Activating Student Engagement Through Drama-Based Instruction

The *Drama for Schools* (*DFS*) professional development program is an arts integration approach developed by the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas at Austin (Dawson, 2006). The goal of the DFS program is to support arts integration for non-arts teachers who wish to bring drama-based instruction into their classrooms. *Drama for Schools* trains K-12 teachers to use drama-based instruction techniques including interactive games, improvisation, and role-playing. In 2007, *DFS* began to evaluate the efficacy of the program along key program objectives. The purpose of this article is to report data on the effects of *DFS* on authentic instruction and student engagement. In contrast with the extant literature base of drama-based instruction with elementary grade teachers, this study focuses on middle school teachers and their students.

The study framework is represented in Figure 1. The starting point on the left side is the *Drama for Schools* professional development program. *DFS* is an intensive, job-embedded program that provides teachers with drama-based instructional strategies in a context that honors each teacher's individual needs and goals. This study investigates the extent to which participation in *Drama for Schools* led to two outcomes: changes in *student engagement* and *authentic instruction*. *Student engagement* is defined in this study as active participation in classroom activities as indicated by levels of on-task behavior. *Authentic instruction* is conceptualized as classroom activities that encourage students to draw on their previous knowledge and experiences, engage in critical thinking, and apply what they learn to their own lives. Student engagement and authentic instruction are represented as concurrent activities here in this figure due to the symbiotic nature of instruction and student participation. This study examines changes to the classroom process within the immediate context of teacher implementation of lesson plans developed as part of the *DFS* program participation.

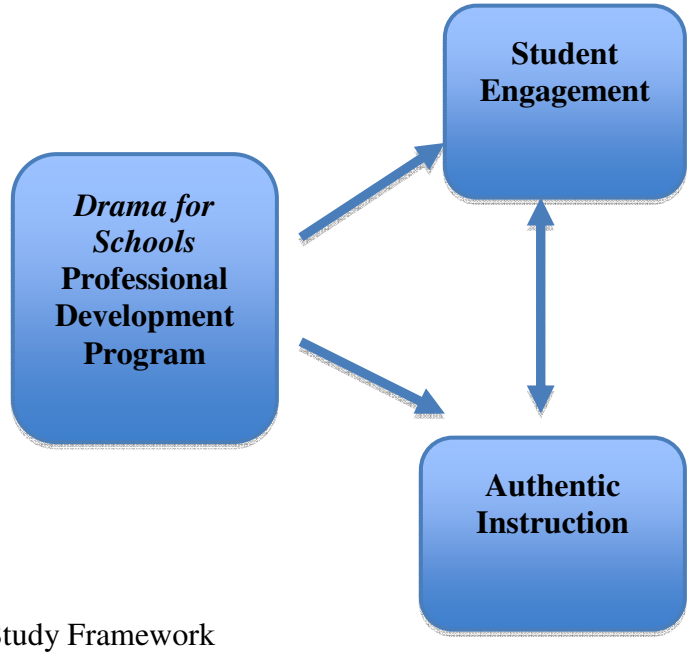

Figure 1. Study Framework

Drama for Schools

Drama for Schools aims to help teachers provide an authentic, active learning experience for their students by introducing teachers to drama-based instructional strategies and helping them to apply these concepts to their lessons (Cawthon & Dawson, 2009). The techniques taught by *Drama for Schools* come from a long history of educational drama and libratory approaches to education (e.g. Boal, 2002; Freire, 1970; Heathcoate, 1984; O'Neil, 1995). These strategies support a variety of learning styles that keep students actively engaged in the learning process, while also allowing for differentiated instruction for diverse learners, such as those who are English Language Learners or who have disabilities.

Critical pedagogical framework. *Drama for Schools* is rooted in a critical pedagogical approach to education. The pedagogical underpinnings of drama-based instruction come primarily from the revolutionary work of Dorothy Heathcoate (1984) and her contemporaries (e.g. Grady, 2000; Miller & Saxton, 2004; O'Neil, 1995; Wilhelm & Edminston, 1998). In his seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire outlines a radical adjustment in the relationship of power and knowledge between teacher and student in the classroom (1970). He describes the traditional educational model practiced in schools as a "banking" concept of education where "the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 72). Freire suggests that education should be a free exchange of ideas where the role of teacher and student are interchangeable. In this style of education, the traditional delineation of teacher and learner is disrupted so teachers and students "become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (p. 80).

This *DFS* approach to classroom instruction insists that students actively co-construct their learning process. They take on the "mantle of the expert" through the scaffolded safety of drama-based activities, trying on new language (first modelled by the instructor) both in verbal and written form (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). This dynamic process demands higher-order thinking skills and increases emotional intelligence. In some cases, this shift in roles and knowledge-making can mark students; drama-based work can illuminate where socially constructed markings exist and create space for new marks of self-efficacy to emerge (Thompson, 2003). These marks have the potential to carry outside the life of the classroom and into a community event or other meaningful venue for the students. It is powerful to consider, then, how the opportunity for students to become the co-creator of information, even if not on always equal standing, has the potential to shift the learning culture of a classroom. Through role making and role taking, teachers and students begin to understand the power and responsibility of teaching and learning. They create a space for mutual understanding and growth by speaking and listening to others.

Drama-Based Instructional Strategies. The purpose of *Drama for Schools* is to train and support teachers in their efforts to embed drama-based techniques into K-12 subject areas. In contrast with an arts education approach, *arts integration* does not stand alone as its own curriculum, but becomes a part of how teachers engage students in core curricular content. For example, kinesthetic image work may be used to help students learn vocabulary terms in their language classes, or teachers may use role-play during class discussions in social studies or science courses to engage students in a class debate on an important topic. Teachers select the

standards-based curricular items they wish to address and work with teaching artists from the *DFS* program to create a lesson that uses drama-based instruction to introduce a topic or make connections for their students.

The following example illustrates the contrast between traditional didactic models of instruction and a *DFS* approach. Identifying and defining vocabulary words is an essential skill common in all levels of K-12 language arts curricula. In direct instruction, students are often asked to define and memorize definitions of new vocabulary and share their information during written assessments. Conversely, the *DFS* program model engages students in a collaborative process using kinesthetic, non-linguistic representations to explore and retain new vocabulary knowledge. For example, a *DFS* teacher might assign small groups of students a new vocabulary term. Collectively, the students must accurately define the word and then use their bodies to create a physical representation of its meaning. Each group shares its image while the *DFS* teacher facilitates a discussion with the class about the image being represented. Through this process, each group of students steps into the role of "vocabulary expert" with their peers and teacher. To conclude, a *DFS* teacher might review the new vocabulary by asking students to quickly recreate other groups' images from memory. These activities draw on student experiences, teamwork, and shared knowledge in an active, scaffolded manner not available in independent memorization of definitions or concepts. Two examples of full lesson plans using *Drama for Schools* strategies are provided as Appendices A and B.

