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Publication Date

2014

Peer reviewed

How Arts Integration Has Helped K-2 Teachers to

Boost the Language Development of ELLs [1]

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Abstract

This study looks at the impact of a cost-effective professional development model in which teaching artists helped early elementary teachers master arts-based strategies for boosting the oral language development of English language learners (ELLs). Teaching artists visited K-2 classrooms for 50 minutes weekly for 28 weeks. Student scores on the listening and speaking sections of the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) were used to determine the impact on language development. The experimental group consisted of 267 students; the comparison group consisted of 2981 students. The analysis of the CELDT listening and speaking scores, fall 2010 to fall 2011, showed significantly more improvement for students in the experimental group. This research has implications for school leaders who, in times of tight budgets, seek professional development opportunities that can assist teachers in addressing the language development needs of ELLs.

Key Words:

English language learner, arts integration, oral language, early elementary, literacy

Across the United States, students who are still developing proficiency in English comprise a large and growing subpopulation. The number of ELLs enrolled in public schools nationwide increased by 51%--from 3.5 million to 5.3 million--between the 1997-98 and the 2008-09 school years (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2010). ELLs now represent 1 in 9 students in the United States. In California they represent 1 in 4 students (Educational Testing Service, 2009). Yet, many teachers feel—and are, in fact—under-prepared to teach these students (Téllez & Waxman, 2005). More than two-thirds of American teachers report that they have not had even one day of training in supporting the learning of LEP students during the previous three years (Hirsh, 2009).

Along with a sustained and coherent academic focus, professional development is one of the top school-level and district-level factors leading to ELL academic success (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). Research has repeatedly shown that teacher quality is the most important school-based determinant of student success (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007; Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). The research summarized in this article looked at an arts-based professional development program in San Diego, California that significantly boosted the listening and speaking skills of ELLs, measured by the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), in five randomly selected experimental schools. Interviews and focus groups were used to capture the perspectives of participating teachers.

Addressing the Challenge of Equity

In state tests for the 2009-10 school year, San Diego ranked first among California's seven large urban districts in language arts and science, third in mathematics. Yet, San Diego is a border city with one of the largest ELL enrollments in the United States; nearly 30% of public school students are designated ELLs (Education Data Partnership, 2010). In recent years, a

stubborn achievement gap has opened up between San Diego's affluent and less-affluent neighborhoods. This has given the city a bifurcated student achievement profile. The Teaching Artist Project (TAP), a partnership between the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and the University of California, Irvine, was set up to address this gap. TAP uses arts-based strategies to enhance the English language development of young ELLs.

Meeting the Needs of ELLs

In the decade since passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001, there has been a growing discrepancy between students who benefit from this reform and students who are, in fact, being left behind. ELLs nationwide are not reaping the promised benefits of NCLB; instead, they are performing 20 to 50 percentage points below native English speakers (Menken, 2010). For example, a Florida *Reading First* study (Al Otaiba et al., 2008) showed success with intensive reading instruction. Yet, only 5 of the 286 students were non-native English speakers. Two-thirds of Spanish-speaking ELLs do not have basic reading skills by fourth grade (Sanchez, Bledsoe, Sumabat, & Ye, 2004). Such reading difficulties are the most common reason students are designated as requiring special education (Al Otaiba et al., 2009).

Young ELLs have unique learning needs. Not only are these children learning a second language, but they are simultaneously developing proficiency in their home languages (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer & Rivera, 2006). ELL students need frequent opportunities to engage in structured academic talk with teachers and peers who know English well and can provide accurate feedback (Francis et al., 2006; Gersten *et al*, 2007; Wong, Fillmore & Snow 2000). Most experts agree that development of oral English proficiency is an essential first step toward reading development (Greenfader & Brouillette, In Press; Brouillette, 2012; Goldenberg, 2008).

Spira, Bracken, and Fischel (2005) found it was possible to predict fourth-grade reading

levels from kindergarten oral proficiency and vocabulary. Ideally, early intervention would enable struggling students to catch up. But, unfortunately, the national focus on reading comprehension has come at the cost of time spent on oral language (O'Day, 2009). This makes it difficult for ELLs to gain ground. Ironically, it is often the under-performance of ELLs that prevents urban schools from making adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB. One reason why this can be a difficult problem to address is that oral language has not been emphasized in teacher certification programs. Many teachers have little training in oral language development.

