which students enjoy and thrive.

Academic Risk-Taking Theory

Based on previous observations, many students experience trepidation when enrolling in acting classes for the first time. Hollywood often paints the picture that acting involves standing alone in the spotlight on a stage in front of a large audience. This stereotype of the art of acting can assist in fueling the fear of public speaking and performing in front of an audience, which does not help the cause of recruiting students to theatre class. On the theatre stage, there is an inherent risk of not just failing at an activity but of failing in front of a large number of people. This can lead to doubt and a lack of confidence, which can make students nervous to take the class and engage with the onstage drama exercises. However, risking failure is an essential part of the learning process (Clifford, 1991).

Margaret Clifford championed this idea of intellectual risk taking and defined the theory as the process of making decisions in situations where the other choices are characterized by a "lack of certainty and the prospect of loss or failure" (Clifford, 1991, as cited in Pearson, 2011, p. 1). The theory was further defined in 2009 by Ronald Beghetto as "engaging in adaptive behaviors (sharing tentative ideas, asking questions, attempting to do and learn new things) that place the learner at risk of making mistakes or appearing less competent than others" (Beghetto, 2009, as cited in Pearson, 2011, p. 1). Even with the possibility of failure, the benefits of intellectual risk taking (such as attainment of knowledge) outweigh the risks (Beghetto, 2009, as cited in Pearson, 2011). For the purposes of this study, academic risk-taking will refer to student participants who volunteer to engage in theatrical role-play, or act as a character, in front of an audience of peers.

Myriad reasons exist in the decision-making process of a student to take on an intellectual risk. Pearson (2011) list some as self-efficacy, interest in the content, achievement goals, and subject area of the activity. When secondary students select an elective course to take, it has been observed that the guidance counselor assists them in selecting one in which they have an interest or passion. If they are taking a class that they like, they are more likely to take intellectual risks than in a class that they do not enjoy (Beghetto, 2009, as cited in Pearson, 2011).

Research suggests that a diverse range of thinking, learning, and life skills are associated with intellectual risk taking (Pearson, 2011). The key word here is *life skills*. As mentioned previously, this research seeks to examine any life skills, academic and social, enhanced by students as a result of theatre education. Some of these life skills

learned through intellectual risk taking have been identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills in creativity and innovation categories (Pearson, 2011). The partnership further defined traits that are signature to success in post-secondary education and the workforce as the tendency to learn from failure and "understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes" (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009, as cited in Pearson, 2011). An interpretation of this could be that no student is perfect in attaining only success. It would seem, based on the above, that experiencing and learning from failure is key to obtaining life skills.

Henriksen et al. (2021) discuss how risk taking is a vital part of creativity, and is in and of itself important for teachers and students to be skilled at in the ever-changing world in which we live. Creativity assists in problem solving and innovation, which are key tools in the ability to adapt to change (Brown, 2009, as cited in Henriksen et al., 2021).

The popular life motto, "we learn from our mistakes", is one that is easier said than done by which to live. Mistakes of various levels happen every day, but they are often viewed as a negative aspect of the learning process (Henriksen et al., 2021). The risk of failure is a key aspect of making a mistake. However, in the learning process of enhancing creativity skills, risk is unavoidable given the potential and fear of failure (Henriksen et al., 2021). Risk taking also occurs in social contexts, and the fear of embarrassment or discomfort in communicating ideas in a public forum has a significant impact (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007, as cited in Henriksen et al., 2021).

To combat this negative outlook on failure in the learning process, *productive failure* allows for the learner to learn through failure and reflect along the way (Kapur,

2015, as cited in Henriksen et al., 2021). This structure works best in an environment that allows for risk, experimentation, and failure, with the instructor closely guiding the learner to lessons learned in the process (Koh et al., 2015; Kapur, 2015, as cited in Henriksen et al., 2021).

In order to cultivate a safe learning environment in a class that is full of risk-taking opportunities and productive failure aspects, theatre teachers focus on ensemble building at the start of each school year. An ensemble is defined as "a unit or group of complementary parts that contributes to a single effect" (Price, 2021, p. 1). For the purposes of this study, the single effect is the final production where the students perform a story for an audience and the group of complementary parts refers to the student participants. Therefore, the working definition of ensemble building for this study involves the teacher/director cultivating an environment where students get to know each other in a deeper way to establish familiarity and comfort. This open, safe, and playful environment is crucial for sharing and challenging myriad perspectives (Choi et al, 2018). In other words, students will not risk engaging in acting activities if they anticipate they will be judged negatively by peers. Learning through risk, failure, and challenge in this type of environment is best conducted through nonjudgmental reflection (Kapur, 2015, as cited in Henriksen et al., 2021). Thus, theatre teachers work to create a safe environment free of judgment through cultivation of ensemble building.

In a focus group of high school theatre teachers, a guidance counselor, and school psychologist, Olsen (2021) examined how high school theatre teacher experience supports student well-being. Ensemble building is one of the supports utilized by those teachers in their classrooms. The key to building a successful ensemble revolved around

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creating that safe environment that "creates places and networks of resort, comfort, and confidence" (Olsen, 2021, p. 132). The focus group continued by pointing out that this is best accomplished through a series of ensemble-building games and activities at the beginning of the year. Once this safe space is created, risk taking begins to become more prevalent (Olsen, 2021).

This academic risk taking of theatre achieved in a safe classroom environment fosters higher student engagement and effective teaching with the class content. A qualitative study was conducted by Neelands and Nelson (2013) in an under-resourced high school in Massachusetts for urban students of color that examined how playmaking acted as a community in affecting 21st century learning skills of academic risk taking, problem solving, creating thinking, collaboration, and communication. This playmaking process was called Applied Theatre and Drama (AT/D), which Neelands and Nelson (2013) define as follows:

> In this case, playmaking refers to the use of a variety of drama/theatre techniques to develop original performance work with students which emphasizes the exploration of their ideas with the goal of developing their voices and visions of the world and bringing them to a broader audience (p. 18).

The specific project involved Drama 2 students participating in a nine-week workshop of the Shakespeare classic play, *Hamlet*. One of the research questions addressed the ways in which a sense of community established in the drama classroom affected student engagement and facilitation of the material. Neelands and Nelson (2013) conducted ensemble building activities through AT/D design during the first half of the project, which assisted in enhancing the community relationships the students had with

each other and their shared experiences. As trust grew in the classroom through the playmaking structure, a Sense of Community (SOC) was established that led to an environment of connectedness and belonging, characteristics that help to foster empathy, cooperation, altruism, and risk taking in sharing their own stories (Sarasen, 1986; McMillan & Chavis, 1986, as cited in Neelands & Nelson, 2013). Due to the successful establishment of this SOC and safe ensemble environment, the students were more willing to take risks in engaging with the difficult language of Shakespeare and participate fully in the content (Neelands & Nelson, 2013). Neelands and Nelson (2013) conclude that students were able to successfully meet learning objectives, such as the identification of the themes in *Hamlet*, as a result of the playmaking process.

Risk taking is not just academic, especially in theatre courses that require students to open up and engage with one another in the ensemble building process. As the ensemble develops into a safe community, risk taking begins to allow the opportunity for students to practice their social skills, such as empathy (Olsen, 2021; Neelands and Nelson, 2013). Youth theatre in England, specifically the theatrical role-play method, has been found to provide significant benefits to young students in the areas of personal and social development, of which risk taking was key. A qualitative study by Hughes and Wilson (2004) was conducted in which interviews and questionnaires were posed to youth theatre students and youth theatre adult leaders/directors, asking both groups about the impact youth theatre has had on students' lives. Results indicate that youth theatre assisted in the formation of personal and social development of youth through the following areas: the development of personal skills and resources, initiative, discipline, risk taking, development and expression of thoughts and feelings, more community

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participation, and empathy for others through role-play in performances (Hughes & Wilson, 2004).

The process of achieving this risk taking of students through performance is not easy for all to achieve. Hughes and Wilson (2004) discuss performance as a high-risk environment where performers are putting to test their ability to hold their nerve, trust and be confident in themselves, communicate the thoughts and feelings of the character role they are portraying, and to stand out in front of myriad audience types of their peers, adults, and broader community. However, despite all of those risks, these young students were still up for the challenge. "Young people powerfully describe the adrenaline rush of performance in their accounts of taking part in youth theatre. Good youth theatres ensure that risk taking happens in a safe context, where young people are thoroughly prepared and supported" (Hughes & Wilson, 2004, p. 64). Thus, the key for students to take high risks in a theatrical environment and achieve drama learning objectives is to cultivate a safe space where they are free to experiment with the content in a supportive community.

Student self-reports have found that confidence in many different skills, including risk taking, was increased as a result of theatre courses. Three drama programs in secondary schools were analyzed in a mixed-methods study conducted by McLauchlan (2010) that examined student accounts of how drama class affected their lives. Questionnaires asking about student self-reported information related to drama experience, along with interviews conducted of the students, revealed that drama class/activities significantly benefited students in the areas of motivation, desire to stay in school, and interdisciplinary applications (McLauchlan, 2010). The data showed that students identified improvement in their personal and social growth in areas such as self-

confidence, creativity, and self-expression (McLauchlan, 2010). Risk taking was also one of those areas as drama students overcame their fear of taking risks, public speaking, and trying out new experiences (McLauchlan, 2010).

As the literature above discusses, taking an academic risk enhances the learning process. Since theatre teaching methods require students to take that risk through active participation in front of their peers, it is crucially important that a safe learning environment be established through ensemble building. Once this is cultivated, students begin to become more comfortable with their fellow ensemble members, which aids significantly in their willingness to take risks in meeting learning objectives.

The next sections will discuss a review of literature that more broadly speak to the types of skills and learning experiences benefiting students through arts-based and specific drama-infused learning.

Skills Development via Arts-Based Learning

Some of life's most important skills are best learned through experiential learning (Kolb, 2014). Similar to the driver's license process previously mentioned, it can be posited that a student cannot learn the social skill of public speaking without experiencing speaking in front of an audience. Thus, it can be argued teachers who require students to present a topic in class to their peers are assisting in teaching this public speaking life skill through experiential learning.

The academic and social skills learned through the arts, more specifically in drama learning objectives, are organically obtained through experiential learning since there is an emphasis in "showing and integrating theory in practice" (Kolb and Kolb, 2005, as cited in Boggs et al., 2007, p. 833). Boggs et al. (2007) detail that drama

specifically fits experiential education since it is a powerful tool to bring students into an experience. It can then be posited that acting students, for example, learn how to act best through the experience of acting in scenes, plays, and/or musicals. Technical theatre students in lighting, for example, learn how to hang a stage light fixture best by practicing the method of physically hanging it.

The effectiveness of the arts is evident in career success and obtainment of life skills. According to a 2015 report, U.S. employers rank creativity among the top three most important personality traits related to career success (Adobe Systems, Inc. & *Ready to Innovate*, 2015). The article states "56% of employers and 79% of superintendents agree that a college degree in the arts is the most significant indicator of creativity in a prospective job candidate" (p. 1). Metro High School alumni were interviewed on life skills learned after experiencing high school arts. They reported speaking, communication, and acting skills all benefit them in the workplace (Cowart, 2013). Cowart (2013) cites the DICE Consortium as reporting that "theatre education provides skills in the areas of speaking and creativity, which is vital for the workplace" (p. 162-163). The key from the alumni learning these life skills is that they *experienced* the high school arts. In other words, they engaged in experiential learning and were at an advantage in their careers later in life partially because of the positive effect of their high school theatre experience.

The *Lifelong Impact* study previously mentioned studied ways that "participation in high school theatre/speech classes and/or related extracurricular activities (e.g., play productions, speech tournaments) may have positively influenced and affected adults after graduation" (McCammon et al., 2011). McCammon et al. (2011) detail participant

testimony that identified many skills learned from high school theatre/speech that contributed to success in their occupations, including "empowering one to *think and function improvisationally* in dynamic and ever-changing contexts" (p. 6). The key word here is *participation*. In other words, students had to actively participate in high school theatre/speech classes or related extracurricular activities in order for those experiences to have the impact they did. Thus, the experiential learning architecture was already present in how the students engaged with the content.

Drama Curriculum Tools

Common instruments of drama education include ensemble-building, role-play exercises, improvisation techniques, group scene work, and monologue performances. Experiential learning underscores the aforementioned and can be posited as a requirement for students to be successful in achieving the theatre learning objectives.

Improvisation

Based on personal experience, improvisation students learn how best to improvise by participating in the various activities and games designed to exercise quick thinking while telling a story. We improvise every day in dialogue, writing, and how we respond to unpredictability. As such from observation, improvisation is key to theatre and one of the most important skills enhanced among high school drama students.

For Cycle 1 of this action research study, I conducted a mixed methods design that measured the extent to which a high school improvisation unit affects the social skills of public speaking and improvisation in students. The high school students involved were enrolled in a Theatre I course that I instructed.

The innovation consisted of a series of specific improvisation exercises designed to improve student improvisation and speaking skills. Pre- and post-test Likert scale surveys were implemented to measure student self-reported levels of confidence in improvisation and public speaking. Additionally, students gave pre- and post-test 60-second speeches on a topic of their choosing as well as a topic provided by me.

Observations of both student participants' performance in class with the improvisation exercises and video recordings of pre- and post-test speeches were also used to analyze results. Based on the quantitative and qualitative pre- and post-test data results, an increase in confidence was observed in student participants' self-perceptions of their confidence in improvisation and public speaking skills after experiencing the improvisation innovation. The average post-test survey scores were overall higher than the pre-test scores. The behavior observed in class and in the video recordings showed signs of increased confidence in improvised speech based on continuous speaking during the 60-second allotted time (i.e. students filled the entire time with speech in the post-test as opposed to the pre-test), consistent eye contact, body language, and avoidance of filler words when linking thoughts together.

Improvisation enhancing the social skills of students is not uncommon. Conrad (2004) conducted a drama method named Popular Theatre with a school that involved acting out scenes based on real issues that students face. While students are the actors in this role-play scenario, the scenes are loosely scripted and mostly improvised. By taking on these roles, students were able to improvise performances that reflected their perceptions of their own reality, as well as others (Conrad, 2004). By reflecting on other

perceptions of reality besides their own, the enhancement of the social skill of empathy can be attributed to this dramatic method of improvisation.

Quasi-experimental action research studies were conducted in Missouri between two school districts. The research examined if exposure to improv storytelling and story-writing games would increase students' writing length (DeMichele, 2015). Results indicated that increases in both word and sentence usage were observed in regular and special education students (DeMichele, 2015). DeMichele (2015) highlights that the collaborative nature of improv "addresses deficits in social emotional or literacy skills that are important to writing" (p. 22).

Theatrical Role-Play

The role-play method is a widely used instructional method not just in theatre courses, but in myriad content courses (namely core classes). Role-play was used as an intervention in a high school government course to assist in teaching students about politics through specific political simulations (Lo, 2015). It was effective as students were engaged during the entire course of the intervention and were able to learn about politics through the roles that they played. Lo (2015) concludes:

> As students continue to engage in political simulations through their roles, they have the opportunity to experience participatory appropriation: to understand political processes better as they experience them firsthand (Lo, 2015, p. 93).

Role-play has been adopted into newer innovations, such as Theatre as Education. This is a form of drama curriculum and intervention that helps to teach concepts to high school and middle school students (Vallack, 2015). It is based on previous reliable research and methods that use observation, collaboration, improvisation, and role-play to

tell a story. Students act as researchers by interviewing a specific cohort in the community. They then take this data back to class and work as a class to write, rehearse and perform an original script based on the interview answers. Student performers and audience are engaged in the retelling of those stories through role-play, thereby teaching the students history concepts and empathy with those who lived in those times. Results indicated increased understanding of concepts and empathy in the students.

> Students base their characters on the data, but use artistic license to link or represent themes symbolically. This engages the Higher Order Thinking Skills of synthesis and creativity, as well as the sophisticated concept of metaphor (Vallack, 2015, p. 4).

The role-play technique has also been proven effective in higher education. Riain et al. (2018) used a qualitative approach to examine the method of role-play in a college literature class. The researcher assigned students into groups for the purposes of acting out a piece of literature for the class. The researcher was able to conclude that the role-play intervention contributed positively to the students' clearer understanding of the literature being analyzed in class. Riain et al. (2018) detail:

> In the exam at the end of the semester, there was no confusion regarding the events at the climax of this story. It seems that the stripped down version enacted by the students served to clarify the sequence of events in the students' minds. Not only did the students involved in the role-play understand what was happening in the story, all the other members of the class did as well (pp. 2-3).

One study examined how higher order thinking skills can be developed using active learning through the theatrical role-play strategy (Vinay, 2018). Role-play again is

defined here as one performing as another character/person in a hypothetical situation. Vinay (2018) conducted a pre and posttest assessment measuring student confidence, and observed students throughout the study. Psychology students were required to complete group studies involving the assumption of roles of experimenter, participant, therapist, and/or patient (Vinay, 2018). Vinay (2018) used a mixed-methods design was used to collect data that suggested the following: students were less confident about the task at hand in the pretest interview, but more confident in the posttest interview. Observation notes detailed students were taking role-play seriously while enjoying the activity (Vinay, 2018), thus they were embracing their roles fully through an experiential learning process. Other students modified studies when certain results were not working out (Vinay, 2018), suggesting a skill of improvisation. Data showed posttest scores with respect to confidence answers as much higher than pretest scores. This research proved that a drama-based strategy (role-play) helped students' understanding through a deep experiential process.

A study conducted in Spain assessed effects of drama techniques on high school students' speaking skills and motivation in an English as a Foreign Language course. Techniques used were mime, role-play, improvisation, and scripts. Students completed a Likert scale pre-questionnaire on motivation in English class, as well as a pretest to ascertain current speaking levels (Torrico, 2015). A post-questionnaire and oral posttest were conducted to compare results after the treatment. The posttest involved a short oral presentation by students on a topic after only minutes to prepare (Torrico, 2015). This oral presentation can be compared to a short slightly improvised monologue in theatre involving a solo performance. Results showed increases in students' English speaking

and vocabulary skills, as well as critical thinking and creativity. Regarding motivation, student enthusiasm for myriad drama activities was high. This methodology has again been proven as an effective tool to enhance student learning in another content area.

When actors are studying how to become various characters, they need to look through the eyes of that character to become that character. Looking through this lens allows the actor to better represent the character's personality, both vocally and physically, in front of an audience. This action of role-play is deeply experiential and teaches empathy. Students are able to attain higher order thinking skills and develop emotional empathy partially because they are playing the roles of others (Vallack, 2015). It can be posited that this sense-based learning of playing another person to tell his or her story while developing the above academic and social skills is only learned through experiential learning.

Arts Integration

One of the most optimistic methods of arts integration is Drama-Based Pedagogy (DBP) (Kiger Lee et al., 2015). A review of research between 1985-2012 was conducted that explored 47 quasi-experimental DBP intervention studies. Kiger Lee et al. (2015) suggests that "A meta-analysis of this research suggested that DBP has a positive, significant impact on achievement outcomes in educational settings" (p. 1). One signature of drama-based pedagogy is that teachers can use it to facilitate both drama and non-drama content (Kiger Lee et al., 2015). This can be interpreted as DBP possessing interdisciplinary values that allow for students to apply skills learned to other content areas.

Evidence exists of success for an arts integration increase over the past 25 years. Despite the obstacles that the No Child Left Behind Act posed to arts education (Spohn, 2006), the No Child Left Behind Act was beneficial as the arts were billed equally as core academic content areas with math, science, reading, and other subjects (Ruppert, 2006). Ruppert (2006) cites the arts "can contribute to improved student learning outcomes" (p. 1). At the state level, Mary Dell'Erbe emphasizes, "In support of high-arts learning, 27 states include the arts in licensure requirements for non-arts teachers" (p. 12). I find this interesting as it shows that those 27 states value well-rounded teachers to teach well-rounded students. Research by Toivanen, Komulainen and Ruismaki (2009) suggests:

> According to our research good teaching is based on confidence, rich interaction, and creative passion, which can be taught through drama and improvisational exercises such as verbal spontaneity games, role playing, and physical movement. (p. 60)

Literature suggests that well-rounded education philosophy has been key to arts integration and its effectiveness on teaching specific skills. Emily Workman (2017) highlights the federal government's support of this philosophy through the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* that "strongly encourages states to ensure all students have access to a well-rounded education, which includes the arts and music" (p. 1). It can be surmised that this act is in partial response to the deeper learning skills that the arts enhance. Deeper learning has lasting effects on achievement in college, citizenship, and career (Workman, 2017). The key is that the arts enhance these deeper learning skills (Workman, 2017). A table in Workman's article depicts strategy of a visual arts experiment involving a field trip to a museum to teach critical thinking. The effect on the

students who attended the field trip resulted in more critical thinking compared to those who did not attend (Workman, 2017).

Arts integration has been proven effective beyond the classroom. The field trip strategy has been key for success of the arts curriculum and deeper learning. It can be posited that this is in part due to the experiential learning component. An Arkansas study involved school groups randomly assigned to attend a live theatre performance or watch a movie of the same script. Greene et al. (2018) discovered educational benefits of seeing live theatre included "higher levels of tolerance, social perspective taking, and stronger command of the plot and vocabulary of those plays" (p. 1). Students watching a movie version of the same show did not encounter the same educational benefits (Greene et al., 2018). Students attending the live performance were able to experience the story live. As audience members, they were physically able to interact with their surroundings. They saw and heard the actors delivering the story in front of them and they were able to immediately discuss what they saw with their peer neighbors. As audience members, they were able to feel like they were a part of the story. Thus, they were able to engage in experiential learning through *experiencing* the story, *reflecting* on what was experienced, *conceptualizing* what was learned from the story, and *experimenting or applying* what was learned to future studies (Kolb, 1984, as cited in Cherry, 2020).

Implications

Experiential learning is not the only learning style that exists in the arts. Teachers must remember that students have all different types of learning styles. As a result, many students may not be comfortable experiencing the art of acting through active participation. Even in the *watcher* observation role, they may never want to transition to

the *doer* participation role. This could be the result of a dislike of the content area of theatre, a dislike of the experiential learning style, trepidation resulting from academic and social risk-taking, or a combination of the three. However, as research has shown above, arts students learn arts concepts best by *doing* and experiencing them.

Based on the literature presented, many sources view the arts as important to high school curricula. The skills taught, both academic and social, posit the arts as a staple in the development of the high school student. This assists in a well-rounded education that includes arts, humanities, social sciences, English, math, and science (Jimenez & Sargrad, 2018). This type of education allows for "(students) to be prepared for college, the 21st century workforce, and global citizenship" (p. 1). While this is good news for the arts education world, there is still a long road ahead to improve the effect and impact of the arts in education. This action research seeks to accomplish these goals.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

This mixed-methods dissertation study follows an action research model, and action research is cyclical and iterative. Mertler (2020) details four main stages of action research as planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. It is further detailed that this four-stage process is not linear, but cyclical in nature (Mertler & Charles, 2011, as cited in Mertler, 2020). Essentially it is a cycle where each stage informs the next. This is similar to how solutions to wicked problems are resolved. Wicked problems consist of topics that are tricky vicious circles without clear or direct answers, and center around the social sciences as opposed to hard science (Rittel & Webber, 1973, as cited in Jordan et al., 2014). Each iteration of addressing a wicked problem helps to inform how future wicked problems may arise and be addressed, which follows a similar cyclical nature (Jordan et al., 2014).

The innovation of theatrical role-play was used as a method of teaching an English IV literature unit. As a researcher, I measured the following constructs: the academic skill of text analysis as well as the social skills of empathy and confidence in public speaking.