Professional Development Model. *Drama for Schools* goes beyond a set of strategies or approaches to lesson planning. As a professional development program, it provides a comprehensive, job-embedded experience for teachers and districts. Professional development is one of the most significant expenditures under recent school reform efforts (Plecki & Castaneda, 2009). It is therefore important that professional development be of the highest quality possible, so that it will achieve its goal of teacher change and improved student learning (knowledge, skill, and practice). That said, professional development has not had a strong history of effectiveness (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1996; Guskey, 2000). Part of this ineffectiveness is due to the structure of professional development programs as a time-based requirement for teachers and their continuing education. Under this format, teachers are required to participate in a certain number of hours of professional development each year. Meeting this criterion thus becomes more about “time spent” than “strategies learned” or “practice changed”.

Standard professional development programs are also typically constrained to single day seminars or after school workshops that are largely removed from the context of teacher practice. It is very difficult to apply new knowledge from these programs unless it is a) ongoing and b) job-embedded (Sparks, 1994). Finally, standard models of professional development follow a “dispensing” model of knowledge formation. In this view, a content expert or program director brings information that the teachers are meant to acquire. The teachers themselves contribute very little to the development of knowledge within the professional development program. This passive role in the workshops or seminars reinforces the difficulty in applying the new information into current teaching practice. Without explicit, individualized ties to what teachers do in the classroom each day, it is challenging to integrate new information presented in professional development.

Guskey describes quality professional development as "a process that is (a) intentional, (b) ongoing, and (c) systemic" (2000, p.16). Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon (2001) conducted a systematic analysis of professional development characteristics and their effect on teacher knowledge and practice. Results emphasized the importance of key variables such as the form of the professional development (workshop or alternate format), the duration, content, active learning activities, relationship to teaching context such as state standards, and continued communication with colleagues. *Drama for Schools* works to embrace these principles in its partnerships with districts. The *DFS* professional development program is not a one-off or a single visit to a school or district. Instead, the district enters into an extended partnership with *DFS* lasting at least one year. In most cases, the contracts are written so that subsequent year activities can build off of the program implementation in the previous year. The format of professional development is flexible enough to fit the needs of the individual districts. For example, in districts that want to provide an introduction to the strategies to a large number of interested teachers, the program will include two full-residency days, one at the start of each semester, followed by monthly site visits with after school training and practice of new strategies with students the next day. This structure allows teachers to have the time to learn new strategies, connect them to their unit or lesson, and practice them with *DFS* specialists in a supportive, feedback-enriched environment.

Authentic Instruction

Arts-based instructional strategies give teachers a broad range of strategies with which to engage their students (Rooney, 2004). These strategies enhance student learning through increased content knowledge and increased engagement in class activities. These are components of *authentic intellectual work* theory developed by Newmann and Whelage (1993). This research started at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has continued in a comprehensive study of authentic instruction and classroom activities in the Chicago Public Schools (Newmann, Byrk, & Nagaoka, 2001). Three pillars of this approach include:

1) *Construction of Knowledge:* Students organize, interpret, evaluate or synthesize prior knowledge to solve new problems.
2) *Disciplined Inquiry:* Using this new knowledge, students deepen their understanding of the problem and communicate their own critical analysis.
3) *Value Beyond School:* Instruction includes school activities that can communicate new findings to the outside world.

Authentic instruction has been implemented and evaluated in a number of contexts. There is typically an emphasis on providing quality education for students in high poverty settings, settings where reduced resources has often led to teaching practices that focus on rote learning instead of higher order thinking (Resnick, 1987). For example, the founders of this framework looked at authentic assessment as an alternative to standardized assessment approaches to measuring student knowledge (Archbald & Newman, 1988). The goal is to see students "engaging their minds well" and applying themselves in meaningful educational experiences (Newmann & Whelage, 1993, p 1).

Arts-based instruction has been shown to increase student interest and motivation in learning, in part by drawing on these three principles. Students using the arts have been shown to develop better communication skills, allowing for more confident portrayal of the artistic process to the student's family and community (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999). They are more willing to take risks and learn new strategies than in traditional settings. For example, a student who is exploring the idea of a narrative, or building a story, can take on the role of a person in his or her own life. Through careful research and inquiry, the student can build a theatrical component to illustrate and express more nuanced meaning than might be available in only a written report of the effects of a current event. In some cases, this role taking can carry outside the life of the classroom and into a community event or other meaningful venue for the student(s).

Student Engagement

Preliminary studies of the effects of arts integration into content-area curricula have shown positive effects on student achievement (Darby & Catterall, 1994; Ingram, 2003) and have demonstrated the feasibility of infusing arts-based strategies into classroom instruction (Stronge, 2002). In general, arts-based instructional strategies give teachers a broad range of strategies with which to engage their students (Rooney, 2004). These strategies enhance student learning through increased content knowledge and increased engagement in class activities.

The positive effects of increased student engagement have been well documented. Student engagement is tied to improvements in student behavior (including both an increase in prosocial behavior and a decrease in antisocial behaviors), improved learning outcomes, and greater respect for the rights of others (Covell & Howe, 2001; Decoene & De Cock, 1996; Howe & Covell, 2007). High levels of student engagement can also reliably predict lower high school drop out rates (Archambault, Janosza, Fallu, & Pagania, 2008). Student engagement has positive effects for teachers, as well; Covell, et al. (2009) found that low engagement is a contributing factor in teacher burnout, and that increasing engagement can both reduce teacher burnout and improve teacher self-efficacy.

In this study we were interested in capturing two perspectives on student engagement. The first focused on breadth, or the proportion of a teacher's class that participated or was actively a part of the lesson. In a classroom setting, there are often students who regularly participate and those who tend to opt out of the discussion or class activity. Those students who are disengaged from the classroom activities may not experience the depth of learning or connection to material that the teacher is working to provide. Here is an example of how *DFS* might engage students who otherwise remain removed from the learning process:

> The fifteen tenth graders walked into the classroom with their heads down; they sat slumped in their seats. Some put their heads on their desks, others stared at the floor. Outside, the Alaskan sky remained dark. It was a month shy of winter solstice and the sun still had a full hour before its 10:30 am debut. I stepped into role as a Dutch woman who had invited a group of non-Jewish Dutch community members to a secret meeting. *I'm so glad you made it here so quickly.* I told them in hushed, urgent tones. *You all slipped in so quietly, just like I asked. Thank you. The German Nazi soldiers have been patrolling*

the streets since early this morning. I'm so sorry we have to meet in the cellar but it was the only place I thought it was safe. Thank you for choosing to be here. You are putting yourself in great risk but you are kind, generous people, and I knew you would come. Slowly the students' eyes began to rise, small smiles began to appear on a few faces—they were hooked.

Why did these teenagers enter the room distant and disengaged? What made them decide to make a different choice? How can a non-drama teacher move beyond a traditional lecture instructional style—employing moments of imagination, inquiry, and role play? *DFS* explores how best to train and support teachers interested in using drama in their curriculum.