Professional development is needed if these teachers are to master instructional strategies designed to teach ELLs more effectively. Early intervention is pivotal, since 74 percent of children whose reading skills are less than sufficient by third grade will have a drastically reduced likelihood of graduating from high school (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998). Fortunately, dramatic play comes naturally to young children, providing rich opportunities for expressing themselves and interacting with others. Theatre activities have been shown to boost literacy skills (Mages, 2006; Podlozny, 2000). In visual art and dance, nonverbal modeling is utilized in combination with verbal instruction to encourage oral language use and give useful feedback.

The K-2 Teaching Artist Project uses an arts-based curriculum with a strong focus on dance and dramatic play to provide children with adaptive tools for expressing themselves and interacting with others. Dramatic play provides an especially a rich opportunity for language acquisition and development. But, what about the needs of teachers?

Helping Teachers to Attain their Full Potential

Only 11 of the 50 states are meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets for ELLs under No Child Left Behind (Zehr, 2010). In a survey of 3 million public school teachers, less than 13 percent reported receiving eight or more hours of preparation to teach English language

learners (ELLs), even though 41 percent reported having ELLs in their classrooms (National

Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition Newsline Bulletin, 2002). In California, the

likelihood of ELLs meeting the linguistic and academic criteria for reclassification to fluent

English proficient status after 10 years in public schools is less than 40 percent (Parrish, Perez,

Merickel, & Linquanti, 2006).

Between 2000 and 2005, half of California teachers whose classes included from 26 to

50% ELLs received either no or only one in-service that focused on the instruction of ELLs.

Among teachers with 50% or more English learners in their classrooms, 43% received no more

than one in-service that focused on ELLs. Only half of the new teachers in the sample—those

required by law to participate in some ELL-focused in-service as part of their induction and

progress toward a credential—had done so (Gańdara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005).

Yet, there are professional development strategies that work. Comparison group studies

found that teachers who receive coaching are more likely to enact the desired teaching practices

and apply them appropriately than are teachers receiving more traditional professional

development (Kohler, Crilley, Shearer, & Good, 1997; Neufield & Roper, 2003). Classroom-

based coaching has also been shown effective in helping teachers to expand skills, sustain

change over time, and improve student achievement (Speck & Knipe, 2001). Other research

(Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits, & Kenter, 2001) suggests that, for coaching to be most useful, it

may need to be embedded in broader efforts to build professional knowledge. As Guskey (2000)

noted, quality professional development is "a process that is (a) intentional, (b) ongoing, and (c)

systemic" (p. 16). Teachers find it difficult to apply new knowledge from professional

development programs unless it is both a) ongoing and b) job-embedded (Sparks, 1994).

Learning from Other Nation's Successes

Although the achievement level of students in the United States has changed relatively little in recent years, the achievement levels of students in other nations have garnered international attention. China's stellar debut of international standardized testing results, in which 5,100 students from Shanghai outscored 15-year-olds in dozens of other countries on a respected exam (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010), helped reignite concern about student achievement in the United States. The 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tested student knowledge in reading, math, and science. PISA is given every three years by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which includes the world's major industrial powers.

As in the past, the performance of students in the United States was mediocre. Since students taking the PISA work on different test booklets, raw scores must be scaled to allow meaningful comparisons. The scaling procedure is tuned such that the a posteriori distribution of student competences, with equal weight given to all Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, has mean 500 and standard deviation 100. On the math test last year, students in Shanghai scored 600, Singapore 562, and Germany 513. Students in the United States scored 487. In reading, Shanghai students scored 556, while the United States scored 500 (17th place). In science, Shanghai students scored 575, while the United States scored 502 (23rd place).

While difficulty exists in comparing nations with compulsory education (United States) to nations with non-compulsory education (China), one must still consider the global setting in which American students will have to perform. That American students should be competitive with those from nations with very different educational systems is a high expectation, but lower expectations would not provide a platform that enabled our students to compete. As Secretary of

Education Arne Duncan observed in responding to the PISA results: "We have to see this as a wake-up call" (Dillon, 2010, A1). But what might be done that has not already been tried?

According to Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009), the reason for the mediocre performance of U.S. students many lie in the culture of American schools. In comparison to the United States, other members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provide teachers with significantly more professional learning. Although passage of Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has resulted in the allocation of more than three billion dollars to professional development, the public schools of the United States have failed to leverage this support to provide every educator with highly effective professional learning (Hirsh, 2009). Well-designed teacher professional development is still relatively rare; few teachers have access to regular opportunities to engage in intensive professional learning (Blank, de las Alas, & Smith, 2007).

An analysis of well-designed experimental studies found that a set of programs offering substantial contact hours of professional development (ranging from 30 to 100 hours in total), spread over six to 12 months, showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement gains (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). But few American teachers receive such support. On the 2003-04 National Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a majority of teachers (57 percent) said they had received no more than 16 hours (two days or less) of professional development during the previous 12 months on the content of subject(s) they taught.