Setting

The dissertation cycle innovation occurred at a school considered medium-sized based on a student population of approximately 1400 students with an average classroom size of 31. The student ethnicity demographics consist of 57.13% White, 23.98% Hispanic, 6.48% Black/African American, 4.07% Asian, 4.27% American Indian/Alaska

Native, 3.72% who identify with 2 or more ethnicities, and .34% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. The gender ratio of the students is almost equal with half female and half male.The innovation consisted of the researcher as well as students in an English IV class. The English class occurred in a standard classroom with desks and chairs all facing the same direction. The lecture-based model of teaching English was sought out in order to differentiate from the innovation's design of experiential and academic risk-taking learning.

Participants

English IV students and their teacher comprised the group of participants, along with the researcher who assumed the role of participant observer as the facilitator of the innovation and teaching of theatrical role-play. The English teacher observed and provided feedback under the direction of the researcher.

All student participants consisted of 12th grade students. The researcher wanted to ensure all participants were of the same relative age and thus possess similar educational skills in the areas of reading, writing, and speaking. This assisted in a more reliable comparative analysis of data results after the innovation had transpired.

The number of participants was 10 out of a class size of 34 students. The students represented myriad economic and social statuses and live primarily in close proximity to the school. The teacher was in her third year at the school.

Role of the Researcher

I served as both the researcher and a participant observer (Mertler, 2020). Additionally, I served in the role of teacher at the high school and facilitated the innovation. I taught specific ensemble building and acting methods in order to implement

theatrical role-play as an alternative way of studying English literature. As this process was conducted, I took copious field notes based on my observations of how students were interacting with the innovation.

I administered pre- and post-test surveys, and collected and analyzed the results. I also administered a document containing open-ended questions to measure progress of theatrical role-play. Interviews of four student participants, as well as the English IV teacher, were also used. I served as the interviewer for this process. More details are provided on the instruments for measuring data in an upcoming section.

Innovation

Preliminary Design

The mixed-methods action research innovation design consists of a main component of the drama curriculum: role-play. Role-play here is defined as one performing as another character/person in a scripted scene/situation that tells a story. The goal is to determine how this drama curriculum tool can teach the same select lesson plans of an English IV class. The life skills, both academic and social, were measured through a comparative study method at the conclusion of the innovation's timeline.

Students acted out a section from English literature in tandem with the playscript version of the same story. For this innovation, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley was chosen by the English teacher as the literature to be studied as it was planned in the English IV curriculum. As such, the script version of the same novel, adapted by Victor Gialanella, was selected by the researcher to work in close association with the original novel. The scenes selected consisted of at least 90% dialogue among the characters so that students had the opportunity to comprehend and express literature through vocal and physical

expression. Once the innovation had concluded, the researcher created a document outlining how the selected scenes corresponded to sections of the novel. This was provided to the teacher for future lesson planning.

A series of warmup and ensemble building exercises were implemented first by the researcher to transition the students into the role-play activities. Final performances were presented by both classes after sufficient rehearsal time in class.

Timeline and Procedure

The innovation consisted of 15 days in order to provide enough time for maximum effectiveness. Table 1 displays this timeline, and more detailed descriptions of each activity are provided below.

Table 1

Theatrical Role-Play Timeline and Innovation Procedures

Research Activity Details		
Activity	**Notes**	**Timeline**
Proposal of research to school district IRB	Submission of consent/recruitment letter, survey and protocol details	10/22
Proposal of research to ASU IRB	Submission of consent/recruitment letter, survey and protocol details	11/22
Recruitment of participants	E-mail recruitment letter to English II students and their parents/legal guardians, as well as to English II teacher	1/23
Participant finalization	Collect participant consent letters	1/23

Day 1: Pre-test Survey, Ensemble Building	Implementation of Likert scale survey and collection of results Implementation of ensemble building activities	1/24/23
Day 2: Ensemble building, introduction to *Frankenstein*	Continuation of ensemble building activities Researcher introduction of *Frankenstein* story via powerpoint and video	1/25/23
Day 3: Group Read-Through of All Scenes	Students read each scene out loud with some volunteering to read for specific characters	1/26/23
Day 4: Group Read-Through of All Scenes	Students continued reading each scene out loud with some volunteering to read for specific characters	1/27/23
Day 5: Group Read-Through of All Scenes	Students finished reading each scene out loud with some volunteering to read for specific characters Researcher introduced each character description Character preference sheets passed out and collected	1/30/23
Day 6: Read-Through Rehearsal	Cast list announced Students read through their assigned scripts as their characters in their acting groups	1/31/23
Day 7: Blocking and Working Rehearsal	Researcher provided blocking and character work direction	2/1/23

Day 8: Blocking and Working Rehearsal	Researcher provided blocking and character work direction	2/2/23
Day 9: Blocking and Working Rehearsal	Researcher provided blocking and character work direction	2/3/23
Day 10: Blocking and Working Rehearsal, *The Actor's Checklist*	Researcher finished providing blocking and character work direction Assigned *The Actor's Checklist* document	2/6/23
Day 11: Run-Through Rehearsal	Students ran through their scenes without stopping Researcher provided directing and acting notes to groups	2/7/23
Day 12: Performances	Students performed the scenes for their classmates Collection of *The Actor's Checklist* document	2/8/23
Day 13: Performances	Students continued performing the scenes for their classmates	2/9/23
Day 14: Performances, Post-test survey. Interview requests	Final group performed Implementation of Likert scale survey and collection of results Interview requests of students and English IV teacher Parental consent form distributed to select number of students (n=4) to participate in interview and agree to be audio recorded	2/16/23
Day 15: Interview Requests	Collect interview audio-recording consent forms	3/23-4/23

Day 16: Interviews	Conduct teacher interview	3/23
Days 17-20: Interviews	Conduct student interviews	4/23
Data Analysis and Interpretation	Comparative analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data from all instruments used	5/23
Assessment Grading	Researcher grades *The Actor's Checklist*, rehearsals and performances of students and send to the English teacher for grade reporting	5/23
Results	Results from study shared with all participants	8/23

Student participants were recruited by way of a recruitment/consent letter that detailed the innovation procedure thoroughly. The letter was submitted to both the site school district research cabinet and the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board. Once approved, it was e-mailed to the parents/legal guardians of student participant candidates. It was also made available to prospective participants through handing out a physical copy in the English IV class.

The English teacher participant was also recruited by way of the same process. Once recruited, meetings took place between the teacher and myself to detail how the innovation will take place and how data will be collected and analyzed. The data collection and analysis process was communicated to the teacher in order for clear understanding of how student participants will be assessed. A section of literature from the English IV curriculum was agreed upon by both the teacher and myself in order to

implement the innovation. In this case, that literature was *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. After examining the novel, I determined the innovation would be better suited with the play adaptation. The main reason for this revolved around the lack of dialogue in the novel, as opposed to the play script. Dialogue is extremely important for theatrical role-play to occur since much of the story is told through the voices of the characters. The script proposed was adapted by Victor Gialanella from Mary Shelley's original novel, and was published by Dramatists Play Service, Inc. After the innovation concluded, I created a document that aligned the sections of the novel with the corresponding play script sections. I sent this to the teacher for future lesson planning.

I had aimed to collect all letters of consent at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the innovation. However, student participants did not submit these until right before and during the innovation implementation. For those who submitted consent letters during the innovation, I transferred data collection of those students into the approved participant category.

On day 1, the pre-test Likert scale survey was administered and collected on the first day, followed by ensemble building activities. Those activities included a warmup entitled *You!* and one main exercise entitled *One Line at a Time Story*. Both activities required the group to be oriented in a circle. *You!* required the students to point at a student across the circle, make eye contact, and verbalize the word "you" with high energy and volume. The modification I made on this exercise was for students to verbalize classmate first names in the circle as opposed to "you". This helped students get to know each other and assisted in ensemble building. *One Line at a Time Story* required students to contribute one sentence of a story told by the group, or ensemble. Students

ideally sit in a circle and a topic for a story was provided by me. Due to spacial

limitations within the classroom, the desks were oriented the same direction as per the

English IV design layout. One person began with, "once upon a time", and then

continued with the first line of the story. Each student then contributed the next line in the

story until everyone in the circle had contributed, with the last student saying "the end"

after their sentence. The story was then repeated back to them verbally by myself as I

wrote what was said as the story progressed. Since the students told a story through their

acting in a group scene as characters in the literature being studied, they needed to work

together as an ensemble. This activity gave them practice in telling a story as a collective

group, and thus assisted in building ensemble. These warmup exercises were repeated for

the first 6 days/rehearsals to continue building the ensemble. The rehearsals after day 6

required more complex tasks, so there was not sufficient time within the class period to

conduct warm up exercises each day.

On day 2, I provided the students with an introduction to the story of

Frankenstein after the warmup activities were completed. The introduction consisted of a

series of video clips and photographs of myriad depictions of the story since the original

book was published. I showed them clips from the classic film, *Young Frankenstein*, as

well as clips from the TV show, *The Munsters*, in an attempt to connect popular

depictions of the story to what students may have seen. I showed photographs of play

productions that portrayed the same playscript we studied in the innovation. I also

showed photographs of how Lurch from *The Addams Family* was inspired by

Frankenstein's monster, as well as how it has been animated in various Halloween

iterations and animated cartoons, such as *Scooby Doo*.

Day 3 consisted of the beginning of the whole class read-through of the 4

different scenes selected from the script. This was completed after the warmup activities.

The purpose of this activity was to familiarize the class with each scene in preparation for

rehearsals and performances. Each scene was selected by me based on the following

criteria: number of characters in the scene, dialogue content, and chronological place in

the story. Since there was not sufficient time to perform every scene from the play and

cover the entire novel, I selected scenes from key points in the story to give the students a

general idea of the beginning, middle, and end of the story. All students were handed the

script selections from the first scene, and then volunteers were asked to read each

character's lines. I read the stage directions in italics when appropriate. These script

selections were collected by me at the end of class.

After conducting the warmup activities, day 4 focused on reading aloud the next 2

scenes as a class. Students were provided with script selections from the next 2 scenes.

Some students volunteered to read the same characters as the previous day. The script

selections were collected at the end of class.

Day 5 concluded the class read-through of the final scene after warmup activities

concluded. Students were giving this script selection, which was collected by me at the

end of class. After the scene was read, I asked students what their favorite scene and/or

characters were. I then verbally provided brief character descriptions of each role

available. Forms were then passed out to students asking for their preferences in which

character they would like to portray. Students were directed to select their first, second,

and third choice of preferred character, or to select *no preference* if they did not mind

who they played. I explained that the scenes would be cast according to these preferences

as best as possible. This form is available in Appendix I. After all sheets were collected, I

cast the scene according to preferences and student feedback on who they would ideally

like to be in their group. I decided to require the students to initiate this request if so

desired because I did not want to limit the possible combinations of actors in each scene.

After warmup activities were conducted on day 6, I announced the cast list for

who was playing which character in the scene, as well as which of the four scenes they

were acting. After scripts were handed out, I directed students to gather in their assigned

casts, or groups, to conduct a *read-through rehearsal*. This rehearsal, also known as a

table read, consists of the cast reading their lines out loud for the whole script in a group

setting (Roth et al., 2017). This allowed for the cast to begin working as an ensemble as

they listened to how each person delivered lines of dialogue.

Days 7 and 8 consisted of *blocking* and *working* rehearsals in the English

classroom. Blocking rehearsals involve the director providing the actors with detailed

movement on how to travel from one place to another onstage (Vegh, 2022). Working

rehearsals aim to address how actors are delivering their lines, physical actions,

pace/tempo of the scene, and the overall flow of how the story is being told (Vaux, 2015).

These rehearsals were aimed to help inform the participants on more details regarding

personalities of their characters, and as such were aimed to assist them in

characterization. A combination of my interpretation of the script as the director and the

students' interpretations of the script as the actors was used to develop the final

characterization of the roles.

While it is common practice to separate blocking and working rehearsals, time

constraints with daily class duration dictated I combine these two types of rehearsals into

one. I did not have sufficient time to work with each acting group to separate the

rehearsal types. I provided students with blocking and characterization notes one group at

a time, and they sometimes took notes in their scripts accordingly to remember my

directions. I instructed them to review all blocking and characterization learned at the end

of each day within their groups by running through the scene.

Days 9 and 10 focused on continuing blocking and working rehearsals for the rest

of the acting groups. Due to spatial limitations in the English classroom, the teacher and I

agreed to moving the class to my larger acting classroom called the *Black Box Theater*.

This theater facility design consists of a simple room with black walls and a flat floor that

allows for more versatility in where set pieces and audience seating can exist (Calarco,

2019). Since this was the first day in a new space, I conducted a warmup entitled, *Kitty*

Wants A Corner. This game consists of students standing in a big circle all facing each

other. One person is in the middle and is required to get out of that location by asking

each person the question, "Kitty want a corner?" The recipient has the option of saying,

"No, go ask my neighbor" or "Yes". If they say the latter, that person takes the place of

the person in the middle and conducts the same business. If they say the former, the

person in the middle moves on to the next person asking the same question. While this is

happening, students on the other side of the circle make non-verbal communication with

each other, such as eye contact and head nodding, to agree to switch places in the circle

without the person in the middle noticing. If that person notices, a race begins to see who

gets to the empty place first. If the person in the middle arrives prior to another student

switching places, the latter is in the middle. The exercise continued for approximately 5

minutes. The purpose of this warmup was to acclimate students to the new environment

with a spatially aware game focused on their peers rather than a potentially intimidating new environment. After this activity was concluded, I conducted blocking and working rehearsals with the remaining groups.

Day 10 also consisted of the introduction of *The Actor's Checklist* (Appendix D) aimed to further assist the participants in developing their characters. I provided an example of how to complete the form, passed out the documents to the students, and instructed them to work on this in addition to rehearsing scenes with their acting groups. The document was also posted as an assignment on Google Classroom by the English teacher. Students were required to complete *The Actor's Checklist* and submit back to me or the English teacher in two days.

It should be noted that while I was working individually with each acting group during each in-class rehearsal, other student groups were directed to work and run through their scenes. The English teacher helped supervise and enforce this while I focused on other groups.

Day 11 consisted of all groups engaging in a *run-through rehearsal*. This rehearsal type involves actors rehearsing the entire show without very few to no stops with the intent to establish an idea of continuity and the overall length of time of the show (Roth et al., 2017). I watched the rehearsals for each group and guided the actors as needed through the scene while taking notes not only for research observation, but also acting notes to provide the students after the run-through had concluded. The latter consisted of reminders on blocking, line delivery, and/or characterization.

The first round of performances were conducted by two groups on Day 12. Each group was given the first part of class to review and run through their scenes. Then two

groups performed in front of the live audience of their peers in a three-quarter thrust-style theater design in the black box theater. A three-quarter thrust theater consists of the stage extending into the audience, thus creating audience seating on three sides of the stage (Theatres Trust, 2023). *The Actor's Checklist* completed documents were physically collected or electronically submitted at the end of class.

A *dress rehearsal* was planned for day 10, would have consisted of all technical elements (lighting, sound, set, properties, costumes, hair/makeup), being merged with the performance (Roth et al., 2017). Due to time constraints, the technical element of costume pieces originally planned was not able to be implemented. Instead, I continued to direct blocking rehearsals for the remaining groups while the others ran through their scenes.

Day 13 consisted of the second round of performances by two more acting groups. Similar to day 12, they were provided the first part of class with time to review and run through their scenes. These groups then performed their scenes in the environment setup as the previous day.

Day 14 was the last day of performances for the remaining group. They reviewed and ran through their scene at the beginning of class prior to performing. They then performed in the same format as previous groups. However, it should be noted that due to schedule limitations from the English teacher, especially since the innovation went over the original 12 days requested, this group performed 5 days later. As such, the review and run-through prior to performance took longer than expected. I also administered and collected the post-test survey during this day. After the survey had been completed, I began considering the purposive sampling of potential student participants to interview.

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The interview questions for students and the teacher are available in Appendices E and F. Since the interviews will last approximately 20 minutes each, a minimum of two days will be required to conduct all of them.

Day 15 included the collection of interview request consent forms, as well as audio recording consent forms.

Day 16 consisted of the teacher interview, conducted on March 3rd, 2023, after the school day had concluded and lasted approximately 30 minutes. It was audio recorded with the teacher's permission, transcribed verbatim, and stored for future analysis.

Due to additional parental consent being required to audio record students for interviews, a delay occurred in the conducting of said interviews. An addendum was created that was approved by both the school district and ASU IRB committees. It was then sent to 2 male and 2 female students, along with their parents. Due to a lack of response from the purposive sampling, the interview request was extended to the rest of the participants.

Days 17-20 consisted of student interviews. All student interviews took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and were all conducted during the English IV class period. The first student was interviewed on April 13th, 2023. The second student interview was conducted on April 24th, 2023. The third interview occurred on April 25th, 2023. The final interview was conducted on April 28th, 2023.

Analysis of the data immediately followed. I begin by comparing the pre- and post-test survey results of the students, noting any similarities and/or changes in the answers. Next, I read through my observation field notes of the rehearsal and performance process while also noting and coding any significant trends of student

behavior. I then read through and coded answers on *The Actor's Checklist* documents and took note of any significant data. Lastly, I transcribed and coded the 5 interviews conducted from the audio recordings and reported noteworthy trends in answers.

In May of 2023, I graded all projects associated with the innovation as they were also required assignments of the English IV class. Those projects included *The Actor's Checklist*, rehearsal participation, and final performance. The rubrics are available in Appendices C and D. I sent all grades to the English teacher so she could input them into the school's grading system. I only used the graded rubrics from the approved participants for data collection and analysis. A note on the grading rubric design: for students enrolled in theatre classes, the performance rubric is more extensive as it contains sections related to more acting techniques they learn during class, such as pace/tempo of the scene, memorization of lines, and more. Due to the lack of acting experience and drama education of the participants, I condensed the rubric to focus only on elements covered during the innovation.

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Quantitative and Qualitative Strategies

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The instruments for collecting and analyzing quantitative data included pre- and post-Likert scale surveys. The instruments for collecting and analyzing qualitative data included semi-structured interviews of student participants and the teacher, a document containing open-ended questions entitled *The Actor's Checklist*, and field notes from the researcher.

Quantitative Data Collection

The pre- and post-test Likert scale surveys were administered to the student participants and measured confidence in the social skills of public speaking and empathy,

as well as text analysis skills. Copies of the surveys are available in Appendices G and H. There are small differences between the pre- and post-test question prompts. The pre-test asks for demographic data, past experience in acting, and what the term *theatrical role-play* means to the respondent. The post-test does not include demographic prompts nor past acting experience as that data was already collected in the pre-test. One short answer open-ended question is added at the end asking about the respondent's overall experience with the innovation. With the exception of those minor differences for demographic and followup purposes, the tests are the same in order to capture differences that might occur due to the effects of this intervention.

The Likert scale methodology is a common research practice that has been proven effective. Carifo and Perla (2008) summarize its effectiveness: "Likert methodology is one of the most commonly used methodologies in all fields of research, but particularly so in allied health, medicine and medical education" (p. 1151). Granted the previous quote states that the Likert methodology is more common in the fields of health science and medicine, however the key word in this category is *education* as it is detailed in *medical education*. Thus, it serves as an acceptable method of quantitative data collection for this action research.

Students were asked to rank their confidence level in their confidence to speak in front of an audience, how connected they felt to characters and persons in literature, and the extent to which they were able to understand the story being told (i.e., text analysis). The skills were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = *Not Confident* and 5 = *Most Confident*. One construct on this survey measured confidence in public speaking skills, another measured empathy levels, and the last measured text analysis skills.

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These surveys were developed with a series of factors in mind. Most of the questions prompted for closed answers, requiring respondents to select an answer from a list. If there are too many open-ended questions, the answers could be vague and not complete, making them difficult to code and value as reliable data (Fowler, Jr., 2013).

Open-ended questions are represented in a limited fashion, however are still important. These types of question prompts allow more options for the voices and opinions of the respondents to be heard in the data and provide the researcher with a more comprehensive and diverse picture of the research topic (Allen, 2017).

Another factor in the design was length, both in time and number of question prompts. In an effort to avoid overwhelming and confusing respondents, the number of questions is limited (Fowler, Jr., 2013). The time required to complete the survey could not exceed an excessive amount of time not only as it relates to the number of questions on the survey, but also due to the class time permitted during the school day to complete the activity.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to measure central tendency and dispersion of the data from the collection instruments. The pre- and post-test scores from the Likert scale survey responses were compared to determine if and how the data changed before and after the innovation's implementation. The central tendency measured statistics of the data to determine the average scores from the Likert scale prompts in the form of mean and median. Dispersion measured range from the lowest to highest scores, as well as the standard deviation of that data. Any notable trends and/or patterns in the data were reported.

Qualitative Data Collection

      Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher after the innovation has concluded. For student participants, the purposive sampling consisted of 2 students of each gender. This sampling method was implemented in order to best select a diverse range of participants that can best speak to the innovation, providing a range of experiences. The interviews took place in person and lasted between 15-20 minutes each. The questions focused on each participant's experience with the innovation. The teacher of the English IV class was also interviewed, with the interview lasting between 30-45 minutes. This interview was conducted after a school day had ended. This focused on the teacher's observance of the innovation and how it related to the students and content being studied. It addressed whether the teacher is likely to use the theatrical role-play method in future lesson plans. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant approval. The student interview questions are available in Appendix E, and teacher interview questions in Appendix F.

      A document entitled *The Actor's Checklist* assisted in collecting written data. Students were prompted to answer nine open-ended questions regarding the character they are playing in the scene. The answers to these prompts assisted in providing results of empathy levels in students. This document is available in Appendix

      Field notes were also used for qualitative data collection. I recorded observational field notes at the conclusion of each class that detail how students are behaving and interacting with the innovation. The notes were organized via the following categories according to a recommended example provided by Creswell and Guetterman (2019): a description of the activity (such as rehearsal and performance of the literature scene in

class) in one column, and reflective notes by the observer related to the activity observed in the second column. The scenes from literature that student participants are acting out via role-play were not required to be memorized. Memorization is an academic skill that can be studied in future research.

One construct of the observations includes how the students comprehend subtext and meaning of dialogue by the way lines are expressed vocally and physically, such as through body language and facial expression, in the acting process. This construct was recorded in the field notes. As I watched the final performances, observations were made about the theatrical role-play effectiveness.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The data collected went through a deductive analysis phase organized into a coding system that helped to measure any trends or patterns from the innovation. Each instrument of measurement contained its own specific coding design.

Tables 2 and 3 detail how the interview transcripts were coded.

Table 2

Coding for Student Interviews

CODE	MEANING
CONF+	Student was confident in answering question
CONF-	Student not confident in answering question
POS	Student answered question with a positive emotion

NEG	Student answered question with a negative emotion
COLL+	Student described collaboration, teamwork, or working in a group in general
COLL-	Student did not describe collaboration, teamwork, or working in a group in general
CHAR+	Student was thoroughly knowledgeable about character they portrayed
CHAR=	Student was somewhat knowledgeable with character they portrayed
CHAR-	Student was not knowledgeable about character they portrayed
STOR+	Student was thoroughly knowledgeable about the story
STOR=	Student was somewhat knowledgeable with the story
STOR-	Student was not knowledgeable about the story
ACT+	Student interested in acting in future
ACT=	Student indifferent or maybe interested in acting in future
ACT-	Student not interested in acting in future
PS+	Student had a positive experience with public speaking and/or willing to engage with public speaking in future

PS=	Student had a neutral experience with public speaking and/or is maybe willing to engage with public speaking in the future
PS-	Student had a negative experience with public speaking and/or willing to engage with public speaking in future
LS+	Student detailed life skills learned from activity
LS-	Student did not detail any life skills learned from activity

Table 3

Coding for Teacher Interview

CODE	MEANING
CONF+	Teacher was confident in answering question
CONF-	Teacher not confident in answering question
POS	Teacher answered question with a positive emotion
NEG	Teacher answered question with a negative emotion
COLL+	Teacher described collaboration, teamwork, or working in a group in general
COLL-	Teacher did not describe collaboration, teamwork, or working in a group in general

CHAR+	Teacher observed students thoroughly knowledgeable with their character
CHAR=	Teacher observed students somewhat knowledgeable with their character
CHAR-	Teacher did not observe students as knowledgeable with their character
STOR+	Teacher observed students thoroughly knowledgeable of the story
STOR=	Teacher observed students somewhat knowledgeable of the story
STOR-	Teacher did not observe students as knowledgeable of the story
LP+	Teacher interested in using method in future lesson plans
LP=	Teacher indifferent or somewhat interested in using method in future lesson plans
LP-	Teacher not interested in using method in future lesson plans
LS+	Teacher observed life skills learned from activity
LS=	Teacher somewhat observed life skills learned from activity
LS-	Teacher did not observe life skills learned from activity

Field notes recording observations of how the participants are interacting with the innovation were coded in two different ways. The first (Table 4) was coded according to which activity of the innovation is being implemented, and the second (Table 5) was identified by the student participant interaction with whatever activity was being conducted.