Teachers' perspectives on the type or nature of student engagement comprised the second aspect explored in this study. In contrast with a quantitative approach to student engagement, this approach emphasizes how we might gauge participation. Student behavior is typically explored through the lens of an outside viewer, for example, a researcher who may observe classroom activities and rate students' levels of activity. What a teacher sees or notes as important may follow a different lens, one that is rooted in her previous experiences with one particular group of students. The area of interest here is what teachers use as their evidence, or their epistemology, of what is important about their students' classroom behavior. For example, one teacher may think that staying on task is the most important evidence of student engagement, and that a successful lesson is one that reduces off-task behaviors, such as talking out of turn. This taps into a "classroom management" model of effective teaching and learning. On the other hand, another teacher may look for physical cues such as body language to evaluate the nature of her students' engagement in the lesson. Another teacher may value dialog among her students, an extension of verbal interactions, which she initiates with students, into a class-wide discussion. Each of these examples represents a possible set of values a teacher has about what makes for an "engaged" classroom environment.

The *Drama for Schools* professional development model seeks to provide teachers with instructional strategies that raise student engagement. *DFS* teaches these strategies using a professional development model based on the same critical pedagogical principles that shape the strategies themselves. How might *DFS* professional development shape not only what teachers do in the classroom, but also how they think about and articulate their students' behavior? Does the experience of working in a critical pedagogical framework shift teacher perspectives to one that emphasizes student dialog, process, and connection to classroom material?

Study Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of *DFS* strategies on the level of student engagement, teacher ratings of lesson plans, and how teachers perceive the participation of their students. Four research questions guided this study:

1) Did teacher implementation of *DFS* strategies in lesson plans result in a change in the level of student engagement?
2) Did teacher implementation of *DFS* strategies in lesson plans result in high ratings of authentic instruction?

3) Was there a relationship between the level of student engagement and teacher ratings of authentic instruction in lesson plans that utilize *DFS* strategies?
4) Was there a change in how teachers describe the nature of student participation in class activities before and after implementation of *DFS* strategies?

Methods

This study was a mixed methods investigation of changes in classroom instruction and in teachers' perceptions of student engagement. A description of the district context, the study sample, methods, and analyses is provided below.

District Context

This study was conducted as part of a *Drama for Schools* program in the Victoria Independent School District (VISD). Victoria is located in southeast Texas, approximately 125 miles south of Austin. VISD currently has a total enrollment of just over 12,500 students. At the time of this study, VISD had participated in *DFS* for three years. VISD is experiencing a period of growth; by 2010, the district will bring on board one new middle school as well as a new high school campus. VISD is also in the planning stages for construction of a Fine Arts facility to be completed by 2010. District demographics are shown in Table 3 below. Half of the students are eligible for Title 1, Part A funding, nearly a third are considered "at-risk," and two-thirds are from ethnic minority groups.

	Demographic Category	*Percent of Group*
Students	Title 1, Part A	50%
	African American	9%
	Hispanic	58%
	Caucasian	32%
	"At-Risk"*	32%
	Special Education	11%
Teachers	Non-Caucasian	25%
	With Master's Degree	17%
Staff	Non-Caucasian	42%

* "At-risk" category is defined by the Texas Education Code (§TEC 29.081.) This category describes students who may be at risk for poor academic performance due to a number of indicators such as a students' retention history, poor academic performance, history of placement in alternative education or in a detention facility, Limited English Proficiency, and truancy.

Table 1. *VISD Demographics*

Sample

A group of 19 secondary teachers participated in the present study. These teachers taught in all of the content areas (social studies, English, mathematics, science, foreign language, arts),

with no single subject area in the majority. This data set includes lesson plan analyses for eight sessions: four in the fall and four in the spring of 2008-09. Not all teachers participated in all sessions, yet these absences were not due to program attrition, per se. Teachers were periodically absent for sessions due to illness, pressure from state testing requirements, and other work obligations. The number of teachers providing information about the *DFS* strategies ranged from a low of three teachers (the last spring session) to a high of 15 teachers (third fall session). Sample sizes for each analysis are noted below.

Measures

As part of monthly *Drama for Schools* professional development meetings, teachers brought with them their next day's lessons to modify by using *DFS* strategies. During the professional development session, teachers actively participated in demonstrations of *Drama for Schools* techniques, discussed the use of these methods, and worked one-on-one with *DFS* teaching artists to revise their lessons (pre-lesson plan ratings). After teaching the *DFS* revised lesson, teachers filled out a similar rating of the lesson as taught using *Drama for Schools* strategies (post-lesson plan ratings). This pre-post method helped to control for teacher and content variation across the sample. Teachers rated their lessons on three aspects of the teaching and learning process: Student Engagement (quantitative), Authentic Instruction, and Teacher Perspective (qualitative). The three measures are provided below:

Student engagement (quantitative). Our measure of student engagement focused on the proportion of students teachers felt were actively participating in the class activity. Some teachers brought a new lesson to the *DFS* sessions and did not have a reference point; they indicated this with *New Lesson*. A total of 28 lessons were rated as *New Lessons* of the course of the year, with a greater proportion in the early part of the year than in the spring term.

> *When you have previously taught this lesson (i.e. without DFS strategies), what percentage of your class actively participated? Please circle one of the options below. Active participation includes contributing in a written, verbal, or physical way, either individually or part of a group.*
>
> Less than 20% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100% New lesson

Authentic instruction. The Authentic Instruction rating was a Likert Scale that included seven items. An original Authentic Instruction scale was piloted during the Fall, 2007 semester. This initial scale included 10 items that corresponded with the principles behind authentic instruction and the desired outcomes. Using data from the pilot group. we conducted a measure of consistency across the items. We found that three of the original items did not meet our criteria. The resulting measure with the remaining seven criteria was used in the data collection for this study (Figure 2).

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by ***circling*** any one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) "None at all" to (9) "A Great Deal" as each represents a degree on the continuum.

With *DFS* strategies, this lesson, topic, or unit …	**None at all**		**Very Little**		**Some Degree**		**Quite a Bit**		**A Great Deal**
1. Is something I enjoy doing with the class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. Keeps students' attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. Reaches students with a range of abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. Showcases my strengths as a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. Leads to a variety of assessment strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. Is one I would recommend to a colleague.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. Appears to be effective in helping students learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Figure 2. *Authentic Instruction Rating Scale*

Teacher perspectives (qualitative). The last measure on the lesson plant rating form was an open-ended question about what teachers used as evidence of student participation. The same question was asked on both the pre- and post- rating forms. On the pre-form, teachers responded by reflecting back on their previous lessons (or for New Lessons, ones that were similar to the proposed lesson). On the post-form, teachers noted what evidence they used to know how students were participating on the *DFS* lesson:

> *If you have taught this lesson before, give examples of how students were engaged in this lesson. In other words, how did you know if students were participating?* (open-ended response)

Analysis and Results

Student Engagement (quantitative)

On average, teachers reported that 61% of their students were engaged during their lesson when they'd taught the material in the past ($n = 49$). In contrast, teachers reported an average student engagement of 91% for lessons that had been modified using *DFS* techniques ($n = 68$). The main reason that the number of lesson plan pre-test scores is lower than the post-test scores is that we did not include the pre-test scores for teachers who indicated they were using a New Lesson. The teachers' responses to this item were analyzed quantitatively using a pre-post t-test. The difference in these reported rates (61% vs. 91%) is statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$).