This contrasts sharply with teachers' experience in most European and Asian nations, where instruction takes up less than half of a teacher's working time (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007); about 15 to 20 hours per week are generally spent on tasks related to

teaching--such as preparing lessons, marking papers, meeting with students and parents, and working with colleagues. In the United States, teachers are generally given only three to five hours per week for lesson planning, which is usually scheduled independently instead of jointly with colleagues (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Also, U.S. teachers average far more net teaching time in direct contact with students (1,080 hours per year) than any other OECD nation. The OECD average is only 803 hours per year for primary schools and 664 hours per year for secondary schools (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007). Therefore, teachers have more time for planning and developing curriculum.

What might this look like? In *The Learning Gap* (1992) psychologists Harold Stevenson and James Stigler described the effectiveness of Japanese and Chinese teachers, who spent only three to four hours per day working with students (in comparison to the five to seven hours per day that American teachers spend in the classroom) but also worked with larger classes (up to fifty students at a time). An argument can be made that the average American teacher works "harder" (in terms of the amount of time spent teaching), but the Asian teachers work "smarter" (meeting and working together on a daily basis to prepare lessons for the next day). In Japan, teachers meet regularly to discuss teaching techniques and improve classroom presentations.

American teachers, isolated in their own classrooms, find it much more difficult to discuss their work with colleagues. The tradition of long hours, spent teaching smaller classes, means that teachers in North America are isolated from other adults, with little opportunity for meaningful interactions with colleagues; "it exhausts their energy … at the end of the week they are tired; at the end of the year they are exhausted" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 33). In the face of demanding moment-to-moment and day-to-day obligations, teachers are left with little

time or energy for study or reflection. Moreover, a pervasive ethic of individualism prevents teachers from sharing innovations. As Roland Barth has observed:

> Professional isolation stifles professional growth. Unless adults talk with one
>
> another, observe one another, and help one another, very little will change. There
>
> can be no community of learners when there is no community and when there are
>
> no learners (1990, p. 18).

Given the budgetary restraints currently faced by schools in the United States, cutting the hours that teachers spend in the classroom is not a realistic option. However, if a cost-effective coaching model could be designed, sufficient hours of professional development might be offered to raise the total to the level needed to boost achievement (Yoon *et. al*., 2007), while also providing learning that was both a) ongoing and b) job-embedded (Sparks, 1994). Since the K-2 Teaching Artist Project in San Diego, focuses on dramatic play, it was a plausible choice to employ teaching artists as coaches. The teaching artists were skilled in dramatic play.

Since California was, at the time, going through a budget crisis that had hit public schools harder than any other in the state's history, affordability was also a key consideration. Teaching artists could be trained in a reasonable amount of time at a cost the project could afford. District resource teachers agreed to work with university partners to create a set of 27 weekly lessons at each grade level, addressing both the visual and performing arts standards and the oral language portion of the English language arts standards. In place of a summer institute, teaching artists would make weekly trips to each teacher's classroom to model each of the 27 lessons.

Program Description.

Utilizing the strategies described above, the project team set about designing an intervention that would: 1) provide at least 30 contact hours of professional development spread

over a school year; 2) focus on boosting the oral language and vocabulary development of ELLs; 3) include demonstrations of exemplary strategies and classroom-based coaching; 4) be ongoing, systemic, and job-embedded; 5) be affordable, yet serve a large number of teachers. The design team created professional development activities that, following a few introductory workshops, took place primarily in each teacher's own classroom. For the first 15 schools, the program consisted of 27 weekly lessons, lasting 50 minutes each, taught in each teacher's classroom by a teaching artist. The lessons were divided into three 9-week units of visual art, theatre and dance (See Sample Lesson in Appendix).

Before beginning each unit, teachers met with the teaching artists to discuss the lesson plans. At the start of each 9-week unit, teachers took an "assistant" role, with the teaching artists doing most of the teaching. Gradually, over the 9 weeks, the classroom teacher assumed more teaching responsibility, with the collaboration evolving into to more of a team-teaching approach. However, variability existed as to the level of engagement for individual teachers; as some teachers were more apt to jump in and teach part of the lesson, while other teachers preferred to focus more on observation. After each trimester, a debriefing meeting was held after school to allow teachers, teaching artists, and TAP staff to discuss the unit, make suggestions, and build on what they had learned during the nine weeks.