Table 4

Activity Coding

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
WU	Warm-up exercise
ENS	Ensemble-building exercise
GR	Whole class group reading out loud
ReadTR	Read-through Rehearsal
BR	Blocking Rehearsal
WR	Working Rehearsal
DN	Director Note/Side Coaching
RunTR	Run-through Rehearsal
DR	Dress Rehearsal
FP	Final Performance

Table 5

Participant Interaction Coding

STUDENT INTERACTION	DESCRIPTION
HS	Hesitant to engage with activity
CF	Confident in engaging with activity
EMP	Empathy exuded in characterization
FE	Facial expression for characterization present
BL	Body language for characterization present
V	Vocal delivery of lines of dialogue present

The Actors' Checklist documents collected were analyzed according to a rubric

scale measuring the depth of student answers. Table 6 shows this rubric in detail with

relevant coding.

Table 6

The Actors' Checklist Rubric

EXCEPTIONAL (EXP)	GOOD (GD)	POOR (PR)
Student answered all parts of the question in thorough detail	Student answered some parts of the question with some detail	Student did not answer the question sufficiently

Threats to Reliability and Validity

One student participant was enrolled in the researcher's Theatre I class. This students was not selected for purposive sampling for follow-up interviews. The reasoning involved the possibility that she might want to satisfy the research requests because of previous affiliations with the researcher. She also had more experience in theatrical role-play since she was exposed to the content in her theatre course. This could hinder other non-theatre students from participating in the innovation due to unintended intimidation of her theatre confidence levels during the exercises. In this sense, the innovation could not be accurately assessed regarding its effectiveness.

As the researcher was a participant observer and facilitator of the innovation, the issue of researcher bias had the possibility to raise concerns to the integrity of the study. With this being stated, the researcher acknowledges potential bias and proceeded with implementing the innovation while attempting to remain unbiased. This allowed for the data to speak for itself and thus be more authentic. All participant names, both students and faculty, were assigned pseudonyms to protect identities.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This action research study sought to examine the ways in which high school theatre programs impact life skills, defined in this study by both academic and social contexts, learned by secondary education students. The innovation consisted of theatrical role-play applied in an interdisciplinary manner. The action research utilized a mixed-methods approach over the course of two weeks at a southwest public high school. The research questions to be answered include:

1. How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical role-play, impact the text analysis skills of secondary education students in interdisciplinary contexts?

2. How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical role-play, impact the social skills of empathy of secondary education students in interdisciplinary contexts?

3. How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical role-play, impact the social skill of confidence in public speaking of secondary education students in interdisciplinary contexts?

4. How and to what extent will a high school English teacher adopt the teaching method of theatrical role-play into future lesson plans?

Definition of Terms

Prior to the results being reported, some terms must be defined in order to fully comprehend the data.

Students were asked on the pre- and post-test surveys to rank their level of confidence in public speaking for a known and unknown audience. For the purposes of this study, a known audience is defined as consisting of people the participant knows, such as family and friends. An unknown audience is defined as consisting of people who the participant has never met.

Pseudonym first names were assigned to each participant. These are the names used to report data for specific participants, and are those used in table 7 to represent demographic results.

Table 7

Demographics of Student Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Grade Level	Ethnicity
Jasmine	F	12	Prefer not to answer
Peter	M	12	American Indian/Alaska Native
Melody	F	12	Black or African American
Aaron	M	12	Hispanic or Latinx
Catalina	F	12	Hispanic or Latinx
Evelyn	F	12	Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White/Caucasian
Jeremy	M	12	American Indian/Alaska Native, White/Caucasian
Michael	M	12	Hispanic or Latinx
Megan	F	12	Not reported

Tara   F   12   Black or African American

Quantitative Data Results

Research Questions 1 and 2

One key finding from the cycle 2 research showed that participants' levels of confidence were not quantitatively affected in the academic skill of text analysis, though they demonstrated some increases in the social skills of empathy and public speaking during the innovation timeline. This is evident in the pre- and post-test Likert scale survey results as students self-reported their confidence levels.

It is worth noting that the small sample size (n = 9) likely affected these results. For example, a student may have been confident one day, but might not have been as confident on the day the post-test survey was administered. With a small sample size, small fluctuations in individual responses may have a disparate effect on the overall means, and day-to-day self-reporting changes can affect the overall numbers in terms of statistical "noise" in a smaller group. In larger samples, individual flukes or fluctuations in scores may have less power to affect the group level statistics.

Another possibility might be that in learning more about text analysis by going through this innovation, students could have gained a better understanding of the complexity of the skill. Thus, with a better understanding of the challenge of engaging in text analysis, their confidence might slightly decrease (even if their actual skill in doing such analysis increased). Future research with a larger sample size might potentially yield different results in terms of the level of impact the innovation has on those skills; or alternatively, future research could explore if or how students' actual text analysis ability

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changed via a formal assessment, rather than primarily looking at changes in their

confidence. The central tendency data is displayed in table 8.

Table 8

Pre- and Post-Test Survey Central Tendency Results

Survey Prompt	Pre-Test Mean (n = 9)	Pre-Test Median (n = 9)	Post-Test Mean (n = 9)	Post-Test Median (n = 9)
I am confident in my ability to analyze text in literature such that I understand the story.	4.22	4	4.11	4
I am confident in my ability to analyze text in literature such that I understand the characters in the story, such as their personalities, objectives, and relationship to other characters.	4.11	4	3.56	4
I am comfortable in my ability to empathize with other to understand their current feelings.	4.22	5	4.33	5
I am confident in my ability to give a speech in front of an audience of people I know.	3.44	4	4	4
I am confident in my ability to give a speech in front of an audience of people I do not know.	2.86	3	3.56	4

The academic skill category of text analysis shows a decrease in overall confidence from the pre- to the post-test. Text analysis of the story mean scores decreased by a difference of 0.11, and text analysis of the characters mean scores decreased by a difference of 0.55.

The social skill category saw an overall increase in confidence levels from the pre- to the post-test. Empathy mean scores show an increase of 0.11. The confidence level of public speaking in front of a known audience mean scores increased by 0.16, while the confidence level of public speaking in front of an unknown audience mean scores saw the highest increase of 0.70.

The median scores were consistent for the pre- and post-test reportings. The only difference observed was in the category of confidence of public speaking in front of an unknown audience with a pre-test median of 3 and a post-test median of 4. The relation between this median increase of 1 and the mean increase of 0.70 in this category is notable.

Graph 1 displays the dispersion of range and standard deviation between the pre- and post-test survey results for the academic skill of text analysis for story and text analysis for character comprehension.

Graph 1

Academic Skill Text and Character Analysis Confidence

The range of story text analysis remained the same at 2 for the pre- and post-test, while the range increased from 2 to 3 in text analysis for character comprehension. A decrease in standard deviation occurred in story text analysis by a difference of 0.11 (Pre-test SD = 0.45, Post-test SD = 0.34). An increase in standard deviation transpired in text analysis for character comprehension by a difference of 0.20 (Pre-test SD = 0.61, Post-test SD = 0.81).

Graph 2 shows the dispersion of range and standard deviation of confidence in the social skills of empathy and public speaking between the pre- and post-test self-reported survey scores.

Graph 2

Social Skills Confidence Levels
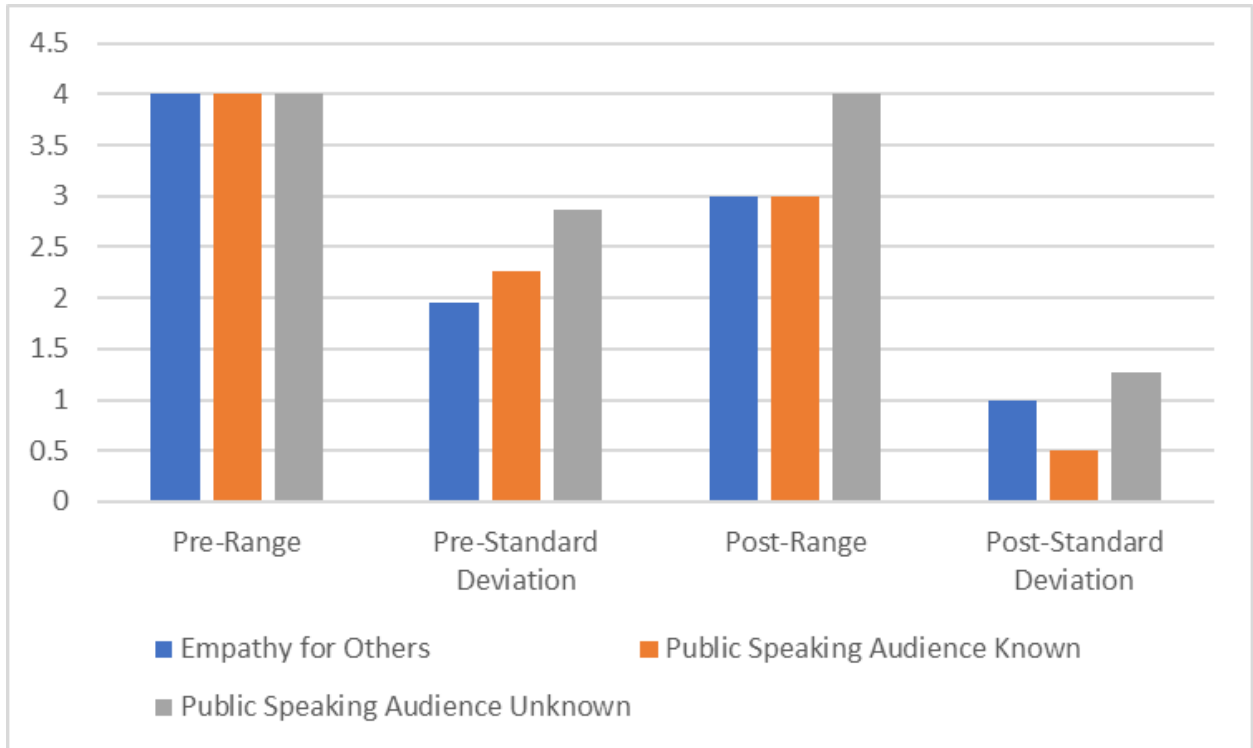
The pre-test range for empathy for others, public speaking for a known audience, and public speaking for an unknown audience was scored at the same level of 4 across all three areas. The post-test range for empathy for others and public speaking for a known audience saw a decrease to 3, while public speaking for an unknown audience saw no difference.

All three areas of empathy for others, public speaking for a known audience, and public speaking for an unknown audience saw a decrease in standard deviation overall. Empathy for others decreased by a difference of 0.95 (Pre-test SD = 1.95, Post-test SD = 1). Public speaking for a known audience decreased by a difference of 1.77 (Pre-test SD

= 2.27, Post-test SD = 0.5). Public speaking for an unknown audience decreased by a difference of 1.59 (Pre-test = 2.86, Post-test = 1.27).

It is worth emphasizing that due to the small sample size, it is difficult to definitively determine why and how scores fluctuated the way they did in this project. A larger sample size in future iterations of this innovation could allow for more statistical power and possibly yield more definitive results. This innovation offers practical significance in pointing to some patterns for this group of students, and would be worth examining in future cycles of this innovation.

The qualitative data yielded results that allowed for the opportunity to dissect the data on a deeper level. These results provided a clearer understanding of the data, especially since they included the voice of the students in a direct manner.

Qualitative Data Results

Qualitative tools used to measure the data included observational field notes, open-ended questions on the pre- and post-test surveys, an open-ended question assignment on characterization, and semi-structured interviews.

Research Question #1: Text Analysis Skills

Text analysis skills for this study focused on comprehension of literature after acting out specific scenes within the whole story. When the four students interviewed were asked if they understood the story of *Frankenstein*, results showed a range of different answers. The codes used in the interview transcripts were STOR- (student was not knowledgeable about the story), STOR= (student was somewhat knowledgeable about the story), and STOR+ (student was thoroughly knowledgeable about the story).

A key finding showed that most of those students interviewed understood the story of the specific scene they performed more than the overall story of *Frankenstein*. As such, the most common code in this category was STOR=.

Catalina

Catalina focused on her scene more than the other scenes, and as such detailed that she knew her part well.

Tim: Do you think that you understood the story after performing a scene as a character?

Catalina: I definitely understood my part.

Tim: Okay.   STOR=

Catalina: I wasn't too focused on the other scenes because I was just focused on mine. But I knew, like, what was going on in my part. I knew what was going on with the creature and then with me and then how we met.   STOR=

Tim: Okay.

Catalina: So I did know that part. And I tried to connect it with, like, other parts-like the wedding and, like, when he killed the kid. It's just, like, little by little, it started to... connecting.

Aaron

Similar to Catalina, Aaron also understood his part within the scene. When I followed up with a question regarding if he could put his scene in context with the overall story, he responded in the affirmative but seems to only know his scene.

Tim: Do you think you understood the story of Frankenstein in general after performing the scene as that character?

Aaron: A little. STOR=

Tim: A little?

Aaron: Yeah.

Tim: Okay, okay. Like, as in you could put your scene in a general context with
the other scenes-

Aaron: Oh yeah.

Tim: Okay. STOR=

Aaron: Like, I know like, like my part, like, my scene, I, I …Like, if uh, you told
me like, "Where was it?" I, I'll, I'll let you know like, where it's-where' it's at.

Megan

Megan was able to place her scene within the broader context of the story,
however it was within the context of a general understanding.

Tim: Do you think you understood the story, after performing the scene as that
character? Like, the general gist of Frankenstein? STOR=

Megan: I definitely think I got a better jist of it. Like, seeing everyone perform it,
not necessarily like, through my character-because I did have a very small part-
sort of thing. But because in the beginning, because I kind of missed a couple
days- so, it was like, you know, hopping through different parts of the story, so I
was a little confused. But then, also like, the activity you did with the story-

Tim: Oh, yeah.

Megan: …helped a lot. And then, seeing everyone perform all their parts really
helped a lot. STOR+

Tim: Okay.

Megan: I- so, I could like, see like, visually in that sort of sense.

Tim: So like, kind of some pieces came together?

Megan: Yeah.

Michael

On the other side of the spectrum, Michael affirmed he was able to understand the story of *Frankenstein* after performing his scene, referencing the *Actor's Checklist* as a key resource.

Tim: Um, do you think you understood the story after performing the scene as a character?

Michael: For sure.   STOR+

Tim: Okay.

Michael: Yeah. Yeah. It was, it was fun reading it, and kind of like with the actors' checklist, you know, just being ab1le to really put into like a third dimension, like another aspect, viewpoint. It was definitely helpful in   STOR+ understanding it because instead of just reading it and being like, "Oh, they thought like this," you could really feel it. You know?   CHAR+

Tim: I see.

Michael: Yeah.

Megan referenced in her interview a warm-up activity, *One Line at a Time Story*, as another aspect of the innovation that helped her understand the overall story prior to performing the assigned scene. She detailed: "But then, also like, the activity you did with the story helped a lot." This activity was conducted the day after the class had collectively finished reading the last scene out loud. The prompt for this activity on that

day was to tell the overall story of *Frankenstein* as a whole class ensemble, one line at a time, by using what they read in the four scenes over the previous three days. The purpose of that particular prompt was to assess student comprehension and whether they were able to connect the scenes together to collectively retell the story of *Frankenstein*.

Field notes supported the reference made by Megan regarding *One Line at a Time*. Table 9 references the field notes and coding for this activity on day 6. A review of code meanings is as follows: *WU* indicates warm-up exercise, *ENS* indicates ensemble-building exercise, *HS* indicates the student was hesitant to engage with the exercise, and *CF* indicates the student was confident in engaging with the exercise. All student participants were coded with *WU* and *ENS*. Observation indicated that Michael was confident with this exercise as he did not need much time to think about how to advance the story with his next line. While Catalina took more time than Michael to continue the story, her line contribution was accurate in telling correct details of the story's plot. As such, her codes were both *HS* and *CF*. As related to her interview answer, Megan exhibited confidence in the exercise through her quick contribution.

Table 8

Field Notes Day 6-*Frankenstein *One-Line-At-A-Time Story Warm-up Exercise

Participant	Code 1	Code 2	Notes
Jeremy	WU, ENS	CF	Quiet but confident in answer
Michael	WU, ENS	CF	Very confident in response
Peter	WU, ENS	HS	Did not seem to enjoy exercise-lack of energy

Catalina	WU, ENS	CF & HS	Took more time to respond, but accurate details provided in storyline contribution
Melody	WU, ENS	CF	
Evelyn	WU, ENS	HS	Clearly did not enjoy exercise due to slumped back in chair and lack of energy
Megan	WU, ENS	CF	Even though similar body language exhibited by neighbor, Evelyn, quick to respond with answer and more energy
Jasmine	WU, ENS	HS	
Aaron	WU, ENS	HS	Visibly uncomfortable as he was looking around at his peers for assistance in providing a line, which when provided contained little detail related to the story

While Jeremy always exhibited a sense of shyness as he did not speak up often, he exhibited confidence in his line contribution with very detailed and accurate plot points for *Frankenstein*. The students who exhibited a lack of energy and engagement in the exercise were hesitant in their responses, most notably Peter and Evelyn. This was a consistent observation over the duration of the innovation.

Data overall suggests that students comprehended their respective group scenes more than the overall story of *Frankenstein*. More time within each group was focused on their assigned scenes rather than the cumulative story, which could have affected these data results. Their confidence in text analysis skills in this circumstance seemed to be affected by how they could perceive their scenes within the scope of the overall story.

Research Question #2: Empathy

The instruments used to collect data on empathy levels associated with the characters students were playing included *The Actor's Checklist* document, interviews,

answers to open-ended questions on the post-test survey, and field notes from the performances. The empathy levels of participants were determined by the level at which students connected with the characters they were playing. This connection was based on the character's emotions, intelligence, physicality, culture, and other unique personality traits.

The Actor's Checklist document (question prompts available in Appendix B) yielded results measuring empathy levels by way of how in-depth students answered the nine questions. A review of the rubric is as follows: *EXP* (Exceptional) indicates the student answered all parts of the question in thorough detail, *GD* (Good) indicates the student answered some parts of the question in thorough detail, and *PR* indicates the student answered the question with little detail or not sufficiently. Graph 3 details those results.

Graph 3 *The Actor's Checklist Level of Detail to Prompts*
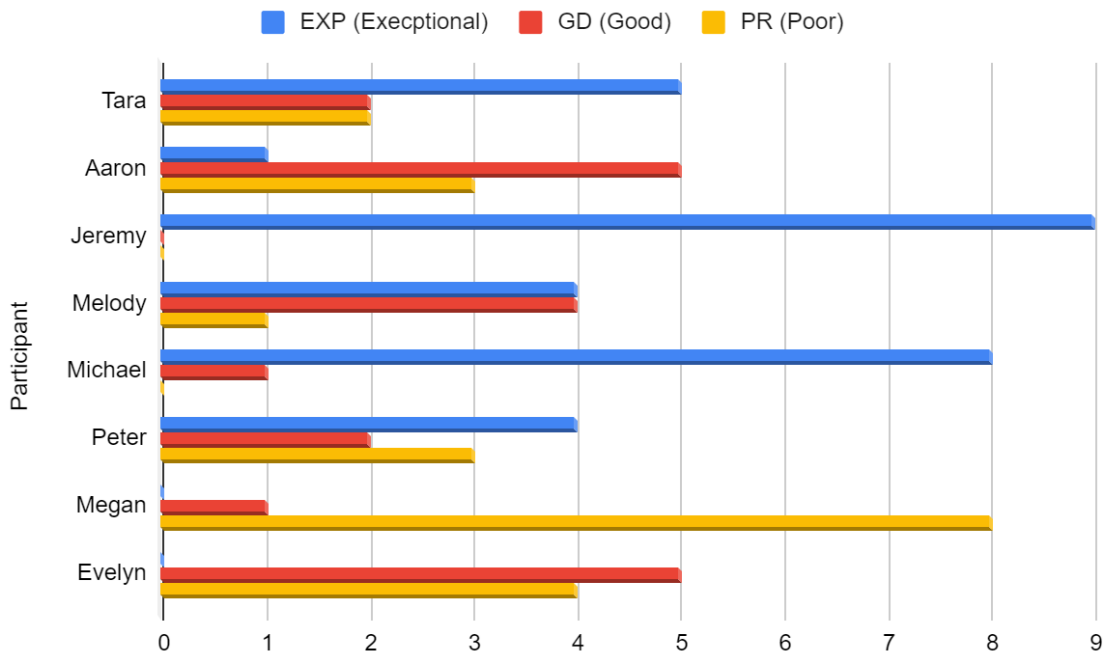
Catalina and Jasmine are not represented on the graph above as they did not submit the document, despite it counting as an assignment for class points. The totals for each category of answers result in 31 exceptional answers (EXP), 20 good answers (GD), and 21 poor answers (PR). Only Jeremy scored an exceptional in all 9 questions due to the level of detail he provided. Michael scored close to Jeremy with 8 exceptional responses. Conversely, Megan scored the opposite with 8 poor responses and 1 good. Evelyn did not provide any exceptional answers either as she had an equal amount of good and poor responses.

Based on the totals most answers contained exceptional detail, trending in thorough knowledge of the character. The number of good and poor responses were approximately equal, suggesting that some students were not as knowledgeable about their characters.

Students interviewed were asked about the effectiveness of *The Actor's Checklist* document in relation to developing their assigned character. Verbal instructions were given to answer each prompt in first person, as if students were the character and not themselves. Catalina took this to heart:

> Yes. It did help, like I say, because I got to know my character. I got to know who he was. I got to know, um, like, just his, like, part of how he, who he was. Like, he was old, he was blind. And the questions, it's just like, I feel like it was asking me, you know, it wasn't asking just, like, about my character. It was asking about me because that's who I was.

Conversely, even though Michael experienced some help from *The Actor's Checklist*, he did not feel that he needed it to develop his character. He already had some ideas in mind after reading the script, so for him it was just a way of putting those thoughts in writing.

> I felt like I didn't necessarily need the checklist. But I feel like it really did help with the ideas I already had in my head, putting them on paper and being able to kind of dive deeper into something. So like, when I was, when I was trying to break into the Frankenstein character-... I had him in my mind. I already knew when I read through, but being able to write down things, it kind of made me think, well, why would he act this way? Why does he feel like this? So it definitely helped in that sense for sure.

I followed up with a question asking if the document helped understand the motivations in the character, and Michael answered in the affirmative.

This connection with characters went further when defining theatrical role-play. When asked on the post-test survey what theatrical role-play means to them, several students discussed character in their responses. Megan and Catalina detailed that it is the ability to embody an identity of a character and to express that character that is different from oneself. Jasmine mentioned this as well, discussing that theatrical role-play is "a form of playing something/someone you are not." Michael added, "It means putting yourself into someone else's shoes, feeling a story, and bringing it to life."