Teachers report significantly higher student engagement for lessons that employ *DFS* techniques when compared with their "practice as usual" lesson plans.

In a further analysis, we looked at the relationship between Authentic Instruction and Student Engagement variables. In a regression of authentic instruction on student engagement ratings, R = .384, which means that 14.8% of the variance in the student engagement scores can be accounted for by post-measures. The direction of this relationship is unclear. It is plausible that the relationship is in the opposite direction, with student engagement feeding into a teacher's rating of the lesson plan. Or, furthermore, that it is co-occurring, and that the regression model captures a correlation without a clear directional hypothesis.

Teacher Perspectives (qualitative)

The total data set of responses consisted of 130 statements by teachers, 62 for lesson plans before the DFS strategy, and 68 after the DFS strategy. Two researchers coded the data set. Teachers' written answers to open-ended items were analyzed and coded for thematic content. The coding scheme was informed by the literature review as well, but also included categories that arose from the responses themselves. (See full list of categories in Table 2). After our initial review of the categories, we divided the coding process into two main themes: depth of responses and content of responses. *Depth* of response was categorized into one of two categories: vague or developed. All responses were coded for level of depth. *Content* of response included categories such as product-oriented, verbal response, peer interaction, student-teacher interaction, and physical movement. Each response could receive one or more code for the content of the response.

After clarification of category meanings and examples, two of us (Cawthon and Ihorn) coded the dataset independently. The reliability of the codes before the consensus meeting was quite high, with an overall agreement of 95% across all coding categories and responses. The percent agreement for each coding category ranged from 82% to 100%, with all but one category (vague vs. developed) at 90% or above. The team then met to discuss areas of disagreement, to clarify different interpretations of teacher responses and code meetings, and to determine the final codes for the data set. Results are provided in Table 2.

Depth. The depth of the responses about student engagement shifted during the DFS process. Approximately two-thirds of participants' responses were coded as *vague* on the pre-DFS lesson forms; a similar proportion of responses were coded as *developed* after the DFS strategies were implemented. While the sample was not large enough to track individual lessons or teachers, it provides a useful description of specificity regarding teachers' articulation of student engagement. DFS seeks to give teachers language and tools that reflect a student-centered approach to instruction; it is, therefore, important that teachers are able to articulate in a concrete way what their students do as part of their learning process.

Content. The bulk of the qualitative analysis focused on the content of teacher responses about student engagement. (In contrast with the *depth* coding, responses could be coded for more than one *content* category.) The most prominent category found in descriptions of lessons before DFS strategies were Verbal with Teacher (60%), Final Products (34%), and Verbal with Students

(19%). These responses reflect a fairly traditional set of instructional practices where teachers initiate dialog with students, and students complete projects such as a worksheet or homework activity. As indicated by the level of group work (3%), most of the pre-DFS activities are focused on individual performances by classroom participants.

The dominant themes after the DFS strategies were Physical Movement (55%), Verbal with Teacher (51%), Verbal with Students (51%), Group Work (45%), Pro-social Interaction (23%), and Public Performance (21%). Interestingly, teachers *augmented* verbal interactions with and between students, with additional activities in place of these original techniques. Some of the activities newly noted by teachers, particularly physical movement and public performance, reflect the drama-based approach of the *DFS* strategies. Other response categories such as those that focus on student interaction are not, by definition, drama-based instruction, but are often byproducts of this instructional approach. Of the dominant behaviors noted by teachers before DFS strategies were employed, only the Final Product category decreased to a notably lower level (from 34% to 10% of responses). It may be that the DFS emphasis on interactive group work replaced the use of individual assignments as activities in these classrooms.

Code (Reliability)	Example Teacher Responses	Before DFS % of responses *n* = 62	After DFS % of responses *n* = 68
Depth			
Vague	"They participated and listened."	68	36
Developed	"Each student conjugated the given verb as he/she tossed the ball to another student."	32	64
Content			
Final Product	"Turning in homework" "Writing sentences" "Turn in a finished project"	34	10
Monitored Progress	"I walk around and make sure they are staying on topic."	10	11
Verbal with Teacher	"Asking questions" "Student-teacher interaction"	60	51
Verbal with Students	"Got into discussions and debated about their choices on certain immigrants"	19	51
Body Language	"Body language showing interest." "Eye contact" "One kid who sleeps everyday stayed awake the whole class and even led his team"	3	4
Physical Movement	"Students were up out of their seat trying to match their card with the diagram"	8	55
Public Performance	"Students worked to design the frozen image and then presented to the class"	10	21
Pro-social Interaction	"Helping each other" "Worked with a partner"	5	23
Emotional Component	"Laughing" "Excitement" "Smiles on their faces"	2	8
Group work	"Students were directing classmates through the mine." "All students working together in groups"	3	45

Table 2. *Teacher Perspectives on Student Engagement*

Authentic Instruction (quantitative)

The Authentic Instruction scale items were averaged into a single score for each participant. For the purpose of this analysis, we focused on the post-lesson form ratings. Lesson plan ratings could range from a low of zero to a high of nine. The overall average post-lesson form rating (i.e. with the *DFS* strategies) was 7.47 (SD = 1.03) (n = 93). On a scale of one to nine, this indicates a high level of authentic instruction in these lessons. This is also a fairly tight standard deviation, indicating that the average score is more representative of the overall study sample than if, for example, the standard deviation had been two or three points on the scale. One of the goals of *Drama for Schools* is to help teachers connect to students as learners in a way that honors the individual experiences of each student. With a large and diverse student body, authentic instruction can be quite a challenge. These results indicate that DFS strategies show promise in reaching goals of authentic instruction for middle school students.

Discussion

Four main research questions guided the analysis in this article; questions focused on level of student engagement, ratings of authentic instruction, and teachers' descriptions of the nature of student participation both before and after DFS implementation in lesson plans. The discussion section develops ideas related to these research questions along the following themes: Engagement, Shift in Specificity, Authentic Instruction, Back to Critical Pedagogy, Implications for Practice, Limitations, and Future Research. We first discuss findings related to research questions about student engagement and teacher articulation of student behavior as a result of *DFS* activities. We then turn the discussion back to the broader themes that motivate our work: critical pedagogy, implications for practice, and future research. We include in our discussion limitations to this research approach and implications for conclusions that can be drawn from these data. We offer thoughts on how teachers and students contribute to the ongoing dialog on the meaning and outcomes of the *DFS* program.