In its initial form, the program provided professional development for 178 teachers in 15 large urban elementary schools. Each year, 5 schools were invited into the program. The goal of the teacher professional development program was to provide K-2 teachers in high-poverty schools with the content area knowledge and pedagogical skills necessary to:

- Utilize arts-based teaching techniques that engage English language learners to build both social-emotional and academic competencies;

- Provide ELLs with rich opportunities to build vocabulary and engage in meaningful interpersonal interactions using oral English;

- Engage their students in standards-based instruction in the performing arts for at least one hour per week during the school year;

- Boost the English language development of students in their classroom as measured by their scores on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT).

Introductory meetings (colloquially called the "Road Show") were held at each school the spring before the school year when teachers at that school would begin the program; teachers were introduced to the K-2 Teaching Artist Project (TAP) and given a chance to ask questions. All K-2 teachers at a school had to agree to participate. Teacher participants became more familiar with the arts-based teaching strategies during a day-long professional development workshop before school started in the fall. Experts introduced teachers to the *California Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards* (California Department of Education, 2001) and to the lessons that they would co-teach weekly with teaching artists during the coming school year. Teachers in the current, revised version of TAP have the following group experiences during the first year:

* 2-hour introductory session the spring before implementation begins;

* 7-hour workshop on new lessons at beginning of fall and spring semesters (14 hours);

* 2-hour debriefing and feedback sessions at end of fall and spring semester (4 hours total).

In the current version of TAP, each teacher receives 53.6 contact hours of professional development during the first year. Teaching artists spend 28 hours co-teaching with each teacher in the classroom and spend an average of 5.6 hours (paid at the same rate as hours in the classroom) consulting with each teacher outside of class time. So, each teacher has about 33.6

one-on-one contact hours with a teaching artist.

A Teaching Artist in the Classroom

In a kindergarten class, a teaching artist is beginning the warm-up for a creative drama lesson. "Actors – stand up. Let's make a circle." Standing in a circle, the children watch him model the movements. When he asks them to "Hold out your right hand," they immediately respond. The classroom teacher moves around the circle, helping children identify their right hand. "Shake your arm like a wet spaghetti noodle." Children giggle as they comply. "Now hold out your left hand." (The teacher again assists children who seem perplexed.) "Now, actors, balance on one foot." Children smile as they lean on one another to help with balance.

The children appear to be having fun. All eyes are on the teaching artist. Once the children seem to be easily following along, the teacher joins the circle. When the teaching artist calls on a specific child, he respectfully addresses the child as "sir" or "miss." During the warm-up, the class explores a range of words and sounds. After pretending to eat a marshmallow, everyone says "mmmmm" and rubs their belly. Next they squat down, pretending to shrivel into raisins; then they grow into juicy grapes, standing tall and reaching for the sky. After the warm-up, the teaching artist brings out pictures of animals and discusses how they might convincingly imitate some of them. Holding up a lion, he asks "Is it loud or quiet?" "Loud." The artist demonstrates how a lion might move across the rug. The children emulate his movements.

Before the artist's next visit, the teacher and children will rehearse the lesson that the teaching artist is now modeling with the class. This allows children to practice the words and movements. If needed, the teacher will refresh her memory by viewing the on-line streaming videos[i] in which a teaching artist models the same lessons. The following year, teachers implement these same arts lessons on their own; the videos help with recall of important details.

Experienced teachers are familiar with the gestures, behaviors, and non-verbal responses that young ELLs use to indicate understanding. Now they are becoming adept at building on those non-verbal responses to stimulate extended verbal interactions. Once mastered, these oral language strategies are readily transferred to other content areas.

Although some teachers may initially be concerned that a focus on the needs of ELLs could result in inequities (Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003; Reeves, 2006; Schmidt, 2000), addressing the needs of ELLs need not undercut the learning of other students. A growing body of literature shows that best practices for promoting vocabulary knowledge among English learners are also best practices for building breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge among native English speakers (August et al., 2005; Beck & McKeown, 2007; Carlo et al., 2004). The challenge lies in designing lessons that encourage varied kinds of learning.

Getting Started

The K-2 Teaching Artist Project was set up so that five schools started each year. During a school's second year in the program, the goal was for teachers to implement the arts lessons in their own classrooms, supported by a district resource teacher. Streaming videos of expert artists delivering each lesson were made available on-line. Each summer, the resource teachers and TAP staff studied the data gathered through interviews, observations, and teacher surveys to revise lessons and procedures, so as to optimize the effectiveness of the program.