Jeremy connected with his character (the Creature) effectively through his comprehension of basic acting techniques. When asked if he learned any new skills on the post-test survey, he stated, "I have learned to act like someone through emotionless

text, and to put it into words with emotions and actions." He went further into this by citing a difference in his life versus the life of the character and how that was beneficial. When asked if he changed during this process, he detailed, "I feel like I have managed to gain the ability to destress through acting like someone that wasn't myself."

Students were asked in interviews if they ever felt connected to the character who they portrayed, and if so in what ways that was evident. All four students answered in the affirmative, sometimes citing specific examples. As a review, the coding for the transcripts referring to connection with characters is as follows: *CHAR+* indicates the student was thoroughly knowledgeable about the character they portrayed. *CHAR=* indicates the student was somewhat knowledgeable about the character they portrayed. *CHAR-* indicates the student was not knowledgeable about the character they portrayed. *COLL+* indicates the student described collaboration, teamwork, or working in a group in general.

Michael

Michael connected with his character, Dr. Victor Frankenstein, and that character's relationship with the Creature character. He references a feeling that he personally encountered in life. In the transcript below, he details that he has trouble controlling his emotions when he is passionate about something, and that his character was similar in that sense.

> Tim: Was there a time during the activity when you felt like
>
> you   connected with the character you portrayed? And if so, what
>
> ways did you connect with the character? And if not, why did you think that was
>
> the case?

Michael: (laughs) Um, the scene where he's confronting

Frankenstein (the Creature), when he kind of gets into the rough and tumble part

of it.

Tim: Okay.

Michael: I felt like I really connected with that because w- CHAR+

Tim: With the creature?

Michael: ... yeah.

Tim: Okay.

Michael: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Because when I'm really pa- when I'm

really passionate about something, it's kind of difficult for me to keep my

emotions contained.   CHAR+

Tim: Okay.

Michael: You know what I mean?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Michael: So, so when I'm, when something like that happens-when

something really negative happens, I feel a need to kind of stand up and face it

head on.

Catalina

Catalina connected with her character in a way that others did not. She played

DeLacey, an elderly man who is blind. He is quite different from her in many ways, so

she describes the research she conducted in order to establish an effective connection.

Tim: Was there another time in addition to that that you felt really, like,

I know this guy, I know who he is?

Catalina: Yeah. Well, as, as, uh, we kept practicing, as I kept reading more about him, who he was... I just wasn't reading. I had, I had to, like, search him up and just, like, see some videos for me to, like, get to, get more comfortable and get to, like, know how, like, his movements are.   `CHAR+`

Tim: Sure.

Catalina: Because like, like, um, pretending to be a blind guy, it's not easy, you know?

Tim: No, it's not.

Catalina: Like, even though, like, I had to keep my eyes open and I, I actually can see, but I had to pretend like I couldn't.   `CHAR+`

Tim: Yeah.

Catalina: So, that got me really connected to him. And like I said, I, I felt what he felt. I felt how he was, like, just him in general... like, in the acting, like, part-I just, like, I felt like I really got connected to him.   `CHAR+`

Tim: Yeah.

Catalina: It's just like, I know him 'cause that's me.   `CHAR+`

Aaron

Similar to Catalina, Aaron also conducted research on his character, the Creature, that Dr. Frankenstein creates. Just before asking the same question, he details his research that he performed in addition to answering whether or not *The Actor's Checklist* document was beneficial in developing the character.   `CHAR+`

Aaron: And then you have to like, find like ... Or like, you have to like,

like, like um ... Like your, your voice has to like, you have to like, make it like,

more grumpy. So like, you have to like, find the way like, to like, do certain parts,

like, of the things. And like, I could like, find it on like, Google or something.

Tim: Oh, okay.

Aaron: Like, how to like, do his parts and stuff.

Tim: So you, you Googled and, and kinda ... Did you watch any videos?

Aaron: No, I just like, looked at like, some like, some like, newspaper.

Like, like the, like the ...like, acting things.

Tim: Okay.

Aaron: Where, uh, how like, to like, do a certain part of like, his voice and

thing ... So I was like, yeah.

Tim: Okay. So like, acting tips on the character.

Aaron: Yeah.

When asked about specific times he may have felt more connected with his

character, part of his answer was delivered in character as the Creature as he quoted a line

from the script.

Tim: Was there a time during the activity when you felt like you

connected more with the character portrayed? If so, when was that and what ways

did you connect with the character? But if not, why do you think that's the case?

Anthony: Uh, I connected with the character at like, the last scene. Like,

when I was like, "Frankenstein!"   CHAR+

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Tim: Yeah.

Anthony: Yeah. That's like ... 'Cause that was like, like, like a cool part to

like, say…

Megan

Megan did feel connected to her character, but in a different way than the others.

She played a character who is part of a duo in the story, Metz and Schmidt. Whenever the

characters are in the scene, they are together. This made it easier for Megan to connect

with her character, Metz, since she worked as a team with a classmate who played

Schmidt. Megan and this classmate happened to be best friends.

Tim: Was there a time during the activity when you felt like you did

connect with the character you portrayed? And if so, when was that, in what ways

did you connect with that character? But if not, why do you think that's the case?

Megan: CHAR+   Um, no, I did feel connected to it. Like, yeah, what I had

was a small part. But, um, it kind of involved Evelyn because she's like my best

friend. So, it was fun having like, a partner kind of thing.   COLL+

Tim: The duo?

Megan: Yeah. And do that. And like the scenes and everything.

Tim: Yeah.

Megan: And that started like, when you know, as soon as we got the script,

and we're like, "Oh, we get to be like- like, a partner kind of thing". So, that was

fun.

Field notes taken during the rehearsal period reflect observations of the level of

engagement with in-class rehearsals, use of class time, and following instructions for the

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lesson. The rubric categories, worth 8 points each, included running through the blocking of the scene, running through character choices, and being on task. The total number of points for this assessment was 24. Table 9 shows the scores associated with how students performed in this arena.

Table 9

Engagement in Frankenstein Rehearsals

Participant Actor	Character Name	Running Through Blocking (8 points)	Running Through Characterization (8 points)	On Task Overall
Megan	Metz	8	8	8
Evelyn	Schmidt	8	8	8
Aaron	Creature	8	8	8
Catalina	DeLacey	8	8	8
Jeremy	Creature	8	8	8
Melody	Elizabeth Lavenza	8	8	8
Jasmine	Frau Mueller	8	8	8
Peter	Creature	8	8	8
Michael	Dr. Victor Frankenstein	8	8	8
Tara	Elizabeth Lavenza	8	8	8

Assessment of the categories above was also based on observations of best effort. Observations revealed that all student participants were providing their best effort over the course of the 5-day in-class rehearsal timeframe. Though Megan and Evelyn were off task at times, a factor was considered concerning their roles. The characters of Metz and

Schmidt only appear in a short section of one scene. Thus, the rehearsal time for Megan and Evelyn was not as demanding. I observed they gave their best efforts when rehearsing their scene.

Field notes taken during the performances provided an assessment of how connected the student actor was to the character they played. These notes were taken according to the performance rubric (Appendix C) by which students were assessed and graded on their scenes. The two areas of particular focus for empathy related to character development are: believability of the character and overall effectiveness of telling the story as that character. Each of these areas is worth 8 points. A note that participants were also graded on best effort contributed, especially due to their lack of acting experience and drama education. Table 10 provides a summary of field notes taken during the performance, and Table 11 provides a summary of how each participant scored in the areas of characterization and storytelling effectiveness. For review, *FP* details final performance, *EMP* details empathy levels portrayed in the character, *FE* details facial expressions portrayed in the character, *BL* details body language portrayed in the character, *V* details vocal delivery of the dialogue, and *CF* details confidence level.

Table 10

Field Notes from Final Performance of Frankenstein

Participant	Code 1	Code 2	Notes
Jeremy	FP	CF	Performed the scene with Catalina exactly as they rehearsed it the day prior. He did not project and his voice was still soft, but this quiet confidence worked well for the Creature.

Michael	FP	CF, EMP, V, BL, FE	While he had great characterization overall, he broke character once or twice. Great vocal energy, effective facial expression, body language matched emotions of character. The scripts were a crutch because they would drop character when trying to find the right page prompt. Good fight choreo between him and the Creature. Note: another student read the lines of Alphonse from the audience for this scene since the actor was not present.
Peter	FP	HS	Was focused on reading the lines more than presenting them in character, resulting in monotone vocals. He did not look up from the script except to move.
Catalina	FP	CF, EMP, V, FE, BL	Performed the scene with Jeremy exactly as rehearsed the day prior. Voice was soft, but delivered in appropriate parental/teacher tone for character matching dialogue. This, in combination with facial expression and body language, led to convincing empathy expressed in the character.
Melody	FP	CF	Didn't follow blocking 100%-missed pantomiming action. Good confidence delivering the lines, but missing emotional tones in voice, facial expression, and body language.
Evelyn	FP	HS	Very little characterization exuded-it seemed like she was going through the motions and wanted to get the scene over with. Lack of energy.
Megan	FP	CF	She seemed to match Evelyn's energy resulting in little characterization and also wanting the scene to get over with. She did exude more confidence in the blocking and timing, though.
Jasmine	FP	HS	While she was confident in the blocking, very little characterization was exuded. Vocal energy was soft and timid.
Aaron	FP	CF, V	Good vocal energy and projection. Facial expressions did not match the emotional intensity of the character's anger due to smiling, but good energy overall.
Tara	FP	EMP, CF, V, FE	Facial expressions effective in speaking AND reacting to dialogue. Blocking hindered due to occasional back to the audience. Though vocally soft, still effective

emotional tones. Much of the movement with this group felt staged like they were just trying to remember where to go when since they were not writing blocking notes down.

Table 11

Character Believability in Final Performance of Frankenstein

Participant Actor	Character Name	Believable Character (8 points)	Storytelling Effectiveness (8 points)
Megan	Metz	7	7
Evelyn	Schmidt	7	7
Aaron	Creature	8	8
Catalina	DeLacey	8	8
Jeremy	Creature	8	8
Melody	Elizabeth Frankenstein	8	8
Jasmine	Frau Mueller	8	8
Peter	Creature	8	8
Michael	Dr. Victor Frankenstein	8	8
Tara	Elizabeth Frankenstein	8	8

Most of the students achieved full scores for their best effort in portraying a convincing character onstage. This was measured in vocal, facial, and physical expressions. Megan and Evelyn worked closely together as the duo of Metz and Schmidt, employees of Dr. Frankenstein, who carry out various tasks. In the scene in which Megan and Evelyn performed, the characters were only in the scene for a small amount of time.

When they did enter, both participants lacked a different aura overall for the characters that was distinct from their own personalities and mannerisms. Some of the lines delivered sounded monotone and without vocal variety, as if they were reciting them from memory instead of conveying the subtext and emotion the characters were feeling at that point in the story. In addition, they did not exhibit a sense of listening to other characters' dialogue, thus disengaging them from the scene. This was observed through a lack of visual focus of who was speaking as well as body language of slumped shoulders.

Some of the students who earned full scores, such as Michael and Aaron, were noticeably excited before, during, and after the scene had performed. There were a few moments when Michael would break character by laughing out of place with some co-actors. He quickly recovered and was able to engage back into the scene in character. As Aaron delivered a line at the end of his scene, he was smiling as he delivered it with vocal projection and high energy. While this facial expression did not necessarily match the angry tone with which the character was speaking in the dialogue, he did make a best effort choice that helped tell the story effectively.

Though Catalina and Jeremy delivered the lines in their duo scene more softly and quieter, their best effort in characterization was clear with the dialogue tone. Catalina spoke DeLacey's lines with a caring and parental tone of concern, and then switched to an educational tone as he taught basic human mannerisms to the Creature. Jeremy spoke gruffly as the Creature when speaking with limited English at the start of the scene. Even though these lines were shorter in length, he provided vocal variety that matched what the Creature's emotions were as the scene progressed.

Tara also spoke softly as Elizabeth, however she exhibited convincing facial expressions that matched the lines being delivered. She smiled when speaking lines to the character of William as she told him a bedtime story as the character was excited in that moment, and she transitioned to nervousness when Metz and Schmidt entered asking for Dr. Frankenstein. In addition, she actively listened to the dialogue from other characters in the scene and thus provided a convincing character for the whole duration.

Data findings overall indicate three key takeaways. The first suggests that the stronger the connection that students felt to their characters, the higher the chance that empathy levels were affected. The higher the empathy levels, the more convincing the characters were by the actors in the final performance.

The second key takeaway suggests that *The Actor's Checklist* assignment affected the connection, and thus empathy, students had to their characters. The more detailed the answers were to the prompts, the higher the students scored on portraying convincing characters.

The third key takeaway suggests that the level of engagement with theatrical role-play can affect how students both perceive and interact with it. The less students feel like they are contributing to the broader group project, the more disengaged they seem to be. This took the form of the size of the roles students had in the acting scenes. The smaller the role, the less engaged the students were in theatrical role-play.

Research Question #3: Public Speaking

The instrument tools used to measure any impact of theatrical role-play on the social skill of public speaking included interviews, answers to open-ended prompts on the post-test survey, and field notes.

Interview questions 9 and 15 addressed public speaking skills (Appendix E). Selections from the interview transcripts follow in response to those specific questions. To briefly review the coding: *CONF+* details the student was confident in answering the question, *CONF=* details the student was somewhat confident in answering the question, and *CONF-* details the student was not confident in answering the question. *POS* indicates the student answered the question with a positive emotion and *NEG* indicates the student answered the question with a negative emotion. *PS+* indicates the student had a positive experience with public speaking and/or willing to engage with it in the future, *PS=* indicates the student had a neutral experience with public speaking and/or is indifferent or maybe willing to engage with it in the future, and *PS-* indicates the student had a negative experience with public speaking and is not willing to engage with it in the future. *LS+* indicates the student detailed life skills learned from the activity, and *LS-* details the student did not detail life skills from the activity.

Michael

Michael indicated overall confidence with regard to public speaking, citing previous experience through prior arts performance. Despite this experience, he was nervous at first with regard to the different art form of acting in relation to public speaking. The innovation helped to alleviate this over time.

> Tim: Tell me about your experience performing and
> speaking in front of your classmates. So like, what were you feeling as
> you were acting out that scene?
>
> Michael: I see. Okay. Um, I've had experience speaking in
> front of people before.   CONF+

Tim: Okay.

Michael: Uh, my family's very musical, so we'll have, like guitar things in front of groups of people.

Tim: Sure. Yeah.

Michael: And with, with my classmates, presentations and

CONF= stuff. But, uh-I was definitely nervous before we started. Just because I didn't... I've never really done this before. But, um, once I got into it, I got into a groove, and I was like, this is awesome. (laughs) Like, it's just really fun. So I really enjoyed it…

POS   **CONF+**

When asked if public speaking was something he would engage with in the future, he answered in the affirmative mentioning that he enjoyed it and that it would be beneficial in a possible future career in politics.

Tim: So, what are your thoughts about public speaking in front of people in the future, and is this something you'd be willing to do? Why or why not?

Michael: Yeah.

Tim: Okay.

PS+

Michael: For sure. Uh, I would love to public speak. Actually, someday in the future, I was thinking maybe going into politics or

CONF+

something like that.

Tim: Okay.

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Michael: Yeah. Uh, but I like public speaking and I think that

would be great because, if you feel very strongly about something-and

you're a really good public speaker-you can have a great influence over

people-and maybe supporting something positive.   `POS`   `LS+`

Tim: Oh, okay.

Michael: Yeah. So, that's kind of why I like it.

Catalina

Catalina was more reserved than Michael overall and less confident in public

speaking. A key takeaway, however, is that she became more comfortable with it once

immersed in acting as the character during the performance.

Tim: Tell me about your experience performing and speaking in front of

your classmates. What were you feeling as you were acting out that scene in front

of other people?

Catalina: Well, they, they all, like, are great. Um, I, I got a little more

comfortable because of, like, we were practicing with doing the exercises and

everything. I did feel a little, like, anxious…and just, like, a little scared, not

because I, I thought that I would

mess up. It was just more about judgment-which is, like, normal. Um, I knew I, I

could do better. I knew, I knew I was going to do it good because I was, I was

really confident about my character and myself-   `CONF+`   `CHAR+`

Tim: Sure.   `PS-`   `NEG`

Catalina: …uh, which I feel like I got really comfortable with my character

and myself that I just put it together and that's what I gave, like, the best out of

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me, like, at that performing. So at first, I was a little nervous because of like, oh, this is real now. Like, everybody's going to focus just on me and which, like, that kinda got me more, like, strong on my feelings because like, I was the main part there, you know? CHAR+

Tim: Sure, yeah. Okay. Thank you. Yeah, very thorough. Basically, what you're saying is once you were immersed in the character-

Catalina: Yeah. CHAR+

Tim: ... it was a little less intimidating?

Catalina: Yeah. PS+

Tim: Okay.

Catalina: Because I think in the beginning it was just like, "Oh, it's me acting." But then I got really, like, comfortable and it's just like, "It's not me. It's, like, him," you know? CHAR+ PS+

Tim: Yeah.

Catalina: So, I wanna give my best out of me-

Tim: Sure.

Catalina: ... so I can, I can make him seem good. CHAR+

Catalina was not sure of her willingness to engage with public speaking in the future, detailing that this might change with time and experience.

Tim: What are your thoughts about public speaking in front of people in the future? And is this something you'd be willing to do? Why or why not?

Jackie: Um, as of right now, I would say maybe.   PS=

Tim: Okay.

Jackie: But as the more I, like, experience life, the more I go over, like, just, just general, like, job interviews or-like, school, this and that... I feel like I would get more comfortable. So maybe, like, in the future, it will be, like, good.   LS+

Tim: Yeah.

Jackie: I will, I feel like I would get more comfortable with this question and just answer it, like, really fast. But right now, it's just like, medium and medium.   CONF=

Megan

Megan indicated she had previous experience with public speaking and as such, was not intimidated by the notion of speaking in front of her classmates. Instead, she was more focused on the acting component.

Tim: Tell me about your experience performing and speaking in front of your classmates. Um, what were you feeling as you were acting out that scene?

Megan: Um, I wasn't worried about like- you know, like the audience, like, my classmates that were watching or anything. I was just more focused on saying what I needed to say at the right time.   CHAR+   PS+   CONF+

Tim: Sure.

Megan: And then doing all, like, the right like, stage movements and

everything, and all the cues.   CHAR+

Tim: Okay.

Megan: That's what I was focused on. And you know, like, not worried

about like, more... You know.   CONF+

Tim: You weren't really nervous in front of your classmates.

Megan: Yeah.   PS+

Tim: It was more about remembering what to do on the script?

Megan: Yeah.

Public speaking was something that Megan mentioned she would not only be

willing to engage with in the future, but also expressed interest in it.

Tim: What are your thoughts on that (public speaking) in the future? Is

this something you would be willing to do? And why would that be, or why not?

Megan: Yeah, I definitely have always like, thought about doing that. Um,

not that I like, wouldn't not do it. Because I love hearing- I love hearing like,

people public speaking, and hearing like, everyone's opinions-   PS+

Tim: For sure.

Megan: ... and their thoughts and everything.

Tim: For sure.

Megan: Um, and I love giving that too, which is nice. So, it's definitely

something I would do.   PS+

When asked about any academic and/or social skills that were enhanced as a result of theatrical role-play, she mentioned a speaking skill involving tempo and pacing.

Um, I definitely think, because sometimes when I speak I can speak very fast. So, sometimes I stutter on my words, and so, sometimes having like, a script-... which you gave us, really helps me, like, you know, plan it out-... because I can memorize it. And that helps me not, you know, stumble on my words. Which will be helpful in the future.

Megan is referencing practicing proper diction and enunciation of words, defined as language onstage that conveys meaning and information in a way that vowels and consonants can be clearly understood (Forum Theatre, 2022).

Aaron

Of the four participants, Aaron expressed the least amount of confidence in public speaking. His demeanor was more reserved and was overall more soft-spoken. He expressed a dislike for public speaking in general. When asked what he thought of theatrical role-play overall, his first comment referenced public speaking. "I don't really like talking, like, in front of people. I like, get nervous."

This nervousness carried over to the final performance as he detailed what he was feeling prior to his first entrance onstage.

Tim: Tell me about your experience performing and speaking in front of your classmates. You kind of hinted at this already.

Anthony: Yeah.

Tim: But what were you feeling as you were acting out that scene?

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Anthony: At first, like, you know how you have to like, open the curtain up-

and like, walk through?

Tim: Yeah.   CONF-   PS-

Anthony: I was like, my legs were shakin' a little. 'Cause I never did th-, did

this before. But like ...when like, you get in, onto like the stage-you're like, your

nerves like, get, gets out.   CONF=   PS=

Tim: Okay.

Anthony: And then you perform.

Though Aaron mentioned his dislike for public speaking at the beginning of the

interview, he referenced speaking in general, as well as public speaking, as a life skill he

thought was enhanced as a result of the innovation.

Tim: Are there any life skills in either the academic and/or social

categories that you feel were improved as a result of this activity? And if so,

which ones and why?

Aaron: Talking. Like, ah, like, from like, everybody.   LS+

Tim: Okay.

Aaron: I think so 'cause like, some people like, are really shy. And I think

this, I think this helped.   LS+

Tim: Okay.

Aaron: Uh, like, 'cause some friends, like, are like, shy talking.

Tim: Okay.

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Aaron:	And like, I think now they're like, a little more talkative.
Tim:	So they felt a little more comfortable-
Aaron:	Yeah.
Tim:	... talking in front of other people, too, and …
Aaron:	In front of ... Yeah.

LS+

PS+

During the teacher interview, the participant was asked if she observed any difference in public speaking confidence in the students as a result of the innovation. She mentioned that she thought so, but could not cite any specific instances.

With regard to public speaking skills possibly enhanced by theatrical role-play, the open-ended answers to the post-test survey revealed that overall students felt some of their skills had improved. When asked if they had learned any new skills, Jasmine, Megan, and Aaron detailed that they were more comfortable speaking in front of others. While already confident in public speaking, Megan detailed, "I am more confident with speaking out loud performing-wise."

The focus of the field notes for measuring public speaking data is the warmup activity, *One Line at a Time Story*. The exercise was conducted each day for the first 6 days of the innovation as a method of building ensemble while practicing public speaking. It occurred at the beginning of class after the students circled up to participate in the warmup, *You!* Tables 12 and 13 detail the confidence observations of participants on day 1 versus day 6 of the innovation. A review of codes follows: *ENS* indicates ensemble-building, *WU* indicates a warm-up exercise, *HS* indicates that the student was

hesitant with activity participation, and *CF* indicates the student was confident with activity participation.