Student Engagement: Quantitative

The teachers who participated in the *Drama for Schools* professional development program believe that their students are more engaged with lessons that incorporate *DFS* strategies. Results indicate that a broader range of students were participating in *DFS* lessons when compared with previous instruction on the same or similar topics. On a practical level, a jump from 60% to 90% means that out of a group of 30 students, teachers might see a change from 18 students participating in the lesson to 27 students actively engaged. This increase, even in sheer numbers alone, likely results in a wider range of student perspectives and a richer learning experience for peers. While it is possible that some students are engaged in the traditional teaching format and not in the DFS format, these numbers indicate an overall shift to near complete participation by the students.

Student Engagement: Qualitative

Drama for Schools strategies are designed to keep students actively engaged in the learning process, and it appears that teachers are able to observe this active engagement and use

it to help them determine their students' level of participation. For example, teachers describe their *DFS* lessons as having "everyone out of their seats" or "students calling out answers" or "presenting their image to the class". DFS strategies focus explicitly on these kinds of classroom behaviors; changes in teacher descriptions of student participation indicate that strategies are being implemented as planned. Dominant themes from the analysis of content included an increase in student-to-student verbal interaction, physical movement, and examples of students giving a public performance in front of their peers. The lesson planning sessions and afterschool training appear to be effective in shifting teachers' approach to instruction by offering drama-based tools applicable to their targeted lessons. What is less clear is how well these strategies carry over into other lessons discussed in conjunction with the new strategies. It is possible that some teachers will only use strategies within the targeted lesson context, whereas others will find ways to integrate them into future lesson plans.

Shift In Specificity

Analysis of the teachers' written responses reveals that teachers are better able to articulate examples of student engagement for *DFS* revised lessons. When responding to the question about student engagement for their original lessons, teachers often gave vague responses about the difficulty to observe behaviors such as, "I know students are engaged if they are paying attention," or "I know students are engaged if they are listening". More developed initial responses often involved a final product that the student would complete (e.g. homework, class work, notes) or verbal interaction with the teacher (e.g. answering or asking questions). In contrast, teacher responses for *DFS* revised lessons were generally longer and included a wider variety of specific, observable behavioral indicators from their students. For lessons prior to *DFS*, responses had an average of $M = 2.2$ ($SD = 1.13$) codes per response; after DFS the responses had an of average of $M = 2.9$ ($SD = 1.93$) codes per response. For example, a teacher who initially had responded "taking notes" gave the following answer about the same lesson modified by using *DFS* strategies: "They volunteered, complimented other student comments, got out of their seats to participate, gave ideas, collaborated with other students." Responses about student engagement for *DFS* lessons named a greater variety of indicators, including positive social interaction (e.g. helping peers, complimenting or encouraging other students, working together to solve problems), physical movements, completion of final products, a wide variety of verbal interaction, and even the positive mood of the students (e.g. smiling and laughing).

Overall, teachers appear to be better able to observe and comment on their students' level of engagement after modifying lessons with *Drama for Schools* strategies. Some of this may be due to the fact that teachers had been thinking about, and reflecting on, whether or not the new instructional strategies were effective for their students. Teachers were becoming invested partners in the DFS program and were invited to take on the role of co-researchers with the *DFS* team. Teachers were collaborating with *DFS* graduate students and faculty to hone not only their own instructional strategies, but also how the program could be best adapted to their school and district. There were multiple opportunities for active questioning, and this level of inquiry may have influenced how teachers were processing their experiences with their students. Some of this added attention to detail may be a byproduct of the critical pedagogical underpinning of the professional development aspect of the *DFS* program.

Authentic Instruction

The authentic instruction component of this study served as a way to measure the kind of changes in teacher approaches to their work in the classroom. Using the authentic instruction principles as a guide, this scale served as an overall measure of teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the individual lessons. As such, it focused more on the broad outcomes of authentic instruction than on its fidelity to the three principles of student-constructed knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school. Results from this study indicated that teachers did see high levels of the kinds of outcomes that are the goal of authentic instruction, with teachers responding with an average score that corresponded to "quite a bit" on the scale. The subsequent regression analysis indicates that there is a relationship between the authentic instruction outcomes and the percentage of students who participated in lessons with DFS strategies. These results confirm previous findings that arts integration and arts education lead to teaching strategies that echo those put forward by the authentic instruction paradigm.

Link to Critical Pedagogy

Because the *DFS* process is rooted in critical pedagogy, it is expected that the strategies and PD model will result in activities that mirror key critical pedagogy principles: students and teachers engaged in dialogic, collaborative learning experiences that emphasize co-construction of meaning. We do assume that, at some level, if classroom activity is moving away from the static "banking model" toward classroom dialog, that activity and engagement must be the result. On the surface, this process could imply a tautology, that we are defining the outcomes of *DFS* by its own activities. Linking back to critical pedagogy is therefore an important and necessary component of this analysis process.

There are spaces within these findings that imply some shift in how teachers experience their classrooms, with a potential additional awareness of the critical pedagogical underpinnings of *DFS* work. For example, students in many of the post-lesson plan analyses were described as taking ownership over their own learning. They were asking questions, co-constructing knowledge, and using drama-based strategies to act as a catalyst for learning. As a further example, evidence of a more egalitarian approach to knowledge seeking is found in the shift from student-to-teacher verbal interaction toward a student-to-student dialog. These behaviors are examples of what one might expect to see in a classroom where students were actively involved in the education process.

Within the lens of critical pedagogy, we see these results as indicating not just a dialog between participants, not just a conversation, but also a "constant state of becoming". We infer a change in not just what people do, but in who they are in this lived context. Engagement is powerful not only in how it changes the procedures within a classroom, but in how it shapes and transforms the roles of its participants. We see an increase in numbers of students participating, yes, but beyond that, we see a change in *how* students participate. These roles can be made explicit through role-play, but the roles can also be a part of how the classroom reorganizes itself around the new responsibilities for learning. The example given of "one kid who sleeps everyday stayed awake the whole class and even led his team" may be an extreme version of smaller

changes in the roles of individuals within the classroom community. Instead of the same students interacting with the teacher to provide answers within group lectures, different students contribute across multiple modalities: verbal, spatial, and physical. For example, students may form a grid with x and y axes in illustrating change in quantities by physically moving from one coordinate to another. Over time, it is possible that, just as teachers see their students doing different things, students also see each other taking on different roles, breaking out of prescribed routines that limit the class to the status quo.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study offer several implications for practice. The first is in our understanding of the "why" behind teacher change in the *DFS* model. To what extent do teachers experience change, because they have more specific behaviors to observe or draw upon in their understanding of their classroom's learning? The *DFS* model is focused on lesson planning and integration of simple techniques that can be adapted to a wide range of contexts. When teachers can "see" their students actively learning, they get concrete feedback. This information may, in turn, help increase teacher self-efficacy (i.e. belief in one's own capacity to teach) by making it clear to teachers that students are engaged in the lesson and learning. As both self-efficacy and student engagement are tied to teacher burnout, it is possible that participation in programs such as *Drama for Schools* can help to decrease problems with burnout and retention. This study therefore highlights the potential theoretical importance of how teachers view the success of their students.