A major change took place when the original Improving Teacher Quality grant, which had been administered by the California Department of Education, ended. Feedback from classroom teachers indicated that, although children enjoyed the visual art lessons, little verbal interaction took place as children painted, sculpted and created collages. If a key goal of TAP was to boost oral language, it would be more effective if visual art lessons were replaced by

additional theater and dance instruction. So, when a proposal to replicate the TAP project was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, the 9 visual art lessons were replaced by 5 more theater and 5 more dance lessons, with a culminating performance at the end of each semester.

Evaluating the Impact of the Program

The mixed-method study summarized below utilized three approaches to investigate whether TAP was meeting its objectives. To better understand how teachers perceived the professional development program, interviews were carried out by an outside researcher. The impact of the program on student engagement was measured through a comparison of student attendance on art and non-art days. The effect of the integrated arts-and-literacy lessons on English language development was assessed through a quasi-experimental study that used the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to measure the language development of students in experimental and comparison groups. The CELDT is a state-mandated, standardized test given annually at the start of the school year to English language learners.

Teacher Interviews

Twenty-four teachers were interviewed about their experiences in integrating arts-based activities into their classroom teaching. Interviewees were chosen in two ways. Each school had a veteran teacher at each grade level who acted as a coach for less experienced participants and as a liaison to the project staff. The teacher-coaches from each participating school were interviewed, with a focus on choosing teachers from kindergarten, first, and second grade, as well as with varied levels of experience. The rest of the interviewees were with classroom teachers from two schools that began implementation in the first year of the program. This brought in teachers who might be less knowledgeable about the experiences of their peers, but

who offered differing perspective.

Four themes emerged from the analysis of teacher interviews: 1) Before receiving the TAP professional development, most teachers had rarely taught standards-based arts lessons and/or did not feel comfortable implementing the arts in their classroom; 2) Teachers indicated that the opportunity to gradually increase their participation in co-teaching arts lessons with a teaching artist contributed to their content knowledge, confidence, and skill in teaching the arts; 3) Teachers reported greater appreciation for the role of the arts in education after participation in TAP; 4) Teachers reported benefits specific to the English language development of ELLs.

Limited arts implementation and limited arts knowledge prior to implementation. Most teachers mentioned that they had very little training in the arts and/or felt uncomfortable implementing the arts into their classroom prior to TAP, often reporting that their students had done art projects no more than monthly. As one teacher noted, "I haven't done much [art instruction], because I didn't feel very confident in my knowledge…." When teachers did teach arts lessons prior to TAP, they consistently mentioned using art as a filler activity. A representative observation was: "Generally, it [art] was a pretty much an end of the week thing, we weren't using the language that [the teaching artist] taught with visual arts …"

Co-teaching with a teaching artist built up teachers' content knowledge and skills. Some teaching artists were better able to facilitate the learning of teachers than others. However, most teachers reported gaining the content knowledge and confidence needed to teach the arts as a result of the design of TAP, which allowed them to gradually take on the role of arts teacher. While teachers may not have felt comfortable implementing the arts before their involvement in TAP, by taking on more and more responsibility for teaching the lessons they were able to learn how to implement the arts units in way they felt comfortable with. The following quote describes

the gradual shift of responsibility from the teaching artist to the teacher:

> Every week [the teaching artists] ask us to take on more responsibility, maybe
> lead the warm-up one week, then the next week lead the lesson. So we do build
> throughout the first 8 weeks. But, I'm comfortable doing that.

Teachers pointed out the benefits of learning from an expert who validated their role as an arts teacher. The following quote highlights the importance of the teaching artist's role:

> When we started this program [TAP], they asked 'Do you want to do it'? I
> thought it was great to expose the students to it. I love it. Then they said … you
> need to participate in it. You need to do it. And I was like 'I don't know. I don't
> want to do that.' But Mike [the teaching artist] was the first one I worked with
> and he was so natural that…I was able to try it with my students with his
> guidance… So I think that was very helpful ...

Teachers enthusiastically described the benefit of having professional development occur in their own classrooms. The teachers repeatedly mentioned that seeing children respond to the arts instruction was much more helpful than being presented with abstract information, which was not clearly relevant to their own classroom experiences. As one teacher pointed out:

> The thing that was wonderful was that they were working with my kids. A lot of
> times with professional development … it's just not realistic for my classroom…
> To see it come alive in my class is huge. That is something missing in a lot of
> professional development…

In the surveys that the teachers filled out, there were comments that a teacher had preferred working with one artist as opposed to another. However, the training that the artists received in delivering the lessons kept the standards high.