Table 12

Ensemble-Building **One Line at a Time Story** *Day 1*

Participant	Code 1: Activity	Code 2: Student Response	Notes
Jeremy	WU, ENS	HS	Very soft-spoken
Tara	WU, ENS	CF	More confident-perhaps related to enrollment in theatre class due to skills already learned
Michael	WU, ENS	HS	Exhibited excitement, but was not confident in his answer
Peter	WU, ENS	HS	Lack of energy
Catalina	WU, ENS	HS	Timid
Evelyn	WU, ENS	HS	Lack of energy
Megan	WU, ENS	HS	Lack of energy
Jasmine	WU, ENS	HS	soft-spoken
Aaron	WU, ENS	HS	Timid
Melody	Absent	Absent	

Table 13

Ensemble-Building **One Line at a Time Story** *Day 6*

Participant	Code 1: Activity	Code 2: Student Response	Notes
Jeremy	WU, ENS	CF	Quiet but confident answer
Tara	WU, ENS	CF	
Michael	WU, ENS	CF	Very confident
Peter	WU, ENS	HS	Did not seem to enjoy the exercise
Catalina	WU, ENS	CF & HS	She took more time to respond, but her contribution contained thorough detail to advance the story
Evelyn	WU, ENS	HS	Body language suggested a lack of engagement, i.e., she was leaning back with arms crossed and did not put much effort into the activity
Megan	WU, ENS	CF	While confident, she was very quick to provide her line-it seemed like she wanted to get it over with
Jasmine	WU, ENS	HS	Soft-spoken
Aaron	WU, ENS	HS	Visibly uncomfortable as he was looking around at his peers for assistance in providing a line, which when provided contained little detail related to the story
Melody	WU, ENS	CF	

The field notes suggest that there was an overall increase in confidence in participation in the activity over the 6-day period. While most students did not provide

much energy or enthusiasm on day 1, this was fairly opposite by day 6. The only student who maintained confidence at the beginning and end was Tara, who was a student enrolled in the theatre class at the time. Students who were observed to be more confident by the end included Jeremy, Michael, Megan, and Melody. Though Melody was absent from the day 1 exercise, I observed confidence levels increasing leading up to day 6.

Catalina exhibited more confidence by the way she spoke, but she was still hesitant in providing an answer within a timely manner when it was her turn. Her longest hesitation happened on the last day, however her answer was of high quality that provided descriptive detail. This helped advance the story significantly as it set up the next person for a somewhat easy transition in the plot.

The rest of the students maintained a sense of hesitancy throughout the activity. A notable trend exists in the lack of engagement and disinterest among Peter and Evelyn. This is consistent with their hesitation in the activity.

Data above suggests that public speaking skills in students were enhanced, both in student self-reporting and in observation. Students began to feel more confident speaking in front of others as theatrical role-play activities progressed. While they may not be ready to give an official public speech, they experienced practice in public speaking that allowed for it to be less intimidating.

Research Question #4: Innovation in Future Lesson Plans

A semi-structured interview was used to address the fourth research question: How and to what extent will a high school English teacher adopt the teaching method of theatrical role-play into future lesson plans?

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The English teacher participated in the semi-structured interview consisting of 15 questions addressing the innovation. The teacher was in her third year teaching at the high school. Her response to the innovation was overall positive. She mentioned that the warmup activities were helpful and that she will use them in future lesson plans that involve drama.

The concept of ensemble building was brought up in response to the warmup exercises. She details:

> …I think just classroom building community exercises, so they get to know each other. I thought it was a really good way for them to all be looking at each other and kind of learning names, even though we were in second semester, but some of them apparently still don't know each other's names, which they take for granted 'cause they're seniors, but, um, I thought they were really helpful.

Regarding theatrical role-play specifically, the teacher expressed that it was really helpful in the learning process. However, she detailed an idea on how she might modify it in the future.

> I think one thing for, like, my purpose as an English teacher would be to have them kind of create it themselves and then do the theatrical role play... to, like, really understand the character I guess, or like-... so that I can see and understand the character.

After asking for clarification on what this would look like, she elaborated that the students in groups would create a scene with dialogue based on what they read in the

literature. "Uh, or take like... take a scene and then what can they do differently or how could they make it their own to reflect their character choices, if that makes sense."

The teacher also mentioned that she would suggest letting the students figure out their own blocking choices in future iterations of the innovation. This concept of *organic blocking*, which involves the actors deciding potential blocking on their own (Shaw, 2011), is another type of directing technique.

She reiterated that the drama element of theatrical role-play has high value that is not as observable when just reading a play.

And I think what we would like to do with drama and what we want them to get out of drama, it would probably be better to do something like theatrical role play than even just having them read it or even having them watch it, you know?

When asked about social skill benefits, the teacher addressed that the acting of scenes forced students to venture out of their comfort zone and dive deep into the character's perspective of the story, which led to emphasizing the speaking and listening standards required of the content area of high school English. "It's one thing to read an aside, and then it'll be entirely different to like *be* the one giving insight or a monologue…".

The location of the innovation warranted a change as the blocking rehearsals were conducted. There was not sufficient space in the classroom for the groups to spread out and effectively rehearse. As such, the English teacher and I agreed that it would be beneficial to move to a larger space for class. This new location ended up being the black box theater where the theatre classes are taught. The space did not include desks and

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instead provided a large area for the acting groups to spread out and conduct rehearsals efficiently.

Due to the potential intimidation of a new classroom space that was larger, I incorporated a warm up exercise referenced earlier entitled, *Kitty Wants a Corner*. This exercise is not meant to be complicated and allows students to become more comfortable with the new location by showing them the size of the space. The English teacher mentioned this as well, however highlighted high trepidation from the students when observing their initial reactions to the activity on the first day in the black box, "And so I think at first, I could see their faces, like, 'Oh my gosh, I can't believe you're making us do this'". As the students became more accustomed to the exercise, the trepidation dissipated as observed by both myself and the English teacher.

> I was a little nervous about that one, um, but I thought they like... I thought it was really good for getting them warmed up, and they actually seemed to like it and it was not as intimidating as I expected it to be. So, I thought it was a good one because that was our first day in the black box. And then they played the game and I was like, "Oh, this isn't actually as scary as I thought it was gonna be."

When asked at the end of the interview if she officially would consider using theatrical role-play in future lesson plans, she confidently responded in the affirmative noting that:

> It is more engaging. It gives them an opportunity to just be out of their seat. And I mean, with... uh, I feel badly when they're... when I'm in my seat for 50-whatever minutes. So, I just think it's really good to be up and moving. I do think it's a

really good way to engage with the text... and just make it, make it more engaging and interesting. So, yeah, absolutely.

Prior to the innovation, she had no extensive acting experience other than a basic knowledge of improvisation. As such, she was not familiar with most of the techniques used in this innovation.

A key takeaway suggests that the teacher thought theatrical role-play was an effective way to teach literature. As such, she plans to use a form of it in future lesson planning. The change of design in the English curriculum daily activities during the innovation timeline resonated positively with the teacher and students overall. The teacher observed some life skills in students being enhanced during the innovation, such as public speaking. While some students were more engaged than others, her recommended modifications to the innovation design also suggests that she is dedicated to infusing theatrical role-play in future classes.

Based on the reported data, results indicate that the theatrical role-play innovation overall positively affected how students learned new literature. While it is clear that students comprehended their assigned group scenes more than the overall story of *Frankenstein*, they experienced first-hand a different learning style that aided in the English unit objectives. The measuring of the academic skill of text analysis with a larger sample size could yield more conclusive results about the innovation's effectiveness.

Results indicate the social skills of empathy and public speaking were positively affected by the innovation. The strength of the connection students felt between themselves and the characters they were playing seemed to affect self-reported empathy levels. Despite a fear or level of hesitation with public speaking, students gained more

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confidence in being able to speak in front of others as the innovation proceeded with ensemble-building and experiential acting exercises.

Based on the results of research questions 1-3, and her interview responses, the English teacher both enjoyed theatrical role-play and plans on incorporating it into future lesson plans. She observed students benefiting from the different teaching method, both in academic and social contexts. Future cycles of this research could explore if this teacher would recommend it to other colleagues, as well as examining if it would be effective in other subject areas other than English. Regardless, the theatrical role-play innovation yielded positive and effective results overall.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, assertions based on the data collected will be detailed along with

study limitations and recommendations for future cycles of research in this topic. The

assertions are organized by research question. As a review, the theoretical framework that

guided this study consisted of Experiential Learning Theory and Academic Risk-Taking.

RQ1: How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical

role-play, impact the text analysis skills of secondary education students in

interdisciplinary contexts?

Assertion 1: Text analysis skills were not explicitly enhanced by this particular

theatrical role-play iteration.

Data shows that text analysis skills either remained the same or decreased after

the innovation had concluded. Students felt less confident in these skills after the

innovation than they did prior.

A possible explanation for this is the lack of knowledge about the story of

Frankenstein ahead of time. Under ideal circumstances, students would have been

familiar with the entire story. I observed that approximately two weeks were allotted for a

novel being studied in the English class. This innovation lasted two weeks, which fit

within the timeline that the novel would normally have taken to study. There was not

sufficient time to read the entire novel and then conduct the innovation, nor was there

time to read through the entire play script. A condensed version of this took place with

the class read-through of the four scenes being performed. I also provided an overview of

the story through a brief lecture.

From a statistical standpoint, it is not feasible to draw definitive conclusions from the data results regarding text analysis skills, due to sample size. Minor fluctuations in the mean scores from pre-test to post-test responses could point to a variety of explanations, none of which are certain in this study. As mentioned previously, the student could have been experiencing a difficult time on the day of the post-test, leading them to feel less confident about schoolwork and thus rating themselves lower in this category. Conversely, the students' text analysis skills may have increased to the point that they were more critical of their abilities at a new skill level. Or, these self-reported scores might be due to an inability to fully understand the story of *Frankenstein* with only the scenes that were performed. This then could affect how they perceived their respective scenes and characters in context with the overall story. Whatever the explanation, this study points to some interesting patterns, suggesting that ongoing and further study (with a larger or varied sample sizes, or different evaluations and measures) could extend this work in detail to speak to this research question more definitively. By doing so, possible correlations and statistical significance might be observed in the quantitative results.

When students were asked about their understanding of the *Frankenstein* story during their interviews, a commonality arose in their responses. They knew the story of their scenes, but had difficulty placing those scenes within the context of the overall story. Catalina referenced this in her interview:

> I definitely understood my part. I wasn't too focused on the other scenes because I was just focused on mine. But I knew, like, what was going on in my part. I knew what was going on with the Creature and then with me and how we met. So I did know that part.

Aaron had a similar answer: "A little…like, I know like, I know my part, like, my scene." In addition to knowing his character, he provided an example of the scene's location as another aspect he knew.

I believe the text analysis confidence levels decreased as a result of the innovation timeline and design, rather than a result of theatrical role-play as a whole. The literature in chapter 2 shows that theatrical role-play enhances academic skills in students. This empirical data is present in multiple studies. So why did this design not produce similar results? The timeline was too short, a larger sample size of participants is needed as highlighted by the quantitative data, and the design of how only specific scenes selected would add to students' comprehension of the overall story was not effective. Further detail on this note is discussed later in the chapter.

RQ2: How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical role-play, impact the social skill of empathy of secondary education students in interdisciplinary contexts?

Assertion 2: Acting as a character, i.e., theatrical role-play, can lead to higher levels of empathy for others.

The overall increase in self-reported empathy levels between the pre- and post-test survey indicates that theatrical role-play possibly assisted in raising those levels. The increase was not a great level higher with a mean difference of just .11. As such, the innovation alone cannot be attributed as the cause of these increased empathy levels. There is a possible relationship, however. While we cannot conclusively point to such a relationship based on quantitative findings in a small sample size, it is worth considering several factors of practical relevance here.

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Two key elements in measuring empathy were *The Actor's Checklist* and the level of character believability presented in the final performance. The more detailed the answers to the prompts about the characters in the checklist, the more convincing their characters were presented in the final performance. Thus, the more empathy the participants had for their characters leading up to the performance, the more they were observed to have confidence in playing that character.

For example, Michael's *Actor's Checklist* answers scored high in the exceptional category due to their intense level of detail. Michael's performance yielded a convincing portrayal of Dr. Frankenstein. Conversely, Evelyn scored in the poor category for her checklist answers since they lacked detail. She did not portray as convincing of a character as others in the final performance.

While Michael reported his confidence in empathy levels at the same high score on both the pre- and post-test surveys, Evelyn reported a decrease from a 5 to a 4. The reasons for this self-reported decrease in empathy level confidence could include the following: 1. She did not provide her best effort on both *The Actor's Checklist* and the final performance, 2. She experienced a lack of engagement with the activities due to an inability to connect with her character, or 3. A combination of these possibilities contributed to the final result.

Based on the data results, I speculate that it may be a combination of the above factors. Her lack of detail on *The Actor's Checklist* answers contributed to her lack of knowledge of her character. It is difficult for an actor to empathize with a character if they don't know why they should. The character's objective in the scene, for example, contains key information about how and why the actor can connect with them. The more

connection and empathy felt for the character, the more confident and thus more convincing the actor's performance.

The difficulty with the design of *The Actor's Checklist* is that some answers to the prompts are clearly provided by the playwright in the script, and others are not. For example, Mary Shelley does not detail the political beliefs of the characters of Metz and Schmidt within her writing, nor does the playwright in the adaptation. Yet, question #1 asks about the character's political beliefs. As such, actors are left to create what they think those political beliefs are for those characters based on clues within the script. This requires skill in script analysis, a topic that requires a separate dedicated class. While the students had practice in text analysis within the English curriculum, they did not have experience with the different design of script analysis that contains most of the story being told through dialogue.

I reiterated to the students that if answers to the checklist questions are not detailed in the script, they are to create those according to what could fit the character. This will help lead them to connecting with their character. This requires an extra step in the process, and thus more effort. Based on field notes, I observed that Evelyn never exhibited any signs of excitement or invested interest in the innovation activities. While she was not alone in this observation, I believe it contributed to her lack of connection to her character and thus a decrease in empathy confidence.

Overall, however, empathy levels of the 10 participants were reported as either staying the same at the highest level of 5, or increasing during the time of the innovation. Jasmine, for example, reported a larger increase from a 1 to a 3. Based on the data, theatrical role-play may have helped with this result. While an exact relationship cannot

be determined, a connection is possible between theatrical role-play and its effect on empathy skills.

Assertion 3: Smaller acting roles can limit student engagement and script comprehension as opposed to larger roles.

Konstantin Stanislavsky, thought to be "the father of modern acting" (Ates, 2023, para. 1), famously said, "There are no small parts, only small actors" (as cited in Hornby, 2010, p. 298). These words were an attempt to attribute an equal importance for lead roles and non-lead roles within a script. Each actor, no matter the role they are playing, must approach the development of that character with the same thoroughness and intensity as they would for a lead role.

While I agree with this statement, the reality is that there are roles that do not have as large an impact on a performance as others. Megan and Evelyn viewed their characters of Metz and Schmidt as small roles. Even though she felt connected to her character, Megan references the size of the role in her interview: "I did feel connected to it. Like, yeah, what I had was a small part." She referenced the role size again when discussing her understanding of the overall story: "I definitely think I got a better jist of it. Like, seeing everyone perform it, not necessarily like, through my character-because I did have a very small part…".

Megan understood the story of *Frankenstein* more from seeing other groups perform than from performing the scene as her character. She seemed to think that the reason for that was because she had a small role. Thus, her investment in understanding the story leading up to the performance was not high. This narrow focus on just her

character seemed to limit her level of engagement with not only the rest of her group scene, but also with the other class activities that were focused on the overall story.

Ultimately this assertion involves student choice. As much as it is up to the teacher to provide the tools for content learning, it is also up to the students to engage with those tools to learn. While the roles of Metz and Schmidt are not as present as the other characters, they still contribute to the *Frankenstein* story in important ways. They serve as Dr. Frankenstein's work force and carry out tasks in order to help him achieve his goals. They complete his "dirty work" for him that is crucial for his creation of the Creature. While this was explained to the class during the discussion of character descriptions, it is clear that Megan and Evelyn lost sight of this during the rehearsal process.

Assertion 4: While not every actor needs* The Actor's Checklist *to connect with the character, it proved helpful overall.

Myriad methods exist in assisting actors with character development. One of the more famous strategies is *The Method*, developed by Konstantin Stanislavsky. One aspect of *The Method* involves actors putting themselves in the place of the character to unite their personalities with that character's personality (Caltagirone, 1997). This will help the actor experience as close to what that character encounters as possible. An example of this could entail an actor neglecting to sleep prior to performing a scene where the character is sleep-deprived, thus giving a potentially more convincing portrayal.

The Actor's Checklist is another method designed to assist with character development using prompts that ask questions about the character. Students were to

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answer the questions fully in first-person, as the character would. I provided them an alternative view of the assignment where they imagined their character being interviewed as they answered the questions. This was designed to reinforce the first-person responses.

Michael did not feel that he needed the *Actor's Checklist* to develop his character. He had ideas already in mind prior to filling out the checklist, so many of the answers to the questions were simply writing down what he had been thinking. While he did not need it, he did say it was helpful to put those ideas down on paper to help him dive deeper into the character. He specifically referenced that the document helped him find the motivations for his character's actions:

But I feel like it really did help with the ideas I already had in my head, putting them on paper and being able to kind of dive deeper into something. ... I had him in my mind. I already knew when I read through, but being able to write down things, it kind of made me think, well, why would he act this way?

The detail in which Michael invested into his character was evident not just in his believable performance, but in the answers to the checklist prompts. Almost all of his answers were of the highest quality and followed directions, which seems to correlate to his convincing portrayal of Dr. Frankenstein.

Students were encouraged to research their characters outside of class by reading and watching videos of other performances. I clarified that they are not to act their character exactly according to how another actor portrayed them. They are to use any observations of other performances as a foundation for what can be done with the character. It is my belief that acting involves providing a signature and unique

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interpretation of a character that only that actor could achieve. An example involves the character of the Joker in the *Batman* series. Many actors have played the character, such as Heath Ledger and Joaquin Phoenix. But every actor provided a different and unique portrayal of the Joker through personality characteristics, mannerisms, and more.

Catalina took this to heart when developing her character. Through Catalina's research, she found videos about her character, DeLacey, that helped visualize who he was and how he moved. Elderly age suggested he move slower and with more fragility, and his blindness added a layer of physical and facial expression complexity. Prior to her character research, I had directed Catalina to keep her eyes open when playing him and to look in the general direction of her co-actor. She was never to make eye contact with him due to his blindness. I wanted her to avoid a stereotypical portrayal of someone who is blind as it could appear as making fun of the disability. Based on her final performance of a convincing character, her research efforts were clearly apparent and paid off in the end. When asked if the *Actor's Checklist* was helpful in addition to this research, she answered in the affirmative and reinforced answering the prompts in first person as the character contributed to further knowledge of him.

> Yes. It, it did help, like I say, because I got to know my, my character. I got to know who he was. I got to know, um, like, just his, like, part of how he, who he was. Like, he was old, he was blind. And the questions, it's just like, I feel like it was asking me, you know, it wasn't asking just, like, about my character. It was asking about me because that's who I was.

With as much detail as Catalina provided about how the checklist helped her connect with her character, I am unable to verify how detailed her answers were to the prompts since she never submitted the document. Unfortunately, unlike Michael, this limits the extent to which *The Actor's Checklist* can be fully measured to assess its effectiveness on her. However, despite the lack of submission of the checklist, I can assert that she did use it in preparation for her character based on her detailed interview answers.

The additional research conducted by some students, such as Catalina and Michael, assisted in their character development. Thus, it is clear that *The Actor's Checklist* served as another tool that was not truly needed to portray a convincing character. However, it was a tool that greatly assisted the participants in their character development.

Assertion 5: Ensemble-building leads to a safe environment of learning, but also to effective collaboration among actors.

I observed a commonality in student participants during the first day of the innovation. Most of them exhibited shy and reserved behavior. This could be attributed to their personality and/or their nervousness about theatrical role-play. They also did not know me as a teacher, which added another layer of complexity to the change in lesson plans.

Thus, ensemble-building was even more important to create an environment where they felt comfortable engaging with the innovation. Academic risk-taking was a major component of this theatrical role-play design, and as such I observed much reticence in participation. This was especially noticeable during warm up activities that

involved speaking to the whole class, such as *You* and *One Line at a Time*. *You* was clearly daunting to some as they were required to speak in the circle with everyone looking at them. Granted they only had to say one word, but many hesitated on who to pick to say the next word. The alteration to this exercise was to replace the word "you" with saying the name of someone across the circle from them. Name recognition was key to helping build the ensemble since this allowed them to better know classmates who they had not interacted with during the school year.

Students became more comfortable with the warm up exercises each day, and I observed less hesitation from participants who were shy. Once I observed this, I started side coaching them to select a classmate who they did not know well. Despite the daily name review completed twice in the whole circle, I made sure they knew that they could ask for that student's name as a quick review prior to selecting them. They were starting to take a larger academic risk by saying the name of a classmate who they did not know well or were maybe unsure of their name. Not all did this as some relied on saying the name of someone they already knew, such as a friend. However, it became clear that these activities were helping to build a more comfortable environment to allow students to take larger risks.

Jasmine was one student who exhibited shy behavior, however she wrote that she started becoming more comfortable with the activities over time. "At first I was very nervous to do this, it was really out of my comfort zone. Later I found it not so overwhelming."

Catalina, Melody, and Tara detailed in their surveys that they enjoyed getting to know people who they did not know prior to the innovation. Catalina stated, "What I

enjoyed the most was working with people I've never interacted with…". Melody answered similarly: "I enjoyed meeting new people in my class and getting to know them." Tara echoed this sentiment on what she enjoyed most: "Getting to know my classmates better."

This ensemble-building then led to collaboration with fellow actors. Collaboration was necessary in order to create an effective story onstage as each scene contained at least two actors. Many of the students mentioned that it was enjoyable to work together and collaborate with their classmates within this arena. Aaron detailed this in his survey stating, "it was fun working with people". He also used this collaboration to define theatrical role-play as "working with people". Michael echoed this sentiment in his survey writing: "I really enjoyed spending time with my friends and working together towards a common goal." Evelyn enjoyed the collaboration as well, stating: "Being together with everyone was cool."

This collaboration required an open mind to other ideas, which was a new skill that Catalina wrote about in her survey: "I've learned how to be open-minded with people." This helped her perform an effective scene with her partner, Jeremy, who stated that he learned a new similar skill: "I have also learned to work with other's actions well…".

While Evelyn and Megan collaborated well together, they seemed to not collaborate with the rest of their group due to their short time required onstage. They often distanced themselves from their group when it was not time for their part of the scene. While the characters of Metz and Schmidt must work together closely as a duo, they must also interact with others in the scene. Dr. Frankenstein exchanges dialogue

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with them, for example, and it was not evident that they collaborated with that actor based on their performance. This isolated collaboration was thus not effective and is part of the reason why they did not tell the story as convincingly as the characters.

The effective collaboration overall among participants helped lead them to performing scenes that successfully told part of the story of *Frankenstein* as a team while portraying convincing characters. The data shows that most participants showed full effectiveness in these two areas, which is largely due to successful collaboration as a result of ensemble-building.

RQ3: How and to what extent do theatre teaching methods, specifically theatrical role-play, impact the social skill of confidence in public speaking of secondary education students in interdisciplinary contexts?

Assertion 6: Acting as a character (theatrical role-play) can make public speaking less intimidating and enhance those skills.

There is a concept in the subject of theatre known as the *Fourth Wall*. The *Fourth Wall* is defined as an imaginary wall that separates the story onstage from the real world (Lannom, 2020). The wall is invisible and separates the actors from the audience (Cullen, 2020). The idea is that the audience is looking in on the story being told onstage without the actors' acknowledgement that there is an audience watching them. Lannom (2020) likens it to a one-way mirror where "the audience can see and comprehend the story, but the story cannot comprehend the existence of the audience (para. 1)". The term originates from Constantin Stanislavsky, who describes the concept as *public solitude*, which involves the maintaining of a sense of solitude while still remaining in the public eye (Hinckley, 2008). Hinckley (2008) reports that Stanislavky would teach actors how to

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overcome stage fright by recognizing the existence of the fourth wall and interacting with it, while simultaneously including the audience in the story. In other words, the audience is not to be ignored, but included in a balanced performance (Hinckley, 2008).

To break the fourth wall means that the actors, and/or characters who they are portraying, acknowledge the audience is present and the story becomes aware of itself (Lannom, 2020). This is not dissimilar to the *aside* used commonly in Shakespeare plays, which involves a character addressing the audience with an observation or remark that the other characters cannot hear (MasterClass, 2021). No characters in any scene selections of *Frankenstein* required breaking the fourth wall.