A number of the teachers brought "new" lessons (lessons on topics they had not taught in the past) to the *Drama for Schools* professional development meetings. This is surprising, because most of the participants were veteran teachers with substantial teaching experience whose lessons are presumably more established and refined than novice teachers. Furthermore, the district has a strict pacing calendar, and the *Drama for Schools* schedule determines the dates that the lessons were taught. Therefore, teachers had little choice in the lessons that were used. This phenomenon created a larger pool of information about student engagement during lessons taught using *DFS* strategies, when compared with the information gathered about teachers' typical lessons. It also created questions about the nature of the initial lessons provided and the ways that teachers use the *Drama for Schools* program. Does the curriculum in the district change substantially from year to year, thus making it difficult for teachers to retain lessons? Or, did teachers feel that, since strategies were "new," the work needed to come from outside their regular teaching, relegating DFS exploration to "extra" content and not to the required components of their curriculum? In spite of what initially appeared to be a random selection of lessons for *DFS* revision, are teachers rearranging their teaching schedules so that they can receive assistance with problem lessons? The role of *DFS* was conceptualized as a way for teachers to draw upon the strategies to fit their own pedagogical needs. Perhaps, for some teachers, *DFS* serves as a way to expand or open up their teaching to new content and possibilities. The *DFS* program assumption that teachers come in primarily seeking to improve previously implemented lessons may need to change to incorporate a broader set of teacher goals. Or, for some, does *DFS* represent such new material that teachers aren't willing to trust their scope and sequence to yet another change in their approach to instruction?

A third implication for practice comes from a perhaps troubling observation that teachers sometimes viewed *DFS* strategies as a way to "force" students to participate in classroom activities. There were comments that indicated a high level of frustration with students who tended to talk only when teachers asked them questions "over and over and over". Teachers value students who will volunteer responses without repeated solicitation on their part. In this standard teaching model, *teachers* are the source of motivation for student participation. In contrast, in *DFS*, the *lesson* becomes the structure for that "prodding" and encouragement. This can be seen as both a challenge and an opportunity for *DFS*. As a challenge, teachers seem relieved when the lesson itself makes it more difficult for students to opt out or to disengage. On the other hand, *DFS* strategies often allow for multiple perspectives on an issue instead of a single right answer that students must report. For some teachers, it is difficult to shift to constructivist modes of learning where the collaborative building and sharing of knowledge can feel chaotic and loud. Nevertheless, as an opportunity, *DFS* provides a safe and inviting space, where students can contribute in a way that is not limited to the often-alienating question-response format.

A final implication for practice, particularly from a program perspective, is evidence that the *DFS* program outcomes link with arts integration standards. Teachers indicated a higher level of students engaging in activities that fulfill these guidelines. The motivation for integrating arts into other core content areas is based on the understanding that the arts are a powerful tool for:

> understanding human experiences, both past and present; learning to adapt to and respect others' (often very different) ways of thinking, working, and expressing themselves; learning artistic modes of problem solving, which bring an array of expressive, analytical, and developmental tools to every human situation (this is why we speak, for example, of the "art" of teaching or the "art" of politics); … making decisions in situations where there are no standard answers; analyzing nonverbal communication and making informed judgments about cultural products and issues; and communicating their thoughts and feelings in a variety of modes, giving them a vastly more powerful repertoire of self-expression. (The National Standards for Arts Education, p. 2-3)

Standards-based arts integration involves a comprehensive view of the arts, unified and deeply immersed in other content areas, crossing the borders of non-arts subject areas and arts concepts to directly affect cognitive learning. Arts-based instruction calls on teachers to be creative participants in their teaching, making the classroom a more lively and engaging place to learn. As "many teachers already in service need to supplement their knowledge and skills, acquire new capabilities, and form teaching alliances with arts specialists," the *DFS* program serves the important task of bringing K-12 educators, community artists, and university drama specialists together for this important exploration (p. 13).

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study that must be considered when drawing conclusions. The first is in relation to the authentic instruction rating scale. This scale has been piloted and refined, but not validated with external measures of classroom instruction or analysis of individual lesson plans. These ratings reflect teacher perspectives of their lessons, but may not

reflect how students experience them. A related limitation is that the refinement of the measure may have led to an under-determination of the scale compared with the overall authentic instruction framework. In other words, the scale may now only partially capture the overall framework of authentic instruction. A more robust measure, validated with external measures, is needed for more conclusive evidence of authentic instruction as an outcome of the *DFS* program.

A second limitation is missing data due to varying levels of teacher participation across the year. In contrast with a single workshop, *DFS* is a year-long program with monthly visits to the school district. There are times when teachers' individual schedules or curricular plans do not allow for the additional meeting time required to plan a *DFS* lesson. We therefore had some months with very low attendance, particularly during state testing season. The sample represents those teachers who were perhaps most able to adjust and include new strategies, or those who were not a part of the high-stakes testing sequence that year (e.g. an untested grade or subject area).

A third limitation in this study is the abridged nature of the study model, which did not include a wide range of variables that may have had an explanatory role regarding the level of student engagement measured in the classroom. For example, content of instruction was not taken into account in this design. The topic of instruction varied by teacher and may have had a differential impact on how enthusiastic students were about the lesson. The study model also did not specify whether the different components of *DFS*, such as the individual strategies or the professional development sequence, had independent effects on study outcomes. Finally, as noted in the introduction, it is not clear whether the outcomes of student engagement and authentic instruction are co-occurring or if one predicts the other (or perhaps all three). The direction of effect, both in the short term of the monthly visits and cumulative over time, is left unarticulated for the purpose of this study.

Future Research

Research on outcomes from the *Drama for Schools* professional development model is still in its infancy. Further investigation into these areas is necessary to fully understand the differences in student engagement that were observed in this study. For example, this investigation was bounded by the timeframe of the data collection period. In the context of teacher mastery of *DFS* strategies, one year was a relatively short learning curve. By focusing on individual lesson plan analyses, we were looking mainly at the process that occurred within a single visit to the district. In contrast, a study with a long-term lens may emphasize transfer of strategies to non-targeted lessons or the spillover effects of *DFS* strategies into other classroom activities.

A second area for further research is that of potential links among *DFS* strategies, student engagement, and student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes can be conceptualized in a variety of ways. State standardized assessments are one tool for measuring student knowledge, and we have seen some positive effects of *DFS* on student performance on these measures. In a larger scale implementation of the *DFS* program, it might be possible to tease out the effects of *DFS* from other school reform efforts. Beyond standardized assessments, classroom end-of-unit tests that span several lessons will be valuable indicators of how the *DFS* strategies help students

make meaning out of the curricular content. It is possible that the students who benefit most from *DFS* strategies are those who wouldn't have already been successful in the traditional teacher-student verbal interaction format. Finally, research on how students integrate new information, particularly in their use of higher order thinking skills, would greatly enhance evaluation of the *DFS* program.