Greater appreciation for the role of the arts in education. Teachers repeatedly reported that involvement in TAP opened their eyes to the impact of arts education on children's academic and social development. Many teachers mentioned that, before TAP, art was just not a priority in their classrooms, in part because of the pressures associated with high stakes testing. When asked how often she used arts before implementation of TAP, one teacher was quite forthright: "Very seldom. It's really hard when we have a very big curriculum. We've just never had the time." Another teacher observed: "I think we were doing it [implementing the arts] … but I was not very conscious of the purpose of it…After the program, I'm more focused on the objectives of the music or the drama." TAP helped her to understand how arts education contributed to children's overall social and academic development.

The growing appreciation teachers showed for the benefits of arts education grew out of workshops they had attended on the *California Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards,* especially relating to how K-2 theatre activities could be used to address the oral language segment of the English language arts standards. One teacher noted that the arts standards helped her understand the purpose of the arts lessons: "I didn't understand it…. The students gained a lot by me learning a lot, too. I got a lot out of VAPA, especially."

Teachers also described *how* the TAP strategies boosted student learning. The process of acting out a story—physically projecting themselves into the make-believe situation—seemed to help children to mentally simulate what is going on in a story. This brought the decontextualized language to life, helping children to understand the plot and/or feelings of characters. A first grade teacher explained: "Children act out the story elements and that helps them to get a better understanding of what it looks like. They act it out first; then they write. It helps a lot." Another teacher noted that acting our stories "is a good assessment because you see that they get it (oral

language, vocabulary, characterization)—or they don't."

Teachers reported benefits specific to the English language Development of ELLs. Often teachers mentioned the impact that theater and dance activities had upon vocabulary acquisition. The following comments were typical:

*   For ELLs, it is a great way to practice vocabulary.

*   Children take the vocabulary they learn in these lessons, then use it elsewhere.

*   Their background knowledge grows. That increases their vocabulary.

When K-2 teachers described their experiences in integrating creative drama activities into their daily teaching, their comments contained striking echoes of descriptions found in the research literature. The quote below describes a kindergarten teacher's experience:

I found acting it out would help my English learners remember the message of the story. They need visuals. They need to see it to make connections.

First and second grade teachers gave examples of the impact drama lessons had on other literacy activities. A teacher explained: "When we were discussing characters from stories, I'd say: 'Remember when you had drama, how you felt when you acted it out…?'"

Impact on Student Engagement and Attendance. School engagement in the early grades may be of special importance, given that research has shown that absenteeism among kindergarten students is associated with negative first grade outcomes and correlated with dropout rates (Peek, 2009). In interviews, teachers in the Teaching Artist Project pointed out children's need for movement and fun, which many teachers felt had been stifled by the heavy emphasis on teaching —and testing—for basic skills following passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Typical comments included:

*   For me, it's bringing the fun back in the classroom. The children are moving. Before (all

          the testing) there used to be more ways for children to learn.

*   I can see my kids more involved and excited. Drama is the fun time of the day. So, that

          gets them going. It gets them excited about the day

*   It makes children want to come to school and do well in other areas.

*   There is a lot of enthusiasm and eagerness to participate. As soon at the teaching artist

          arrives, they are up and ready to go.

During the 2008-09 school year, a study was carried out to investigate whether the increased level of student engagement on arts days had a measurable impact on attendance. The research team looked at five schools where all of the arts lessons at a specific grade level were taught on the same day. Attendance rates on arts days were compared to attendance rates on days without arts lessons. Because schools varied in regard to the day of the week on which the art lessons were taught, day of the week was not a confounding variable. The analysis also controlled for school, grade, and month of the year (Hinga, Brouillette, Farkas & Grove, 2012). We found that, on average, student attendance was a statistically significant 0.65 percentage points higher on days and in locations where the teaching artists were present.

Measuring Improvement in Listening and Speaking

As mentioned earlier, there have been two slightly different versions of the K-2 Teaching Artist Project. The version of the project evaluated in the quantitative study described below sent teaching artists into classrooms to co-teach 14 theater lessons and 14 dance lessons with classroom teachers. To determine the impact of the K-2 Teaching Artist Project on CELDT listening and speaking scores, a quasi-experimental study was designed to control for differences between the experimental and comparison groups. What follows is the analysis of data from five

randomly selected experimental schools and 13 randomly selected comparison schools. The

level of analysis is the student. At the beginning of the study, the schools had been randomly

assigned to experimental or comparison conditions so as to eliminate selection bias.

CELDT data for fall 2010 and fall 2011 were provided by the San Diego Unified School

District (SDUSD), along with demographic data that could be linked to each student participant.