While basic theatre and acting terminology was taught prior to the first blocking rehearsal, the concept of the *fourth wall* never arose. I did not think it prudent to teach at the time, especially with the tight time schedule. However, the data shows that participants used the fourth wall to their advantage naturally and subconsciously. Melody referenced this fourth wall acting in her open-ended response that asked about skills learned from the innovation: "I've learned to act as if the audience isn't actually there". I observed that students would use the fourth wall as a shield or barrier, but did not include the audience in the story. Granted this takes years of experience and education to achieve, so 14 days was not enough time. Additionally, in an effort to make the innovation less intimidating, I did not require memorization of lines. As such, the need for the scripts in student hands contributed to this fourth wall imbalance as well.

However, the focus that the participants exhibited allowed them to fully immerse themselves into the characters they were playing. While some were more successful at this than others, the commitment to their assigned characters was noticeable and helped

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to alleviate fears and nervous feelings they were experiencing. In other words, they engaged with an experiential learning process. Thus, the design of Experiential Learning Theory was successful for this particular application.

This concept needs to be examined further, however, as public speaking is not the same as acting in character. Actors play roles who are not themselves, and as such essentially wear an invisible mask of a character when performing. This mask hides the identity and personality of the actor. Since acting involves representing someone other than oneself onstage, this does not necessarily mean that acting is the cause of enhanced public speaking. The students were not required to present anything in front of an audience as themselves. They played characters. This character mask was noticeable in the participants, particularly Catalina. She was noticeably more confident in front of the audience when in her character of DeLacey. As she said in her interview, "Because I think in the beginning it was just like, 'Oh, it's me acting.' But then I got really, like, comfortable and it's just like, 'It's not me. It's, like, him (DeLacey), you know?'" As such, does Catalina feel ready to give a public speech as herself? She had a mixed response to being willing to participate in public speaking in the future. I assert her public speaking skills were enhanced by theatrical role-play, but she is still not comfortable with the skill in general.

Since students were not required to memorize their lines, most of them relied on looking at the script for large percentages of the scene. I directed them to be familiar enough with the script to where they did not need to look at it during the whole scene. Despite this and my coaching them to actively listen, make eye contact with others in the scene, and to act in character even when not speaking, they buried themselves in the

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scripts. This often hid their facial expressions, causing an undesired "fifth wall" that did not allow for optimal audience engagement. I believe this unintentional shield of paper possibly allowed for more confidence speaking in front of others since they did not have to look at the audience. They locked themselves in behind the fourth wall and performed the scene, as Melody stated, "as if the audience isn't actually there."

Assertion 7: Ensemble-building helps public speaking be less intimidating in front of a known audience.

One of the main purposes of the ensemble-building exercises orchestrated in the beginning of the theatrical role-play process was to create a safe and familiar environment in which participants could engage with and experience the innovation to its full extent. During those exercises, participants became more acquainted with each other and thus more comfortable. This was observed through the warm-up and rehearsal activities.

This positive environment was crucial for students to be comfortable performing their scenes in front of an audience. This was a known audience of their fellow peers, and due to ensemble-building, seemed less intimidating than an unknown audience.

The pre- and post-test survey results support this assertion. The prompt for confidence level of speaking in front of a known audience reported a pre-test mean of 3.44 and the post-test mean of a 4, resulting in a .16 increase in confidence. The confidence levels of speaking in front of an unknown audience scored overall lower than the known audience scores with a pre-test mean of 2.89 and a post-test mean of 3.56. Again, caution is noted in quantitative interpretations of small sample means, but in looking across the innovation and all the data, it suggests that students were self-reporting

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higher confidence levels because they knew audience members, such as their peers. Thus, it was a more comfortable environment for an activity (public speaking) perceived by many participants as intimidating. Despite an increase of .67 in confidence levels for an unknown audience, the self-reported scores were lower than the known audience scores.

Assertion 8: Groups that had a confident student leader were more engaged during the rehearsal process and appeared more confident in the final performance.

When students were assigned to group scenes, a combination of factors were taken into consideration. The first was a review of their preferences that they submitted on the character preference sheet. The second was my observations of their interaction with the activities as well as with their classmates. At this point in the timeline, I was not knowledgeable enough about the potential leadership skills that some students may have had. As such, leadership qualities were not taken into consideration when casting the roles and group scenes. This appeared to have an effect on the results.

I would check in with each group periodically during the class period, however I noticed some groups were more engaged and on task with the activity than others. Megan observed this as well and highlighted it in her interview as a challenge: "...sometimes some of the people in my group weren't very attentive sometimes when it came to their parts." Michael's group, for example, was always on task. I observed that Michael had high enthusiasm for the innovation. This, combined with his leadership skills, helped motivate others in his group to not only stay on task, but to do so in a meaningful way. In other words, their group always seemed like they enjoyed acting the scene out together. The same was observed from Catalina's group as she exhibited leadership in engaging a shy and reserved partner. However, as the innovation continued, a working relationship

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developed that helped the two of them connect as an ensemble. When asked what it was like working with a fellow classmate, she discussed how it was initially difficult to connect with him due to his shy nature and her lack of previous interaction with him. This changed, however, as they continued to work together each day. She elaborated:

> So actually, Jeremy is a pretty quiet guy. Um, I never got to, like, talk to him or just, like, have a moment with him. And then the more, like, I spent time with him and then we practice and everything, I got to see, like, a part of him that I didn't know. So I feel like it just got me more comfortable, not me just thinking that he doesn't talk or he just doesn't want to speak to me, because it's just not that. It's just, we never had the chance to, like, communicate like that.

Conversely, not every group had as strong a leader as Michael and Catalina. Some groups were not as engaged, which could be attributed to a lack of strong enthusiastic student leadership within their group and/or the compressed duration of my individual direction with them. This then led to some disengagement with the lesson, resulting in not getting the most out of the innovation as was possible. This was observed from Evelyn and Megan as neither of them exhibited leadership for their scene. This contributed to occasional off-task behavior, as well as a disconnect from the rest of their group.

Final performance and rehearsal scores indicate that students who had a member of their group who exhibited a sense of leadership performed better than those who did not. This is consistent with observations as well. Michael and Catalina helped lead their groups to high scores. Conversely, Evelyn and Megan did not have a strong leader in their group, which may have contributed to their lower scores. Future iterations of this

design should consider at least one student leader in each group. This is discussed later in the chapter.

RQ4: How and to what extent will a high school English teacher adopt the teaching method of theatrical role-play into future lesson plans?

Assertion 9: The English teacher will incorporate theatrical role-play into teaching and future lesson plans.

The English teacher participant always exhibited an enthusiastic and engaging demeanor toward theatrical role-play. I believe this was not only due to her genuine interest in the subject, but also a method of getting her students excited about the activity and change of scenery from the normal routine. This helped significantly as many students were extremely reticent to engage with this new format, especially conducted by a new teacher.

Aaron enjoyed this change since it did not involve the normal classwork that is typically done. When I pressed for examples, he mentioned "homework" pertaining to reading and writing. Jeremy detailed on his survey that he enjoyed the less stringent atmosphere:

> Academic classes tend to be strict on what is right, and what is wrong, while theatrical role-play allows you to be someone else, and you don't have to worry about getting something right or wrong because you could always replay the scene again.

Michael echoed his appreciation of the change of lesson design and went a step further to recommend theatrical role-play on his survey for future classes: "I think it

would be good to have this for as many classes as possible, at least once, so that they (students) can try something new and hopefully have as much fun as I did."

The experiential learning aspect of theatrical role-play allowed for students to view classwork through a different lens. While some of their answers for enjoying the change of pace may have been associated with the lessened workload to which they were accustomed, I believe the ability to *experience* the story firsthand through the portrayal of a character greatly added to their learning and overall enjoyment of the activity. This was observed by the teacher, and I believe it is a key reason why she will conduct theatrical role-play in future lesson plans.

Practical Limitations

There were limitations that existed prior to, during, and after the innovation had concluded. Most limitations correlated directly to the allotted time window. 14 school days with approximately 50 minutes per class was simply not enough time to allow for theatrical role-play to operate at its highest potential.

In order to portray a convincing character onstage, most theatre productions rehearse for approximately six weeks (Forum Theatre, 2022). Prior to the commencement of this innovation, I knew that the time window was short and that I needed to take advantage of every minute that I had. While I knew it would not be perfect, I underestimated how little time I actually had each day in relation to the high volume of innovation content. For example, blocking rehearsals transpired much slower than anticipated due to a couple of factors. The first centered around my directing blocking as if I were actually directing this script as a full-length stage production. My blocking notes were too complex for students who had never acted before. Despite taking class time to

go over basic universal blocking notes and frequent reminders to write the blocking notes down in pencil, students rarely wrote correct blocking notes (if any). I should have paired down the stage movement through more simple blocking notes. Due to these rehearsals taking more time per group than anticipated, I had to combine the blocking and working rehearsals into one. As such, I was only able to work with one group for one of the 14 days prior to observing their run-through rehearsals.

Regarding run-through rehearsals, the original plan involved my providing extensive acting notes for each group. This was not feasible due to time constraints, as well as student absences. The acting notes provided were of high quality, however the ideal frequency of more than once was not possible to achieve.

Time constraints also limited technical elements that would have enhanced the performances. Small costume accent pieces were planned for each actor to help them with characterization, however this was not feasible in the time window allotted.

Time also affected how students responded to the innovation in general. When asked on the post-test survey if she had changed during the process, Jasmine stated: "Not sure I can say I changed in such little time."

Memorization of lines of dialogue was purposefully not required due to the knowledge that most student participants had very little to no acting experience. I also wanted to minimize the intimidation factor that acting in front of an audience, especially for beginners, can pose. More often than not, when an actor gets nervous onstage they are at a high risk of going up, or forgetting, a line (Daily Actor, 2021).While the lack of a memorization requirement was observed as a relief for students, it also posed an obstacle. The paper scripts were crutches because students would often lose their place in the script

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and focus more on finding and reading the line versus acting and reacting with the dialogue and emotions of the characters. I had taught them that most acting occurs onstage when your character is not speaking. Essentially, characters are reacting to other dialogue and events in a scene. However, actors were so focused on keeping their place in the scripts that they essentially could not do this. This could help to explain why some confidence levels may not have increased ideally between the pre- and post-test.

While I was working with specific groups individually on blocking and working rehearsals, all other groups were directed to run through their scenes at least twice during the class period. While I could observe some of those groups making progress in this direction, I had difficulty keeping track of whether or not all groups were truly engaged with the activity. Due to the complexity of the direction in blocking and characterization of each group, my focus was mostly on those specific groups with which I was directly working. While I had the English teacher helping to redirect students to be on task, they did not stay on task for very long.

Due to curriculum time constraints, the class was unable to read the *Frankenstein* novel prior to the innovation. As such, many students were not familiar with the story despite its fame in pop culture. As reported in chapter 4, Catalina and Aaron mentioned in their interviews that this was difficult to initially connect with the character. This likely affected some of the answers on *the Actor's Checklist* document. Some students forgot to answer the questions in first person as the character. A note for next time is to reiterate these instructions on the top of the document.

Another limitation was related to student absences. Conflict sheets are used in common theatre practice as a way of determining which actors will be present at specific

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rehearsals, which also assists in the design of the rehearsal schedule (Hishon, n.d.). If an actor has too many conflicts, they may not be cast in the production (Gillis, 2020). The nature of this English IV class did not require students to be at every class nor did it allow for a conflict sheet detailing when students would be absent from school. Students would be absent last minute for myriad reasons, which directly affected their scene groups. A number of students were absent for several days during the in-class rehearsal process, and some even were absent on the day their group performed. *Understudies*, or actors studying for other actors in lead roles in the event that the actor is not able to perform (Backstage, 2022), are often used in theatre. This was not an option for this innovation, so if an actor was missing the show went on without them. The solution was to request a volunteer to read the missing actor's lines from offstage. One group asked if they could perform the next day in hopes the missing actor would be back, but due to schedule restraints this was not feasible. While there is no data to support the following statement, it is likely that the absence of an actor in the scene affected that group's performance. Future cycles of this research could investigate this factor further.

Since Tara was enrolled in the Theatre I class, she had already learned many of the acting tools that the other participants had not. Thus, she had an advantage in how she participated in the innovation. Knowledge on how to write blocking notes, proper stage directions, and how to develop a character were experiences that Tara already had as a result of the class. The results include her data, so this produces a slight limitation in how the data were analyzed. However, as mentioned in chapter 3, she was not selected to participate in the interview process due to her prior experience in theatre class.

Megan and Peter were absent on important data collection days. Megan missed the day when the pre-test survey was administered, and Peter missed the day when the post-test survey was administered. As such, their scores could not be fully measured in the comparison analysis.

I became aware of these more detailed practical limitations through the experiential process of conducting the innovation. As much as the students were engaging with Experiential Learning Theory during this time, so was I from a researcher perspective. Some of these practical limitations were avoidable, such as pairing down my blocking notes for time and ease of new student learning of acting. Most were unavoidable, such as time constraints of the unit time window allotted as determined by the school curriculum and length of individual class periods. Future cycles of similar innovation designs should consider working with administrations and faculty on possibly extending the time window to allow for theatrical role-play to be paced more evenly.

Research Design Limitations

As noted previously, the sample size of 10 students total was not large enough to provide definitive assertions from a statistical perspective. While 10 participants out of 34 students was still a reasonable amount of participation, it could certainly be better. Recruitment of students was extremely difficult as very few of them seemed interested. Interestingly, there was not much additional work that students had to complete as an official research participant. It was a matter of the submission of a few signed papers, with the understanding that they were required to engage with the activity as a class project regardless of their official status with the research component. It was even more difficult to recruit interview participants out of those 10 students. Even though it was

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clear that the interviews would not take very long and happen during the English class period, students were still apprehensive. Many of the participants exhibited shy behavior throughout the timeline, so I was not surprised when some of them did not respond to the interview invitation. At one point I still did not have the minimum 4 participants to interview like I had originally designed, so I had to ask certain students individually in person if they would be willing to interview. While this worked, future designs of this innovation should explore and include stronger recruitment strategies.

Even if all 34 students in the class elected to participate in the research, the number is still on the lower side. I had initially wanted the design to include a minimum of two classes experiencing theatrical role-play. This could consist of two English classes, an English class and a history class, or any other combination of interdisciplinary courses. Out of 6 class periods conducted each school day, teachers are allotted a prep period to get caught up on other job-related tasks, such as grading. My prep was 6th period during this innovation, which worked well regarding my availability. But I was unable to conduct the innovation again in another class since I would have needed a substitute teacher to cover my own class during that time. 14 school days is a long period of time to request this, especially for just one class.

The key takeaway with the number of participants limitation is that this particular research design was limited to a smaller sample size due to recruitment difficulties and time availability. This affected the analysis of the quantitative data and thus a clearer understanding of how the results answered research question #1.

Most of the students who interviewed gave thorough and relatively in-depth responses to the prompts. Aaron was the only student who did not expand on his answers,

which sometimes limited the analysis of some of his answers. I would ask students follow-up questions if they did not provide thorough responses. Aaron was the only participant who struggled with this, sometimes providing one-word answers to follow-up questions.

None of the students interviewed knew me prior to the innovation, however they became more familiar with me over the course of the research timeline. As such, some of them may have answered questions with the mindset of wanting to please the researcher with the information they think I was seeking. This may have been true with the answers to open-ended questions on the surveys. While this may have been the case with some students, I did not witness this overtly in the interviews or in the written responses. Students were consistent with how they answered questions, and seemed honest when providing feedback on their interaction with the innovation. However, I highlight this as a possible limitation among the participants.

As much as I wanted this innovation to be positively effective, I remained objective during the process. However, due to my career as a theatre teacher with extensive experience in theatrical role-play, I do highlight confirmation bias as a possible limitation. During the interviews, I remained as neutral as possible when responding and listening to participant answers. For instance, if the answer was affirmative for the innovation effectiveness, I resisted smiling. Additionally, due to the extensive literature available of similar theatrical role-play innovations being effective, I was hoping to add to this collection with my own confirmation of similar results. However, I kept the cyclical nature of action research in mind when confronted with this hope. I noted that this particular iteration of the innovation is one way to study theatrical role-play no

matter the results, and future cycles of this research could be informed based on the results of this design.

Practical Considerations and Future Research Implications

Consistent with previous iterations of similar research and innovations, theatrical role-play continued to be effective in this study. Empirical evidence of this can be observed in the data.

While the study was effective, I recommend future cycles of research be conducted with specific alterations. One of those alterations includes an extended timeline. It is clear that 14 school days, averaging 50 minutes each of interaction time with the innovation, is not enough. The difficulty with this ideal scenario is that English curricula, categorized in the core curriculum, have a specific timeline of literature that needs to be covered to meet learning objectives. This ties in to the added complexity of standardized testing in reading and writing skills, both in state and national arenas. The performance of the students on those exams is largely dependent on whether or not learning objectives have been met in the class. While the English teacher assured me there was no interruption to her instruction of the curriculum, a theatrical role-play intervention that requires more than 14 days of implementation can result in a disruption of learning objective pacing. While the literature has shown testing skills have been enhanced as a result of theatre, further research must be cognizant of extended timelines as other core courses are not acting classes.

Future iterations should also consider a more time-structured outline of each lesson for each day. The 5-minute break option, for example, should be at a clear and

distinct time for the entire class (perhaps in the middle), instead of leaving the option of when to take it up to each group. This will help students stay on task more efficiently.

Time management of lessons leads into another suggestion. The researcher and teacher should meet during the casting process and determine at least one student that exhibits leadership qualities for each group. This student would then be asked to help lead the group, in addition to the teachers, to ensure class time is used efficiently for rehearsal within their respective groups.

Another alteration is to make the blocking notes a required grade. Despite frequent redirection to write down the blocking notes I was providing, many students just chose not to do that. Granted I was directing this blocking quickly due to time constraints, so students may have been intimidated by the quick pacing and decided to give up if they could not keep up. However, with simplified blocking for future cycles, students should be able to keep up with the pacing and thus be held accountable for their blocking notes. This is a necessary tool not just for performance, but also for a grade to assess the achievement of learning objectives.

The assessment of academic skills possibly enhanced by theatrical role-play would be more effective if questions were focused more clearly on the students' comprehension of the story as a whole, and not just the scene. While this was the intent of the design, it was misinterpreted on both the survey documents and student interview question #8. The key words *overall story* need to be clearly communicated to the students, instead of just asking if they comprehended the story. The goal was for a general understanding of the whole story of *Frankenstein*, not just the story within their scenes.

An additional alteration related to academic skills would be to have the class read the whole playscript prior to rehearsing select scenes. While the scenes selected told the basic story in chronological order, a reading of the whole story would give the students a more effective understanding of how the scenes relate with and contribute to the overall picture. By doing this, students would have a better chance at increasing confidence in their text analysis skills. While time was a factor during this cycle, a session needs to be allotted to allow for this in future cycles.

The collaboration between classmates consisted of people who they did not know well and people who they did know well. It would be interesting to study the effectiveness of theatrical role-play with the grouping of students who do not know each other at all. Are they as effective as working with those they know, or does working with those they know lead to more off-task behavior?

Any future iterations of this research design should include a larger sample size of participants. This will help to further understand the potential effect of theatrical role-play on high school students from a quantitative perspective by providing more robust statistical data. This can then help to observe any statistical significance or correlations.

It would be interesting to research how likely teachers are to recommend theatrical role-play as a teaching method to their colleagues not only within their content areas, but beyond. Future cycles could examine if the innovation could become more prevalent among teachers of all disciplines, which could lead to data regarding its appeal to education stakeholders as a teaching method.

One of the larger hurdles with this design is the reality that many students, especially as they are in their adolescent stages of growth, will struggle with engagement

and may not see the value of theatrical role-play within the context of class content. There will also be several students who are extremely nervous about the notion of acting in front of their peers. They likely chose to enroll in an arts elective course other than theatre, such as photography, that does not require them to present in front of others-but ended up in theatre. As such, theatrical role-play can be extremely intimidating for them.

There are several ways that one might be able to address student engagement and nervous feelings with theatrical role-play-and certainly this is an area that would benefit from more exploration and research. One possibility is to provide them with the *optional* "carrot" of potentially performing with technical elements, such as stage lighting and costumes, by the end of the timeline. I was asked by one student participant if they were able to perform their scene on the main stage of the auditorium. I had instead chosen the black box theater in the school since its smaller size can help make it less intimidating than the larger stage, which contains hundreds of audience seats. Since I wanted the research design to be the same among all the groups to allow for more consistent measurable results, I denied the student's request for the main theater. However, upon further reflection, this type of option, raising the stakes just slightly to change the staging without being intimidating, could help with student engagement as many students like the idea of adding the technical elements of lighting, sound, and costumes, to name a few. These elements could be added to that larger stage atmosphere and provide an end goal for students to look forward to, thus possibly providing more engagement in class rehearsals leading up to the final performance. However, it is crucial that this is optional as not all students will be comfortable with that type of environment.

Another possible way to support student engagement could be to relate theatrical role-play to student lives outside of school as much as possible. In my career I have noticed that students connect with film, social media (such as TikTok), and TV acting/productions more so than stage theatre. This could be due to a preconceived notion that theatre equates to only Shakespeare plays, which have ornate language that is difficult to understand in the modern age. So exposing them to the other genres of theatre, such as comedy or action/adventure, is important early in the process. Many films have been adapted for stage theatre, and vice-versa, so I would recommend focusing on highlighting those first, through the viewing of video clip examples. This could help students at least begin to connect with theatre and acting as an art form, and perhaps make it both more interesting to engage with, and less intimidating for those who are nervous.

While I emphasize that an extended timeline for the innovation beyond 14 school days is recommended, the reality is that curriculum pacing for core classes in schools must abide by a strict schedule to meet learning objectives and prepare students efficiently for annual state standardized testing. In this sense, it is highly possible that 14 school days could be the maximum time allotted for this design. In a case where fewer school days can be afforded, such as 10, the design must be condensed to focus on the key steps that can still allow for theatrical role-play to affect life skills of students. No matter what the timeline looks like, ensemble-building activities are key components to start each lesson and should be conducted each day through a variety of warm-up exercises. The more students know each other, the more comfortable they can be with participation in the innovation.

Day 1 should consist of a strong connection to get them interested and excited for what is to come. The buy-in from the students is key, and some of the strategies previously mentioned can help students connect with the material right away. Day 2 should consist of the highlighting of key points of the overall story. Then a timeline should be presented of how each acting scene chronologically contributes to the overall story, which would provide them with clear context and help them see the big picture. Days 3 and 4 should consist of a read-through of all the scenes as a class to ensure students are familiar with the script selections. For the next couple of days, organic blocking could be implemented with the help of a strong student leader. This allows each group to come up with movement based on how they interpret the script. I would then provide fine-tuning of the blocking after watching them run through the scenes. However, it is important to ensure students know how to block their scenes. As such, giving them a brief overview of simplified blocking examples and stage areas would help with that. This would also help to inform them as they collaborate with each other to determine that blocking for their scenes.

The blocking rehearsals would not require as much time since they are simplified, which would allow more time for the working rehearsals. The facilitator can then work on characterization with the students while not feeling as rushed. Since this research is not focused on students performing the blocking perfectly, having more time dedicated to character work would allow for a potential for more confidence in empathy skills.

The remaining time could consist of repeated run-through rehearsals to ensure students felt comfortable and confident with their scenes. The last 2 days would then consist of the final performances.