Conclusion

As an arts integration professional development program, *Drama for Schools* works to shift the learning culture of a classroom, school, and district. It takes on the challenging, broad concepts of "authentic instruction" and "student engagement" and attempts to operationalize them into measurable outcomes within the classroom environment. The purpose of this study was to investigate both constructs as a way of understanding proximal change in teacher perspectives on their teaching and on student behavior. This lesson plan analysis tracked the month-to-month journey of teachers as they moved through the first year of the *DFS* program. Lack of student engagement is a significant challenge for teachers; *DFS* seeks to provide the support and structure to bring more voices into the classroom and to utilize the multiple strengths of a diverse student body. We presume that higher levels of student engagement, in both quantitative and qualitative representations of growth, will lead to greater engagement of teachers in their own work. As an arts integration approach, drama-based instruction leverages the power of imagery, role-play, improvisation, and dialog in ways that connect students to curricular content. As a professional development model with critical pedagogy as its foundation, DFS seeks to bring this power into the life of the classroom, where teachers and students meet each other to make meaning in their common work.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Literature-based Lesson Plan

Name: Katie Dawson Date: _____

GRADE: 6th Grade English

TOPIC: **Homer's <u>The Odyssey</u>**

FOCUS: Would I stay loyal if I was separated from someone I cared about for many years? Why would a husband disappear for a long time? How would the wife feel if she didn't know where he was?

1. **<u>ENGAGING:</u>**

What does the word loyalty mean to you? If two people were in a committed relationship and agreed to remain loyal to each other what might that mean? Talk about various definitions of loyalty. Invite students to join you in an open area of the classroom to think more personally about some of these questions.

Exploding atom: Bring all the students together in a tight circle. Explain that you have some questions that you would like each student to answer for themselves. *When we stand in this position, very close together we are showing that we agree with a question. So if our answer is "yes" to the question being asked we stand right here.* Next have students "explode" out so the circle is very wide. *When we stand in these positions we are showing that we DON'T agree with a statement that is being given, this is our "no" position. If this is "no" and clumped together is "yes," where do you think "maybe" or "sometimes" might be?*" Once students understand the activity fully ask the following questions:

1. I know what it's like to be away from someone I care about.
2. It's hard to be away from someone you care about for an extended period of time.
3. If I had to be away from the person I cared most about for a month, (this could be a boyfriend/girlfriend/best friend) without any contact (no email, no phone calls, no letters) I would remain loyal to them.
4. If I had to be away from the person I care about most for 1 year, I would remain loyal to them.
5. If I had to be away from the person I care about most for 5 years, I would remain loyal to them.
6. If I had to be away from the person I care about most for 10 years, I would remain loyal to them.

Processing activity:

- What did you notice during this activity?
- Were you surprised by any of your answers?

- By then end of this activity most of were standing much more in the "no" area, why do you think someone wouldn't remain loyal to someone else for ten years?

2. <u>SHARING THE STORY</u>:

The next book we are going to be reading in class is the epic poem <u>The Odyssey</u>, by Homer which was written over 2,500 years ago. This is the story of husband and wife that were separated for 20 years. <u>The Odyssey</u> is the sequel to <u>The Iliad</u> which you read last semester. If you remember from <u>The Iliad</u> the story takes place in ancient Greece. Odysseus—King of Ithaca and many other men had left to fight in the Trojan War. Odysseus helped lead the charge in the Trojan horse that brings about the fall of Troy.

<u>The Odyssey</u> tells two stories: it is the story of Odysseus's journey home to his wife, Penelope in Ithaca; and it is the story of Penelope, Odysseus's wife and queen, who has been waiting 20 years for her husband to return.

3. **<u>EXPLORING THE STORY</u>**:

Let's start by imagining what might be happening with Penelope over the long time she is waiting.

Activity 1: ROLE ON THE WALL – *What's happening with Penelope?*

Draw a very simple outline of body on the board, label it Penelope. *What do you think the people around Penelope might have been saying to her as she loyally waited for her husband?* Brainstorm phrases that might have been said to Penelope, write these around the outside of P.'s body. *Who might be saying these things?* After each phrase, brainstorm who might have said it to her and write those names beside the phrases. *How does hearing these things make Penelope feel?* Write down P.'s feelings inside the outline of her body. Connect certain statements to certain feelings and people.

<u>Transition:</u> *It sounds like there were certainly people around Penelope who were having an effect on her. (Note this response may change depending on what students say!) Some said positive things and some of these were negative things. Let's explore these situations a little bit further.*

Activity 2: SIMPLE PERSUASION IMPROVISATION

Ask for a student or students to take on the role of Penelope. Sit them in a chair. The rest of the students are people who are coming to talk to Penelope. Each student could choose their own role, or they could be grouped (e.g. a group of suitors, a group of servants who are loyal to Odysseus, a group of Penelope's mother). You may give each group time to brainstorm some ideas about what they can say. Allow each group a chance to speak their mind to Penelope. Or, they could all be in the same room vying for her attention. This could also be done through parallel play with half the group playing Penelope and the other half playing someone who is talking to her. All the scenes unfold at the same time. The facilitator freezes the action and "spotlights" certain groups' conversation then asks all the groups to resume their conversation.

Transition: *It sounds like Penelope was under a lot of pressure to change her mind during the time her husband was away. Let's take a moment and find out a little bit more about how all this pressure felt for Penelope.*

Activity 3: Hot seating Penelope and Suitor/Servant
Ask all of the Penelope to come to the front of the room and ask them questions about what has been happening with them. *I hear that a lot of people have come to see you. Who has come to see you and what did they have to say? How have the visitors affected your choice to wait for your husband?*

Ask all of the Suitor/Servants to come to front of the room. *Who are you and why did you decide to go talk to Penelope about her missing husband? How did the conversation go? Did you get what you wanted? Why or why not?*

Transition: *So we have heard a lot of talk about what may have happened to Odysseus but let's take some time to explore this idea even more.*

Activity 4: Where in the World is Odysseus? What happened to him after he left on his ship with his men? *Let's talk about where Odysseus might have gone. What information do we know so far about how Odysseus left? Let's make some predictions now about where he might be. Let's here some suggestions about why Odysseus did not return after the war . . .*
--Generate predictions as a group; make a large master list on the board. Encourage all ideas.
--Break students into groups of three and have them pick one idea and ask them to explore that idea through the creation of three stage pictures that tell the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Or, break students into groups of three and have them pick one idea and ask them to explore that idea through three journal entries that tell the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

4. REFLECTING ON THE WORK:
D: So what were some of the wild and wonderful possibilities we created for what might have happened to the character of Odysseus? What did we think might have been happening at home with his wife Penelope as she waited for him to return?
A: Which character (Penelope or Odysseus) do you think will have the more difficult time in the story based on some of the ideas we've generated? Why?
R: Tonight we'll begin by reading the first two chapters of the story. Let's see if any of our predictions come true.