These files represent students in first, second, and third grades who could be matched across two

CELDT scores: from fall 2010 to fall 2011. Three separate data files were merged and the data

was cleaned to eliminate students from both the experimental and comparison schools who had

moved during the intervention or who were lacking the needed scores for the analysis.

What resulted was an experimental group consisting of 267 students and a comparison

group consisting of 2981 students. Males and females were proportionately represented in the

sample with the experimental group containing 52.4 percent males and 47.6 percent females.

The comparison group contained 51.8 percent males and 48.1 percent females. The experimental

and comparison groups also demonstrated comparable distributions related to ethnicity, with the

largest representation being 89.5 percent Hispanic for the experimental group and 86.2 percent

Hispanic for the comparison group. The largest notable difference for ethnicity was realized in

the combined category for Asian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino students where the experimental

group showed 3.7 percent, while the comparison group showed 9.8 percent. Table 1.1 below

provides the complete distribution of ethnicity for the experimental and comparison groups.

Table 1.1 (from p. 37) about here

A similar consideration related to group comparability was that of socio-economic status

(SES). District data provided a measure of this variable, by student, consisting of a self-reported

level of education collected from parents during school enrollment in the fall of 2010. Table 1.2

below provides a view of the level of comparability for SES with the greatest number of parents in the experimental group reporting as "high school graduates" (28.1 percent) and the greatest number in the comparison group reporting as "not a high school graduate" (32.2). For the experimental group, the second highest parent reported level of education was "declined to state or unknown" (27.3) and third highest reported as "not a high school graduate" (21.7). In the case of the comparison group, "high school graduate" (30.2) was the second highest reported level of education and "decline to state or unknown" (22.2) was third highest. In the experimental group, 77.1 percent of parents had a high school education or less. In the comparison group 84.6 percent of parents had a high school education or less.

Table 1.2 (from p. 38) about here

The CELDT fall 2010 and fall 2011 listening and speaking score analysis utilized a gain scores analysis approach. Using this approach the fall 2010 listening and speaking scale scores were subtracted from the fall 2011 listening and speaking scale scores to produce a gain score between the two years. The gain score was then converted to a Z-score (Rogosa & Willett, 1983), which is a commonly used approach for multi-year analysis using an ANCOVA framework. Table 1.3 provides scale scores, gain scores, and Z-scores for the experimental and comparison groups from the fall 2010 and fall 2011 CELDT. The table demonstrates the pattern of higher experimental group scale scores, gain scores, and Z-scores for the CELDT fall 2011.

Table 1.3 (from p. 39) about here

Table 1.4 shows the results of the ANCOVA for the CELDT listening gain scores. A gain score was calculated from the student's 2010 CEDLT listening score to the 2011 CEDLT listening score. The gain was then standardized to a Z-score. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of regression.

The analysis shows a significant difference for the experimental group (Grouptype) when controlling for the 2010 scaled scores (listeningSS10), grade, ethnicity, and parent level of education. The results show $F (1, 3242) = .5.125$, p= .024. The adjusted r-square is low at .111.

Table 1.4 (from p. 40) about here

Table 1.5 shows the results of the ANCOVA for the CELDT speaking gain scores. Following the same procedure used for listening results, a gain score was calculated from the student's 2010 CEDLT speaking score to the 2011 CEDLT speaking score. The gain was then standardized to a Z-score. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of regression. The analysis demonstrates a significant difference for the experimental group (Grouptype) when controlling for the 2010 scaled scores (speakingSS10), grade, ethnicity, and parent level of education. The results show $F (1, 3242) = .20.1344$, p.= .000. A strong interaction between the experimental group and outcome variables was realized in this analysis with a strong r-squared value of .515.

Table 1.5 (from p. 41) about here

Discussion and Limitations

The analysis of the CELDT fall 2010 to fall 2011 scores for students in the experimental and comparison groups shows a significant interaction between the experimental group and outcome variables, which was maintained across CELDT listening and speaking scores. The interaction was stronger with the experimental students on the outcome variable for CELDT speaking. Several factors strengthen this noted interaction such as the selection process initially to randomly assign similar schools to the experimental and comparison conditions. Secondly, as noted in the ANOVA analysis, the student populations in both the experimental and comparison groups demonstrated little difference on baseline demographic and CELDT score variables with

23

the exception of ethnicity. This analysis stands as a starting point for the intervention realizing these types of gains for experimental students in the future and replicating this research to confirm future findings against these initial findings.