There is potential for this innovation design to transfer to other types of settings through alternative pathways. Beyond the English content area, it would be interesting to see how theatrical role-play would affect the life skills of students in a history class. Examples of this could include acting out events from U.S. History, for example, as historical figures. By applying *The Actor's Checklist* to student assessment within this unit, students would have the opportunity to understand (and potentially empathize with) notable people in history. This could lead to an explanation of why they took specific actions, or the reasons behind highly impactful important decisions. It could also be applied to a mathematics class, for instance, when emphasizing to students how math is relevant in their lives after high school concludes. This could involve an original script that students write that provides a scenario in the real-world requiring math skills, or they could act out famous scenes from film, TV, plays, and/or musicals in which math is used in a notable way. Science courses could work in a similar fashion where students act out famous scenes involving chemistry experiments, for instance-or perhaps take on the roles of different organisms, elements, cells, systems, etc. in scientific/natural processes or phenomena. In the example of acting out experiments, that could even involve *Frankenstein* since Dr. Frankenstein runs scientific experiments in his quest to reanimate the dead (i.e., the Creature). The key takeaway is that theatrical role-play can help strengthen the connection between students and the course content through the personal experience it provides each student.

Conclusion

Prior to the start of this research project, I knew that not every student would be interested in participating in theatrical role-play. Similar to my Introduction to Theatre

classes, not every student is passionate enough about the subject to continue their theatre education journey beyond the class. The point was not to recruit new students to the theatre program, but to provide the drama curriculum tool of theatrical role-play as another creative method of teaching and learning new content, seeking to strengthen students' skills or confidence in several areas. I had a concern about infusing an acting project into a core English class of seniors who were not expecting to take the stage as a character in any literature they were studying that year. The intimidation that acting can have on non-theatre students, combined with some of the seniors experiencing "senioritis" as their graduation loomed closer, presented quite the challenge. This was intimidating to me as the teacher and researcher. However, I was confident that once ensemble-building had taken effect, some of those students would start to engage with the project with more effort and potential enthusiasm. I have observed that sometimes engagement with theatrical role-play through experiential means can lead to not just meeting learning objects, but also to enjoyment. Michael, for example, discussed his regret for not participating in theatre during his earlier years in high school because he enjoyed this project: "I've learned that I actually enjoyed theater and wish that I'd tried it sooner so I actually could have pursued it through high school."

The data shows that students overall learned a piece of literature through the art of acting, i.e., theatrical role-play, and some even had fun with it. This full immersion into acting out the story of *Frankenstein* allowed for the students to have the experiential learning experience that has proven to be a successful educational method within Experiential Learning Theory.

Once a sense of ensemble had been established, the taking of academic risks became less intimidating for some participants as they started to be more comfortable with the innovation activities. This helped make me feel more comfortable as well and less nervous about how the students would interact with the new art of acting with each other. I do not think it is a coincidence that the abbreviation for Academic Risk-Taking Theory spells *ART*. Art exists all around us in myriad forms. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the performing arts in particular have had a large impact on enhancing the life skills of students. The very nature of the performing arts curriculum design includes experiential learning and academic risk-taking at its core. So how do education stakeholders take full advantage of the learning benefits that not just theatrical role-play in drama presents, but all performing arts subjects?

There is no universally agreed-upon perfect formula for this innovation. As the literature discusses, theatrical role-play has been implemented in numerous classrooms across the globe. Each iteration of it has had a slightly different design, but a similar objective overall. The effects of theatrical role-play in the interdisciplinary classroom and beyond, as well as theatre in general, are evident and vast. But the complex wicked problem (Jordan et al., 2014) of how to elevate its importance to a level of common knowledge and understanding by education policymakers/leaders continues to require more cycles of research. As mentioned previously, significant strides have been made that have highlighted the value that theatre brings to education and society. The academic and social skills honed by this art form positively contribute to a productive and nurturing society. However, the spotlight on the importance of theatre education needs to be brighter. Until then, as we say in theatre, "the show goes on".

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APPENDIX A

ARIZONA CURRICULUM MAP: STATE STANDARDS

2015 Arizona Academic Standards in the Arts
Theatre
Artistic Process - Creating

Anchor Standard #1 - Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
	TH.CR.1.Ka	TH.CR.1.1a	TH.CR.1.2a	TH.CR.1.3a	TH.CR.1.4a	TH.CR.1.5a	TH.CR.1.6a	TH.CR.1.7a	TH.CR.1.8a	TH.CR.1.HS1a	TH.CR.1.HS2a	TH.CR.1.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, transition between imagination and reality to invent and inhabit an imaginary elsewhere in a guided theatrical place (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Propose potential character choices in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Propose potential new details to plot and story in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Create roles, imagined worlds and improvised stories in a theatrical work.	a. Articulate the visual details of imagined worlds and improvised stories that support the given circumstances in a theatrical work.	a. Identify physical qualities that reveal a character's inner traits in the imagined world of a theatrical work.	a. Identify blocking based on a character in a theatrical work.	a. Investigate multiple perspectives and solutions to staging challenges in a theatrical work.	a. Investigate and explore multiple perspectives and solutions to staging problems in a theatrical work.	a. Apply basic research to construct ideas about the visual composition of a theatrical work.	a. Investigate historical and cultural conventions and their impact on the visual composition of a theatrical work.	a. Synthesize knowledge from a variety of dramatic forms, theatrical conventions, and technologies, including rights and royalties to create the visual composition of a theatrical work.
	TH.CR.1.Kb	TH.CR.1.1b	TH.CR.1.2b	TH.CR.1.3b	TH.CR.1.4b	TH.CR.1.5b	TH.CR.1.6b	TH.CR.1.7b	TH.CR.1.8b	TH.CR.1.HS1b	TH.CR.1.HS2b	TH.CR.1.HS3b
b	b. Collaborate with peers and interact with non-representational materials such as, puppets, and costume pieces for a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Collaborate with peers about which costumes and props to use in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Collaborate with peers to discuss scenery in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Visual and devise ideas for costumes, props and sets for the environment and characters in a theatrical work.	b. Invent and design technical elements that support the story and given circumstances in a theatrical work.	b. Propose design ideas that support the story and given circumstances in a theatrical work.	b. Identify solutions to design challenges in a theatrical work.	b. Present and explain solutions to design challenges in a theatrical work.	b. Explore and discuss solutions to design challenges of a performance space in a theatrical work.	b. Explore the impact of technology on design choices in a theatrical work.	b. Implement design solutions for a theatrical work.	b. Design and implement a complete design for a theatrical work that incorporates all elements of technology necessary for a piece/production (e.g. lighting, scenery, sound, props, costumes, media, makeup, rights and royalties).
		TH.CR.1.1c	TH.CR.1.2c	TH.CR.1.3c	TH.CR.1.4c	TH.CR.1.5c	TH.CR.1.6c	TH.CR.1.7c	TH.CR.1.8c	TH.CR.1.HS1c	TH.CR.1.HS2c	TH.CR.1.HS3c
c		c. Identify ways in which gestures and movement create or retell a story in a guided theatrical experiences (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Identify ways in which voice and sounds create or retell a story in guided theatrical experiences (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Collaborate to determine how characters move and speak to support the story and given circumstances in theatrical work.	c. Imagine how a character moves and speaks to support the story and given circumstances in a theatrical work.	c. Depict how a character's inner thoughts impact the story and given circumstances in a theatrical work.	c. Explore a scripted or improvised character by imagining the given circumstances in a theatrical work.	c. Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character's inner thoughts and objectives in a theatrical work.	c. Develop a scripted or improvised character by discussing the character's inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a theatrical work.	c. Use script analysis to generate ideas about a character that is believable and convincing in a theatrical work.	c. Use personal experiences and background knowledge to develop a character that is believable and authentic in a theatrical work.	c. Integrate cultural and historical contexts with personal experiences to create a character that is believable and authentic in a theatrical work.

Anchor Standard #2 - Organize and develop artistic ideas and work

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
	TH.CR.2.Ka	TH.CR.2.1a	TH.CR.2.2a	TH.CR.2.3a	TH.CR.2.4a	TH.CR.2.5a	TH.CR.2.6a	TH.CR.2.7a	TH.CR.2.8a	TH.CR.2.HS1a	TH.CR.2.HS2a	TH.CR.2.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, interact with peers and contribute to a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Describe and contribute to the development of a sequential plot in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Collaborate with peers to devise meaningful dialogue in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Participate in methods of investigation to devise original ideas for a theatrical work.	a. Collaborate to devise original ideas for a theatrical work by asking questions about characters and plots.	a. Devise original ideas for a theatrical work that reflect collective inquiry about characters and their given circumstances.	a. Analyze original ideas and artistic choices to improve, refine, and evolve a devised or scripted theatrical work.	a. Examine and justify original ideas and artistic choices in a theatrical work based on critical analysis, background knowledge and historical and cultural context.	a. Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas for a theatrical work.	a. Discuss the function of history and culture in the development of a dramatic concept through a critical analysis of original ideas in a theatrical work.	a. Refine a dramatic concept to demonstrate a critical understanding of historical and cultural influences of original ideas applied to a theatrical work.	a. Develop and synthesize original ideas in a theatrical work utilizing critical analysis, historical and cultural context, research and western or non-western theatre traditions.
	TH.CR.2.Kb	TH.CR.2.1b	TH.CR.2.2b	TH.CR.2.3b	TH.CR.2.4b	TH.CR.2.5b	TH.CR.2.6b	TH.CR.2.7b	TH.CR.2.8b	TH.CR.2.HS1b	TH.CR.2.HS2b	TH.CR.2.HS3b
b	b. With prompting and support, express original ideas in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., creative drama, process drama, story drama).	b. Participate in group decision-making to create a theatrical work (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Contribute ideas and make decisions as a group to advance a story in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Compare ideas with peers and make selections that will enhance and deepen group theatrical work.	b. Participate in defined responsibilities required to present a theatrical work to peers.	b. Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising theatrical work.	b. Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising a theatrical work.	b. Share responsibilities and leadership roles to develop collaborative goals when preparing or devising theatrical work.	b. Collaborate as the actor, director, playwright and designers to explore their interdependent roles in a theatrical work.	b. Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a theatrical work.	b. Collaborate as a creative team to create artistic solutions and make interpretive choices in a devised or scripted theatrical work.

Anchor Standard #3 - Refine and complete artistic work

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
	TH.CR.3.Ka	TH.CR.3.1a	TH.CR.3.2a	TH.CR.3.3a	TH.CR.3.4a	TH.CR.3.5a	TH.CR.3.6a	TH.CR.3.7a	TH.CR.3.8a	TH.CR.3.HS1a	TH.CR.3.HS2a	TH.CR.3.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Collaborate in the adaptation of the plot in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Collaborate in the adaptation of dialogue in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Collaborate with peers to revise, refine, and adapt ideas to fit the given guidelines of a theatrical work.	a. Discuss and revise an improvised or scripted theatrical work through repetition and collaborative review.	a. Discuss and revise an improvised or scripted theatrical work through repetition and self reflection.	a. Discuss and identify artistic choices to refine a devised or scripted theatrical work.	a. Analyze and refine artistic choices in a devised or scripted theatrical work.	a. Use rehearsal and analysis to refine a devised or scripted theatrical work.	a. Practice and demonstrate a devised or scripted theatrical work using theatrical staging (blocking, movement).	a. Analyze and critique the dramatic concept of a devised or scripted theatrical work.	a. Conceptualize the style, genre or form in a devised or scripted theatrical work.
	TH.CR.3.Kb	TH.CR.3.1b	TH.CR.3.2b	TH.CR.3.3b	TH.CR.3.4b	TH.CR.3.5b	TH.CR.3.6b	TH.CR.3.7b	TH.CR.3.8b	TH.CR.3.HS1b	TH.CR.3.HS2b	TH.CR.3.HS3b
b	b. Using guided dramatic play, include sounds in a theatrical experience.	b. Identify similarities and differences in sounds and movements in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Adapt and use sounds and movements in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Participate and contribute to physical and vocal exploration in an improvised or scripted theatrical work.	b. Develop physical and vocal exercise techniques for an improvised or scripted theatrical work.	b. Create technical elements that occur in rehearsal for a theatrical work. (e.g. lighting, sound, scenery, props, costumes, makeup, media).	b. Discuss a planned technical design during the rehearsal process for a devised or scripted theatrical work. (e.g. lighting, sound, scenery, props, costumes, makeup, media).	b. Research multiple technical design elements for a devised or scripted theatrical work. (e.g. lighting, sound, scenery, props, costumes, makeup, media).	b. Implement a planned technical design using simple technology for devised or scripted theatrical work. (e.g. lighting, sound, scenery, props, costumes, makeup, media).	b. Justify technical design choices to support the story and emotional impact of a devised or scripted theatrical work. (e.g. lighting, sound, scenery, props, costumes, makeup, media).	b. Conceptualize and construct technical design choices to enhance the story and emotional impact of a devised or scripted theatrical work. (e.g. lighting, sound, scenery, props, costumes, makeup).	b. Employ a high level of technical proficiency to support the story and emotional impact of a devised or scripted theatrical work (e.g. safely utilize technical theatre practices).
	TH.CR.3.Kc	TH.CR.3.1c	TH.CR.3.2c	TH.CR.3.3c	TH.CR.3.4c	TH.CR.3.5c	TH.CR.3.6c	TH.CR.3.7c	TH.CR.3.8c	TH.CR.3.HS1c	TH.CR.3.HS2c	TH.CR.3.HS3c
c	c. Identify single objects used in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., sun/circle, bus/rectangle).	c. Discuss multiple representations of a single object in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Suggest multiple representations of a single object in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Collaboratively create multiple representations of a single/multiple object(s) in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Collaborate on solutions to technical issues that arise in rehearsal for a theatrical work.	c. Identify effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted theatrical work.	c. Use physical and vocal exploration for character development in an improvised or scripted theatrical work.	c. Demonstrate effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted theatrical work.	c. Refine effective physical and vocal traits of characters in an improvised or scripted theatrical work.	c. Explore physical, vocal and psychological choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant to a theatrical work.	c. Research and analyze scripts to revise physical, vocal, and psychological choices which impact the believability and relevance of a theatrical work.	c. Perform ideas from research and analysis to create a believable, authentic, and relevant piece in a theatrical work.

2015 Arizona Academic Standards in the Arts
Theatre
Artistic Process - Performing

Anchor Standard #4 - Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for performance

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
	TH.PR.4.Ka	TH.PR.4.1a	TH.PR.4.2a	TH.PR.4.3a	TH.PR.4.4a	TH.PR.4.5a	TH.PR.4.6a	TH.PR.4.7a	TH.PR.4.8a	TH.PR.4.HS1a	TH.PR.4.HS2a	TH.PR.4.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, identify characters and setting in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Describe a character's actions and dialogue in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Interpret story elements in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Explain the elements of dramatic structure in a story to create a theatrical work.	a. Modify the dialogue and action to change the story in a theatrical work.	a. Describe the essential events in a story or script that make up the dramatic structure in a theatrical work.	a. Describe the underlying thoughts and emotions that create dialogue and action in a theatrical work.	a. Discuss various character objectives (choices) in a theatrical work.	a. Demonstrate character choices using given circumstances in a theatrical work.	a. Research various character objectives and tactics in a theatrical work to overcome an obstacle.	a. Analyze unique choices and create believable and sustainable characters theatrical work.	a. Apply reliable research of directors' styles to create unique choices for a directorial concept in a theatrical work.
	TH.PR.4.Kb	TH.PR.4.1b	TH.PR.4.2b	TH.PR.4.3b	TH.PR.4.4b	TH.PR.4.5b	TH.PR.4.6b	TH.PR.4.7b	TH.PR.4.8b	TH.PR.4.HS1b	TH.PR.4.HS2b	TH.PR.4.HS3b
b	b. Use body and voice to communicate character traits and emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Use movement, facial expressions, gestures, and voice to communicate character traits and emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Alter voice and body to expand and articulate nuances of a character in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Apply movement and voice in a theatrical work.	b. Discuss physical choices to develop a character in a theatrical work.	b. Experiment with various physical choices to communicate character in a theatrical work.	b. Demonstrate physical choices to create meaning in a theatrical work.	b. Discuss various staging choices to enhance the story in a theatrical work.	b. Describe how character relationships assist in telling a story of a theatrical work.	b. Apply pacing to better communicate the story in a theatrical work.	b. Identify essential text information, research from various sources, and the director's concept that influence character choices in a theatrical work.	b. Apply a variety of researched acting techniques to character choices in a theatrical work.

Anchor Standard #5 - Develop and refine artistic work for presentation

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
		TH.PR.5.1a	TH.PR.5.2a	TH.PR.5.3a	TH.PR.5.4a	TH.PR.5.5a	TH.PR.5.6a	TH.PR.5.7a	TH.PR.5.8a	TH.PR.5.HS1a	TH.PR.5.HS2a	TH.PR.5.HS3a
a		a. With prompting and support, demonstrate physical movement in a guided theatrical experiences (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Participate in a variety of physical, vocal, and cognitive exercises that can be used in a group setting for a theatrical work.	a. Demonstrate the relationship between and among body, voice, and mind in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques.	a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques.	a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied for a theatrical work.	a. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied for a theatrical work.	a. Practice various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or theatrical performance.	a. Use a variety of acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or theatrical performance.	a. Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable theatrical work.	a. Apply and justify a collection of acting techniques from reliable resources to prepare a believable and sustainable performance.
	TH.PR.5.Kb	TH.PR.5.1b	TH.PR.5.2b	TH.PR.5.3b	TH.PR.5.4b	TH.PR.5.5b	TH.PR.5.6b	TH.PR.5.7b	TH.PR.5.8b	TH.PR.5.HS1b	TH.PR.5.HS2b	TH.PR.5.HS3b
b	b. With prompting and support, demonstrate the use of with various technical elements in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. With prompting and support, identify technical elements that can be used in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Identify the basic technical elements that can be used in a theatrical work.	b. Discuss technical elements in a guided theatrical work (e.g. process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Propose the use of technical elements in a theatrical work.	b. Articulate how technical elements are integrated into a theatrical work.	b. Choose a variety of technical elements that can be applied to a design in a theatrical work.	b. Demonstrate the use of technical elements in a theatrical work.	b. Use a variety of technical elements to create a design for a rehearsal or theatrical work.	b. Use researched technical elements to increase the impact of design in a theatrical work.	Interpret and apply contractual royalties to secure rights for a theatrical work	b. Explain and justify the selection of technical elements used to build a design that communicates the dramatic concept.

Anchor Standard #6 - Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
	TH.PR.6.K	TH.PR.6.1	TH.PR.6.2	TH.PR.6.3	TH.PR.6.4	TH.PR.6.5	TH.PR.6.6	TH.PR.6.7	TH.PR.6.8	TH.PR.6.HS1	TH.PR.6.HS2	TH.PR.6.HS3
a	a. With prompting and support, perform in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. With prompting and support, perform in dramatic play or a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. With prompting and support, use voice and sound in dramatic play or a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	With prompting and support, play and sound in dramatic play or a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	With prompting and support, communicate emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g. process drama, story drama, creative drama).	Use movement and gestures to communicate emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g. process drama, story drama, creative drama).	Incorporate voice, movement and gestures to communicate emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g. process drama, story drama, creative drama).	Perform in a group guided theatrical experience and present it informally to an audience.	Perform a rehearsed theatrical work for an audience.	Perform a scripted theatrical work for a specific audience.	Present a theatrical work using creative processes that shape the production for a specific audience.	Present a theatrical production for a specific audience that employs research and analysis grounded in the creative perspectives of the playwright, director, designer, and dramaturg.

2015 Arizona Academic Standards in the Arts
Theatre
Artistic Process - Connecting

Anchor Standard #10 - Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
Code	TH.CN.10.Ka	TH.CN.10.1a	TH.CN.10.2a	TH.CN.10.3a	TH.CN.10.4a	TH.CN.10.5a	TH.CN.10.6a	TH.CN.10.7a	TH.CN.10.8a	TH.CN.10.HS1a	TH.CN.10.HS2a	TH.CN.10.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, retell a personal experience in a guided theatrical experience (e.g. process drama, creative drama, story drama)	a. With prompting and support identify between characters and oneself in dramatic play or a guided theatrical experience (e.g. process drama, story drama, creative drama)	a. Relate character experiences to personal experiences in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama)	a. Use personal experiences and knowledge to make connections to community and culture in a theatrical work.	a. Explain how a theatrical work connects to oneself to a community or culture.	a. Identify the ways a theatrical work reflects the perspectives of a community or culture.	a. Examine a community issue through multiple perspectives in a theatrical work.	a. Explain how the actions and motivations of characters in a theatrical work impact perspectives of a community or culture.	a. Incorporate multiple perspectives and diverse community ideas in a theatrical work.	a. Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas and personal beliefs impact a theatrical work.	a. Choose and interpret a theatrical work to reflect or question personal beliefs.	a. Collaborate on a theatrical work that examines a critical global issue using multiple personal, community, and cultural perspectives.
Code	TH.CN.10.Kb	TH.CN.10.1b	TH.CN.10.2b	TH.CN.10.3b	TH.CN.10.4b	TH.CN.10.5b	TH.CN.10.6b	TH.CN.10.7b	TH.CN.10.8b	TH.CN.10.HS1b	TH.CN.10.HS2b	TH.CN.10.HS3b
b	b. With prompting and support, identify skills and knowledge from personal experiences in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Select from different art forms and content areas to apply in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Apply skills and knowledge from different art forms and content areas in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Identify connections to community, social issues and other content areas in theatrical work.	b. Respond to community and social issues and incorporate other content areas in theatrical work.	b. Investigate historical, global and social issues expressed in theatrical work.	b. Identify universal themes or common social issues and express them through a theatrical work.	b. Use different forms of theatrical work to examine contemporary social, cultural, or global issues.	b. Incorporate music, dance, art, and/or media to strengthen the meaning and conflict in a theatrical work with a particular cultural, global, or historic context.	b. Explore how cultural, global, and historic belief systems affect creative choices in a theatrical work.	b. Integrate conventions and knowledge from different art forms and other disciplines to develop a cross-cultural theatrical work.	b. Develop a theatrical work that identifies and questions cultural, global, and historic belief systems.

Anchor Standard #11 - Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
Code	TH.CN.11.Ka	TH.CN.11.1a	TH.CN.11.2a	TH.CN.11.3a	TH.CN.11.4a	TH.CN.11.5a	TH.CN.11.6a	TH.CN.11.7a	TH.CN.11.8a	TH.CN.11.HS1a	TH.CN.11.HS2a	TH.CN.11.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, identify stories that are different from one another in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Identify similarities and differences in stories from one's own community in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Identify similarities and differences in stories from multiple cultures in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Explore how stories are adapted from literature to theatrical work.	a. Investigate cross-cultural approaches to storytelling in theatrical work.	a. Analyze commonalities and differences between stories set in different cultures in preparation for a theatrical work.	a. Research and analyze two different versions of the same theatrical story to determine differences and similarities in the visual and aural world of each story.	a. Research and discuss how a playwright might have intended a theatrical work to be produced.	a. Research the story elements of a staged theatrical work and compare them to another production of the same work.	a. Research how other theatre artists apply creative processes to tell stories in a devised or scripted theatrical work.	a. Formulate creative choices for a devised or scripted theatrical work based on research about the selected topic.	a. Justify and document the creative choices made in a devised or scripted theatrical work based on critical interpretation of specific data from research.
Code	TH.CN.11.Kb	TH.CN.11.1b	TH.CN.11.2b	TH.CN.11.3b	TH.CN.11.4b	TH.CN.11.5b	TH.CN.11.6b	TH.CN.11.7b	TH.CN.11.8b	TH.CN.11.HS1b	TH.CN.11.HS2b	TH.CN.11.HS3b
b	b. With prompting and support, tell a short story in dramatic in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Collaborate on the creation of a short scene based on a fictional literary source in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Collaborate on the creation of a short scene based on a non-fiction literary source in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Examine how artists have historically presented the same stories using different art forms, genres, or theatrical conventions.	b. Compare the theatrical conventions of a given time period with those of the present.	b. Identify historical sources that explain theatrical terminology and conventions.	b. Investigate the time period and place of a theatrical work to understand performance and design choices.	b. Examine artifacts from a time period and geographic location to better understand performance and design choices in a theatrical work.	b. Identify and use artifacts from a time period and place to develop performance and design choices in a theatrical work.	b. Use basic theatre research methods to better understand the social and cultural background of a theatrical work.	b. Explore and document how personal beliefs and biases can affect the interpretation of research data applied in theatrical work.	b. Document and present and support an opinion about the social, cultural, and historical understandings of a theatrical work, based on critical research.