Appendix B

HOTSEATING/TIR LP WORKSHEET

Additional Context: Lesson created for students in northern interior of Alaska

GENERAL TOPIC: SCIENCE- the ethics of nuclear power

TEK(S): Alaska Standards (Grade 11)
The student demonstrates an understanding of how to integrate scientific knowledge and technology to address problems by:
[11] SE1.1 researching how social, economic, and
political forces strongly influence which technology will be developed and used (**L**)

FOCUS QUESTION: What are the ethical questions involved in the use of nuclear power? What are benefits of nuclear power in a financially depressed community? What are the biological implications of radiation and nuclear waste?

Materials:
A surface for writing (blackboard, whiteboard or large paper)
Paper and pencils/pens

ENGAGE (HOOK):
Today we are going to talk a bit about ways we create the power that turns on our lights and runs the air conditiontion/heat we are enjoying right now. Ask students to list various forms of energy that are used to produce electricity throughout the state. Have students work together to brainstorm a list of possible sources including: water power, wind power, water turbine, biomass, diesel gas power, coal, and nuclear power. *Where does our electricity come from?*

SHARE info about topic**:** Explain that today we will be focusing on what it might be like to be from a small community that is in deep financial trouble. This is a remote, rural community that doesn't have access to a lot of natural resources for energy (like oil). It could even be a town that had a major manufacturing plant close due to the poor economy. This is a town that is in dire need of jobs, cheaper energy, and a better economic and environmental future. Choose a name for your town. Ask students to imagine that they are adults living in this town. . *We are going to imagine that we are all members of the _____ community, adults, who have come to a very important Town Hall Meeting. You've come because the economy is bad and many of you are out of work. Think about what your character's name is. It could be your actual name or a new name. Choose a profession, appropriate for school, that someone might do in a small rural city in Texas. Decide whether you are currently employed in your line of work or not. I'll know that you have your job when I can see your eyes looking at me. Let's imagine that I am the assistant to the new mayor of this town. I called the Town Meeting. When I put on my scarf I will become the Mayor.*

EXPLORE: (List at least two possible activities)

1. PROCEDURE: TOWN HALL MEETING:
Teacher in role: *"Ladies and Gentlemen of (name of town) I am so pleased that you have come to join us tonight in city hall. Mayor Sterns ate some very bad shrimp for dinner and had to be rushed to the hospital; so I am here in her place. My name is Ms. Dawson, I'm the assistant to the Mayor. I'm here tonight to share some very exciting news. As you know mayor made some*

important campaign promises to you! You said you needed jobs; our unemployment rate is at 15%. You said we need to build a new library, and a community center. You also said that the cost of energy is too high. It's costing you too much to heat your homes, and run your lights and appliances — well the mayor is ready to deliver on her promises. I have in my hands a copy of contract from the NEC Corporation which should bring many new jobs to our little town. Now all I need from you is a yes vote saying that we do want NEC's plant located in our town. That we do want jobs and stability for our family. That we want an end to high energy prices. Say yes to the mayor (or me) tonight and our little town of -- can get ready for some BIG changes. Assistant Mayor tries to get group to sign petition. Then opens the floor to questions. Each student should introduce themselves and their profession. The Assistant Mayor should interact with each community member trying to "sell" them on the power plant. During this conversation the following information can be introduced to encourage students to see multiple perspectives:

Possible Side-Coaching:

- NEC stands for Nuclear Energy Corporation. They will be building a Nuclear Power Plant in town.
- NEC has agreed build this power plant with no cost to the town.
- The plant is a beta project, a new type of power plant based on a battery cell of some sort. This will provide the clean power that our little village has been looking for.
- NEC has had some difficulties with nuclear waste disposal in the past. Teacher can reference Three Mile Island and Chernobyl as examples of locations where melt downs have occurred.
- Teacher could choose to let it slip that NEC was under investigation five years ago concerning allegations of nuclear waste water contamination but explain that there are new people in charge with a stronger commitment to safety and the environment. (If you are team teaching, have the second teacher play a representative from NEC who helps allay concerns around nuclear power.)
- NEC plans on building the power plant on the banks of the major river in town. This river supplies much of the town's water supply.

Teacher-as-assistant-mayor should instigate a lively discussion. Students will naturally choose sides.

Transition: When issues are out in the open teacher should say: *Well, it seems that we have opinions on both sides in the room. However, the mayor does need to give NEC an answer tonight. I will remind you all that you voted for change and change means sacrifice and faith. You wanted an answer to our economic woes and the mayor has done her best to offer it. I would like to take a vote. I will ask each person what their decision is and they may answer yes or no.* Each student makes their decision. Stop the drama and step out of role.

2. PROCEDURE: WRITING IN ROLE Explain that there was indeed heated debate over this issue, and that the town was divided. A group representing each side of the issue decided to write an editorial to the local newspaper. Divide the class into two groups; it is best to divide along the lines with which people voted. Have each group compose a letter to editor that expresses their feelings on this subject. Have them each sign the bottom of the letter. Teacher should move between groups and make sure that they are working well together. After letters

are written, bring entire class back together. Have each group read their letter and discuss the opinions that have been expressed. Comment on the many sides of the argument.

Possible Side-Coaching: Building on the character's we introduced in our Town Meeting, think about writing from your character's point of view? What would you character specifically want to say about this issue? If your group was going to title themselves (e.g., Concerned Citizens Against Nuclear Power) what might they call themselves?

REFLECT on the issues
Describe: What are the ethical and biological issues around nuclear power that were introduced in our drama work?

Analyze: What are the positive effects of nuclear energy? What are some of the negative effects?
What would you want to know as an informed member of a community that is considering building a nuclear power plant?

Relate: How would you feel if a nuclear power plant was going to be built in our town? Who in our town do you think would be supportive? Who do you think might be against it? How could we make our opinions heard in our town?

EVALUATE:
Were students comfortable taking on their "role"? Did they have enough information to build a character? Were students primarily for or against the power plant? Was I able to introduce the alternate viewpoint? Were students able to consider ways the economic factors in their decisions? Were students able to consider environmental factors in their decisions?

OTHER EPISODES: (These are other dramatic activities which could be used to extend the exploration)

IMAGE WORK. Explain that despite the many dissenters the town did finally agree to allow NEC to build their nuclear power plant in town. Invite students to look at what happened to the characters six months in the future on the opening day of the plant. The local paper covered the opening day with some very illuminating pictures of the protest and support of the new plant. In groups of three have students create an image of what happened on opening day. Ask each group to create a title for their picture. Students will then share scenes. Have class close their eyes before each image and open them on your signal. After the image, discuss what students saw happening and what emotions they observe from each of the characters. What are the relationships between these characters? Speculate on the moment before and the moment after each image. After viewing all the images, discuss: *What were the results of the power plant being built in town?*

RADIO SHOW: Explain that many of the issues that were introduced in our plant opening days continued through the first year of the plant being opened. On the anniversary of the plant opening a local radio show decided to do an interview with some key players from both sides. Interview the students allowing them to call in and talk with each other "on air."