2015 Arizona Academic Standards in the Arts
Theatre
Artistic Process - Responding

Anchor Standard #7 - Perceive and analyze artistic work

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
Code	TH.RE.7.Ka	TH.RE.7.1a	TH.RE.7.2a	TH.RE.7.3a	TH.RE.7.4a	TH.RE.7.5a	TH.RE.7.6a	TH.RE.7.7a	TH.RE.7.8a	TH.RE.7.HS1a	TH.RE.7.HS2a	TH.RE.7.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, express an emotional response to characters in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Recall choices made in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Identify when artistic choices are made in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Discuss why artistic choices are made in a theatrical work.	a. Identify artistic choices made in a theatrical work through participation and observation.	a. List ways to develop characters using physical characteristics and design choices that reflect cultural perspectives in theatrical work.	a. Describe and record personal reactions to artistic choices in a theatrical work.	a. Compare recorded personal and peer reactions to artistic choices in a theatrical work.	a. Apply criteria to the evaluation of artistic choices in a theatrical work.	a. Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a theatrical work to develop criteria for artistic choices.	a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a theatrical work.	a. Use historical and cultural context to structure and justify personal responses to a theatrical work.

Anchor Standard #8 - Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
Code	TH.RE.8.Ka	TH.RE.8.1a	TH.RE.8.2a	TH.RE.8.3a	TH.RE.8.4a	TH.RE.8.5a	TH.RE.8.6a	TH.RE.8.7a	TH.RE.8.8a	TH.RE.8.HS1a	TH.RE.8.HS2a	TH.RE.8.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, identify setting in dramatic play, a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Describe emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Demonstrate personal experiences in a theatrical work (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Describe personal reactions and emotions to events presented in a guided theatrical experience (e.g. process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Compare and contrast multiple personal experiences when participating in or observing a theatrical work.	a. Describe how to make choices based on personal experiences in a theatrical work.	a. Justify responses based on personal experiences when participating in or observing a theatrical work.	a. Discuss other artist's character choices based on personal experiences.	a. Apply character choices based on other artist's or personal experiences in a theatrical work.	a. Analyze and compare character choices developed in multiple theatrical works.	a. Defend character choices when participating in or observing a theatrical work.	a. Modify character choices using the work of others when participating in or observing a theatrical work.
Code	TH.RE.8.Kb	TH.RE.8.1b	TH.RE.8.2b	TH.RE.8.3b	TH.RE.8.4b	TH.RE.8.5b	TH.RE.8.6b	TH.RE.8.7b	TH.RE.8.8b	TH.RE.8.HS1b	TH.RE.8.HS2b	TH.RE.8.HS3b
b	b. With prompting and support, name and describe settings in dramatic a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. With prompting and support, name and describe details in settings in a dramatic play or a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, or creative drama).	b. With prompting and support, name and describe details in multiple settings in a dramatic play or a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, or creative drama.)	b. Express multiple ways to develop a character using props or costumes that reflect cultural perspectives in theatrical work.	b. Demonstrate the physical characteristics and environment of characters in a theatrical work.	b. Describe how cultural perspectives influence theatrical work.	b. Identify multiple cultural perspectives that influence a theatrical work.	b. Describe how specific cultural perspectives can influence theatrical work.	b. Analyze how cultural perspectives influence the evaluation of a theatrical work.	b. Identify and compare cultural perspectives and contexts that influence the evaluation of theatrical work.	b. Apply concepts from a theatrical work for personal realization about cultural perspectives and understanding.	b. Apply new understandings of cultures and contexts to theatrical work.
Code	TH.RE.8.Kc	TH.RE.8.1c	TH.RE.8.2c	TH.RE.8.3c	TH.RE.8.4c	TH.RE.8.5c	TH.RE.8.6c	TH.RE.8.7c	TH.RE.8.8c	TH.RE.8.HS1c	TH.RE.8.HS2c	TH.RE.8.HS3c
c	c. With prompting and support, name and describe characters in describe personal emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Use text and draw pictures to describe the personal emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Use text and draw pictures to describe others' emotions in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Describe connections made between personal emotions and a character's emotions in theatrical work.	c. Identify and discuss psychological changes connected to character's emotions in theatrical work.	c. Discuss and demonstrate the effects of emotions on posture, gesture, breathing, and vocal intonation in a theatrical work.	c. Identify and discuss personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in or observation of theatrical work.	c. Interpret and discuss how personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs are used in a theatrical work.	c. Apply personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs to evaluate a theatrical work.	c. Justify personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in and observation of a theatrical work.	c. Provide multiple aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in and observation of theatrical work.	c. Justify multiple aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs that informs artistic decisions in a theatrical work.

Anchor Standard #9 - Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

	Kindergarten	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	HS Proficient	HS Accomplished	HS Advanced
Code	TH.RE.9.Ka	TH.RE.9.1a	TH.RE.9.2a	TH.RE.9.3a	TH.RE.9.4a	TH.RE.9.5a	TH.RE.9.6a	TH.RE.9.7a	TH.RE.9.8a	TH.RE.9.HS1a	TH.RE.9.HS2a	TH.RE.9.HS3a
a	a. With prompting and support, actively engage with others in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Build on others' ideas in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Collaborate on a scene in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	a. Explain how to evaluate a theatrical work.	a. With specific criteria, evaluate character in a theatrical work.	a. With specific criteria, evaluate a theatrical work.	a. Use supporting evidence and criteria to evaluate a theatrical work.	a. Explain preferences, using supporting evidence and criteria to evaluate a theatrical work.	a. Respond to a theatrical work using supporting evidence, personal aesthetics, and artistic criteria.	a. Examine a theatrical work using supporting evidence and criteria, while considering art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines.	a. Analyze and assess a theatrical work by connecting it to art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines using supporting evidence and criteria.	a. Research and synthesize cultural and historical information related to a theatrical work to support or evaluate artistic choices.
Code	TH.RE.9.Kb	TH.RE.9.1b	TH.RE.9.2b	TH.RE.9.3b	TH.RE.9.4b	TH.RE.9.5b	TH.RE.9.6b	TH.RE.9.7b	TH.RE.9.8b	TH.RE.9.HS1b	TH.RE.9.HS2b	TH.RE.9.HS3b
b	b. Use imagination to transform objects	b. Identify props and costumes that might be used in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	b. Use a prop or costume in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama) to describe characters, settings, or events.	b. Use props and costumes to enhance a theatrical work.	b. Explain how technical elements may support a theme or idea in a theatrical work.	b. Assess how technical elements represent the theme of a theatrical work.	b. Use one or more production elements in a theatrical work to assess aesthetic choices.	b. Use one or more production elements in a theatrical work to assess aesthetic choices.	b. Evaluate the production elements used in a theatrical work to assess aesthetic choices.	b. Apply the aesthetics of the production elements in a theatrical work.	b. Construct meaning in a theatrical work, taking into consideration, personal aesthetics and knowledge of production elements while respecting others' interpretations.	b. Analyze and evaluate varied aesthetic interpretations of production elements for a theatrical work.
Code	TH.RE.9.Kc	TH.RE.9.1c	TH.RE.9.2c	TH.RE.9.3c	TH.RE.9.4c	TH.RE.9.5c	TH.RE.9.6c	TH.RE.9.7c	TH.RE.9.8c	TH.RE.9.HS1c	TH.RE.9.HS2c	TH.RE.9.HS3c
c	c. Name and describe experiences and feelings of characters in a guided theatrical experience	c. Compare and contrast the experiences of characters in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Describe how characters respond to challenges in a guided theatrical experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).	c. Identify a specific audience or purpose in a theatrical work.	c. Explain how a character's choices impact an audience member's perspective in a theatrical work.	c. Recognize how a character's circumstances impact an audience member's perspective in a theatrical work.	c. Evaluate and analyze issues and situations in a theatrical work from an audience member's perspective.	c. Identify how the intended purpose of a theatrical work appeals to a specific audience.	c. Assess the impact of a theatrical work on a specific audience.	c. Describe the playwright's purpose for an intended audience in a theatrical work.	c. Justify how a theatrical work communicates a specific purpose for an audience.	c. Compare and debate the connection between a theatrical work and contemporary issues that may impact an audience.

APPENDIX B

THE ACTOR'S CHECKLIST

I.   Who am I? (physically, emotionally, spiritually, culturally, intellectually)

II.   Where am I? (describe the immediate physical environment of the scene)

III.   Where have I come from? (immediate physical past, right before the scene begins) What event(s) propel you into the scene?

IV.   Where am I going? (immediate physical future) Where do you, as the character, think you are going at the end of the scene?

V.   How do I feel about my environment?

VI.   What do I want, or need, to do? (active objective and motivation) Your objective usually has something to do with the other character(s) in the scene.

VII.   What stands in my way of achieving my objective? (conflicts in the scene)

VIII.   What do I do to overcome the conflicts and try to achieve my objective? (The clue to answering this is to look at what you actually say and do in the scene.)

IX.   What is my relationship to the other character(s) in the scene? (How do you FEEL about the other characters actively involved in your scene?)

Details not presented clearly by the playwright, you as the actor get to make them up!

APPENDIX C

THEATRICAL ROLE-PLAY PERFORMANCE RUBRIC

Group Scene Project

Students will perform a group scene from *Frankenstein*. They will be graded on the following:

Blocking Choices are Motivated and Make Sense   P   A   G   E

Characterization (convincing character represented)   P   A   G   E

Audience Etiquette   P   A   G   E

Best Effort Displayed   P   A   G   E

Overall Effectiveness of Telling the Story   P   A   G   E

Total: ___/40

APPENDIX D

THEATRICAL ROLE-PLAY REHEARSAL RUBRIC

Rehearsal for Group Scene Project

Students will perform a group scene from *Frankenstein*.
They will use class time effectively to rehearse the scene in
preparation for performance.

Running through Blocking/Movement   P   A   G   E

Running through Character choices (i.e., using *The Actor's Checklist* and what Mr.
McCandless gave as direction)
                                                P   A   G   E

On Task (followed directions for rehearsal expectations)   P   A   G   E

Total: _____/88 points   Performances begin Thursday, 2/10/23

APPENDIX E

PRE-TEST THEATRICAL ROLE-PLAY SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to examine self-reported perceptions of how high school students perceive specific academic and social skills. The specific academic skills to be measured include text analysis. The specific social skills to be measured include empathy, and confidence in public speaking. Understanding these results will help inform the research to assess if theatrical role-play affects these specific academic and social skills.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief survey. It should take approximately ten minutes to complete and is due by the end of this class. You may choose to discontinue completing the survey at any time. Your honest and candid answers are appreciated.

Academic Skills

Please select your answers below by circling the word that best describes your reaction to the prompt.

1. I am confident in my ability to analyze text in literature such that I understand the story.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

2. I am confident in my ability to analyze text in literature such that I understand the characters in the story, such as their personalities, objectives, and relationship to other characters.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

Social Skills

1. I am comfortable in my ability to empathize with other to understand their current feelings.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

2. I am confident in my ability to give a speech in front of an audience of people I know.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

3. I am confident in my ability to give a speech in front of an audience of people I do not know.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

Theatre Experience

1. Do you have past experience in acting (please circle either "yes" or "no")? Past experience in acting includes acting in plays and/or musicals on a theater stage. This could have been completed in a school setting or local/community theatre. Yes/No.   If "yes", please proceed to question #2. If "no", please proceed to question #3.

2. Please list previous characters/roles you have played in theatrical plays and/or musicals.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Short Answer

3. What does *theatrical role-play* mean to you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
___

Demographic Information

1. Please indicate the grade level in which you are enrolled.
A. 9th Grade
B. 10th Grade
C. 11th Grade
D. 12th Grade

2. Please indicate your gender identification.
A. Female
B. Male
C. Non-binary
D. Other
E. Prefer not to answer

3. Please indicate your race/ethnicity.
A. American Indian/Alaska Native
B. Asian
C. Black or African American
D. Hispanic or Latinx

E. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
F. White/Caucasian
G. Other
H. Prefer not to answer

Thank you for your time in completing this survey.

APPENDIX F

POST-TEST THEATRICAL ROLE-PLAY SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to examine self-reported perceptions of how high school students perceive specific academic and social skills. The specific academic skills to be measured include text analysis. The specific social skills to be measured include empathy, and confidence in public speaking. Understanding these results will help inform the research to assess if theatrical role-play affects these specific academic and social skills.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief survey. It should take approximately ten minutes to complete and is due by the end of this class. You may choose to discontinue completing the survey at any time. Your honest and candid answers are appreciated.

Academic Skills

Please select your answers below by circling the word that best describes your reaction to the prompt.

1. I am confident in my ability to analyze text in literature such that I understand the story.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

2. I am confident in my ability to analyze text in literature such that I understand the characters in the story, such as their personalities, objectives, and relationship to other characters.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

Social Skills

1. I am comfortable in my ability to empathize with other to understand their current feelings.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

2. I am confident in my ability to give a speech in front of an audience of people I know.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

3. I am confident in my ability to give a speech in front of an audience of people I do not know.

Strongly Disagree   Slightly Disagree   Unsure   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

Short Answer

1. What does *theatrical role-play* mean to you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What did you enjoy the most, if anything, about the theatrical role-play process? What did you enjoy the least, if anything, about the theatrical role-play process?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Have you changed during this process? If so, in what ways?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Have you learned any new skills? If so, what are those new skills?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Do you have any suggestions for how this process can be approved for future students? If so, please describe those suggestions.

APPENDIX G

STUDENT PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewer: thank you for being willing to take the time to participate in this interview during class. The purpose of the interview is to learn about your experience with the theatrical role-play activity that was completed over the past two weeks in class. The interview will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. Your involvement with this interview will have no bearing on your academic standing should you decide you no longer want to participate. With your permission, I would like to audio record this interview so that I can reflect on your answers later as I write up my report findings. The audio recording will be deleted once the report is complete. Do I have your permission to record this interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1.   Did you know anything about acting before this activity? If so, what did you know?

2.   Tell me about your experience with the warmup exercises that we did in class. What did you think of them overall?

3.   How did you feel about the group activity of the class reading the scenes aloud together? What were you feeling during that activity?

4.   Did you ever feel like you were a part of a team with your peers? If so, when in the process did you feel this way?

5.   What was it like acting with your fellow classmates?

6.   Did *The Actors' Checklist* help you in your character development? If so, in what way(s) did it help? If not, why do you think that is the case?

7.   Was there a time during the activity when you felt like you connected with the character you portrayed? If so, when was that and in what way(s) did you connect with the character? If not, why do you think that is the case?

8.   Do you think you understood the story after performing the scene as a character?

9.   Tell me about your experience performing and speaking in front of your classmates. What were you feeling as you were acting out the scene?

10. What was most rewarding about the theatrical role-play activity?

11. What was most challenging about the theatrical role-play activity?

12. What did you think about theatrical role-play overall?

13. Do you have any suggestions for the activity if it is conducted in the future? If so, please explain.

14. What are your thoughts about acting in the future? Are you interested? Why or why not?

15. What are your thoughts about public speaking in front of people in the future? Is this something you would be willing to do? Why or why not?

16. Are there any life skills, academic and/or social, that you feel were improved as a result of this activity? If so, which ones and why?

17. Is there anything else you would like to share about the experience?

Thank you for your answers to my questions and for taking time to speak with me today.

APPENDIX H

TEACHER PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewer: thank you for being willing to take the time to participate in this interview. The purpose of the interview is to learn about your experience with the theatrical role-play activity that was completed over the past two weeks in class. With your permission, I would like to audio record this interview so that I can reflect on your answers later as I write up my report findings. The audio recording will be deleted once the report is complete. Do I have your permission to record this interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1.   Did you know anything about acting before this activity? If so, what did you know?

2.   Tell me about your observations of the warmup exercises that we did in class. What did you think of them overall?

3.   How do you feel about the group activity of the whole class reading the scenes aloud together? What did you observe in how the students interacted with it?

4.   Did you observe any sense of teamwork in the students during the activity? If so, when and in what way(s)?

5.   During the rehearsal and performance process, was there a time when you believed the characters that the students were portraying? In other words, did you believe that they were convincing as that character in how they spoke and general demeanor? If so, what are some examples? If you did not believe this was the case, what did you observe that led you to this conclusion?

6.   Do you think the students understood the story after performing the scene in class? If so, what are some examples?

7.   What observations do you have about how the students conducted themselves in front of an audience of their peers?

8.   What do you believe was most rewarding about the theatrical role-play method?

9.   What do you believe was most challenging about the theatrical role-play method?

10.   What did you think about theatrical role-play overall?

11.   Is this method one in which you would consider using in future lesson plans? Why or why not?

12. Do you have any suggestions for the activity if it is conducted in the future? If so, please explain.

13. Based on your observations of the students, do you believe any of them became more confident speaking in front of people during this process?

14. Are there any life skills, academic and/or social, that you observed were enhanced in students from this activity? If so, which ones and why?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share about the experience?

Thank you for your answers to my questions and for taking time to speak with me today.

APPENDIX I

FRANKENSTEIN CHARACTER PREFERENCE FORM

Frankenstein Characters

Please write the number (1, 2, or 3) of your first, second, and third choice next to the characters below. If you have no preference, circle that option at the bottom.

Dr. Victor Frankenstein _____

The Creature _____

Elizabeth Lavanza_____

Henry Clerval _____

William Frankenstein _____

Justine Morris _____

Alphonse Frankenstein _____

Herr Mueller _____

Frau Mueller _____

Metz _____

Schmidt _____

DeLacey _____

No Preference

APPENDIX J

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Danah Henriksen, PhD, in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to determine how performing arts, specifically theatre, affect academic and social skills of high school students. Arts programs are often cut from education curricula due to budget constraints. The purpose of this study is to better understand the how these skills are learned within a drama curriculum to highlight the importance of performing arts in all secondary education curricula.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve participation in an in-class theatrical role-play project designed to assist with both academic and social skills. The academic skill is text analysis, and social skills include confidence in public speaking and empathy. The project consists of 12 school days, during which time students in the English IV class would experience drama exercises and informal rehearsals that lead up to an in-class performance of a scene from literature. Lines of dialogue would not have to be memorized as the purpose of the study is to comprehend the literature through acting. You do not need any previous acting experience. The researcher, me, will direct you and a group of students in the scenes to prepare for the performance. You will be asked to complete two surveys designed to measure self-reported confidence levels in text analysis, public speaking, and empathy with characters in literature. These surveys will be completed in class; one on the first day and one on the last day of the study. Each survey will take between 5-7 minutes. You will also be asked to complete a document entitled *The Actors' Checklist*, which will ask questions according to the character you are portraying in the literature scene. This document will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, which they will be asked to fill out at home and bring back to school. Other than this, participation will not occur outside of class time. Lastly, some students (4 total) will be asked to participate in an interview at the end of the study. Those particular students will be determined during the course of this study, however no student is required to complete this activity. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the research study at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever. As my research topic aligns with the learning objectives of the *Frankenstein* unit, the English teacher has approved this project to be conducted in her class. All students will engage with the activity as a class requirement to meet those learning objectives, however data collected for this project will only be from students with signed permission slips. Your consent is required for them to participate. The school district Cabinet, along with Arizona State University, has authorized this research to be conducted at the high school.

The benefits of this study include the enhancement of both academic and social skills for high school students. By providing an experiential learning process, students are more likely to be fully engaged in the course content. This could assist them with academic skills to be applied in an interdisciplinary manner, as well as social skills to be applied both within and beyond the formal high school setting. The only foreseeable risk for students is that they may feel uncomfortable taking the academic risk of acting out a scene from literature amongst their peers. However, studies have shown that the benefits of taking this type of academic risk far

outweigh the risks as students learn to overcome challenges as this is a crucial part of the learning process.

Confidentiality of participation will include the assignment of pseudonyms of participants. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but only pseudonyms will be used.

I would like to audio record the interview for the select number of students. You do NOT have to be interviewed. If you do, the interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts. Please just let me know.
If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Dr. danah.henriksen@asu.edu (Dr. Danah Henriksen) or Mr. Tim McCandless at tmmccand@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.
Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study, and if you approve. Thank you for your consideration.
By signing below, you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name:

Signature: Date:

APPENDIX K

ADULT CONSENT FORM

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Danah Henriksen, PhD, in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to determine how performing arts, specifically theatre, affect academic and social skills of high school students. Arts programs are often cut from education curricula due to budget constraints. The purpose of this study is to better understand the how these skills are learned within a drama curriculum to highlight the importance of performing arts in all secondary education curricula.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve participation in an in-class theatrical role-play project designed to assist with both academic and social skills. The academic skill is text analysis, and social skills include confidence in public speaking and empathy. The project consists of 12 school days, during which time students in the English IV class would experience drama exercises and informal rehearsals that lead up to an in-class performance of a scene from literature. Lines of dialogue would not have to be memorized as the purpose of the study is to comprehend the literature through acting. You do not need any previous acting experience. The researcher, me, will direct you and a group of students in the scenes to prepare for the performance. You will be asked to complete two surveys designed to measure self-reported confidence levels in text analysis, public speaking, and empathy with characters in literature. These surveys will be completed in class; one on the first day and one on the last day of the study. Each survey will take between 5-7 minutes. You will also be asked to complete a document entitled *The Actors' Checklist*, which will ask questions according to the character you are portraying in the literature scene. This document will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, which they will be asked to fill out at home and bring back to school. Other than this, participation will not occur outside of class time. Lastly, some students (4 total) will be asked to participate in an interview at the end of the study. Those particular students will be determined during the course of this study, however no student is required to complete this activity. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.
The benefits of this study include the enhancement of both academic and social skills for high school students. By providing an experiential learning process, students are more likely to be fully engaged in the course content. This could assist them with academic skills to be applied in an interdisciplinary manner, as well as social skills to be applied both within and beyond the formal high school setting. The only foreseeable risk for students is that they may feel uncomfortable taking the academic risk of acting out a scene from literature amongst their peers. However, studies have shown that the benefits of taking this type of academic risk far outweigh the risks as students learn to overcome challenges as this is a crucial part of the learning process.

Confidentiality of participation will include the assignment of pseudonyms of participants. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but only pseudonyms will be used.

I would like to audio record the interview for the select number of students. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do <u>not</u> want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts. Please just let me know.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Dr. danah.henriksen@asu.edu (Dr. Danah Henriksen) or Mr. Tim McCandless at tmmccand@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study, and if you approve. Thank you for your consideration.

By signing below, you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name:

Signature: Date:

APPENDIX L

ASU IRB APPROVAL

APPROVAL:
MODIFICATION

Danah Henriksen
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - West Campus
-
Danah.Henriksen@asu.edu

Dear Danah Henriksen:

On 3/10/2023 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Modification / Update
Title:	Life Skills Enhanced by High School Theatre: How Theatrical Role-Play Affects Academic and Social Skills
Investigator:	Danah Henriksen
IRB ID:	STUDY00016998
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• ADDENDUM.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Revised: 3/9/23, Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB approved the modification.

When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the "Documents" tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Timothy McCandless