As with any research study there exist certain limitations. The sample for the experimental group is small. With new schools rolling into the intervention, future studies of this project will be able to increase both the experimental and comparison group sample sizes. The gains for experimental students maintain a significant interaction; however, these gains do not specifically control for what might be occurring at comparison schools related to English language development. The analysis assumes a "business as usual" understanding of instructional conditions at the comparison schools. Future studies related to this project would benefit from a further understanding of the instructional conditions for English language learners within the comparison schools.

Implications

In recent decades, the attention of educational reformers in the United States has focused on variables ranging from budget, to curriculum, class size, and school-level accountability. None of these initiatives has had a significant effect on the achievement of students. As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan noted after the results of the 2010 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) were released, "The United States came in 23rd or 24th in most subjects. We can quibble, or we can face the brutal truth that we're being out-educated." (Dillon, 2010, p. 1A)

To react to these discouraging results by rewarding or punishing teachers, based on their students' test scores, is likely to do little to improve schools. Leaders must identify professional development opportunities that will enable educators to respond effectively to challenges such as the achievement gap between ELLs and other students. Instructional strategies such as those used

in the San Diego Teaching Artist Project hold the promise of not only expanding listening and speaking skills, but also presenting ELLs with task types—visual representations, movement activities, oral responses—that allow them to show what they know and can do. Additionally, building academic language through integration of the arts and literacy bodes well for addressing aspects of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that are currently a focus of attention for many building-level leaders and leadership teams.

The San Diego Unified School District is the 8th-largest district in the United States; many factors have an impact on student achievement in such a large, diverse district. Still, it is interesting to note that, in spring 2013, the district's student achievement scores were the highest they had ever been—and the gap between high-income and low-income students was the lowest it had been. What makes this achievement remarkable is that, during the previous five years, California's public schools had weathered the worst budget crisis in the system's history.

In at least 37 states, nation-wide, public schools received less state funding in 2011 than in 2010. In 30 states, schools were receiving less funding than they had four years before (Oliff & Leachman, 2006). If teachers are to close the achievement gap between ELLs and other students, affordable but effective ways must be found to fill the continuing need for professional development. The Teaching Artist Project (TAP) proved to be both effectual and cost-effective. Many highly-qualified professional actors and dancers have welcomed this opportunity for regular part-time employment. Yet, in contrast to the high fees charged by many professional developers brought in for a one-time presentation, the San Diego teaching artists receive about the same hourly remuneration as a veteran teacher.

In San Diego, salaries of the artists were paid by a federal grant. Costs were kept low by utilizing in-house expertise. Resource teachers from the district's Visual and Performing Arts

(VAPA) Department organized the training sessions for teaching artists, carried out observations of the artists in the classroom, and presented the introductory professional development sessions for classroom teachers. Many options exist for school districts that wish to implement a similar program. Local theater or dance companies are often eager to partner with school districts in approaching local sponsors or writing grants to support teaching artists. Arts programs also tend to be popular with parents, who may volunteer to assist with fundraising.

Compared to sending teachers to a summer professional development institute, the Teaching Artist Project offers two advantages: 1) the teacher receives one-on-one coaching from an expert in her/his own classroom, working with her/his own students; 2) the students in the teacher's class benefit from weekly lessons with the teaching artist. The San Diego lesson plans and classroom videos are available as a free resource to any school that wishes to make use of them: http://sites.uci.edu/class/theatre-grades/ (for theater) or http://sites.uci.edu/class/dance-lessons-grades/ (for dance). Should a school not wish to employ teaching artists, these same self-guided lessons could be implemented by motivated teachers, perhaps with the assistance of parents who possess theater or dance experience.

Impact on Annual Yearly Progress

Under the federal NCLB legislation of 2001, ELLs are one of the mandated subgroups whose test scores are used to determine whether schools and districts are meeting goals for adequate yearly progress (AYP) based on state-level performance standards. However, designing programs that effectively boost ELL language development and move students toward higher levels of achievement on standardized tests has proven difficult. ELLs in United States schools come from a wide range of linguistic backgrounds. Although a majority of ELLs speak Spanish at home, it has been estimated that approximately 400 different native languages are spoken by

ELLs nationally (Educational Testing Service, 2009). While a bilingual Spanish-English program may be helpful to a Spanish-speaking population, speakers of Chinese, Somali or Urdu would not benefit. In contrast, the arts-based approach taken by the Teaching Artist Project benefits all ELLs.

The isolation of many minority communities has presented a stubborn challenge. Nearly 70 percent of limited English proficient students are enrolled in only 10 percent of the nation's elementary schools (Cohen, 2005). In these predominantly urban schools, LEP students account for almost half of the student body (on average). Because these schools tend to be located in neighborhoods where most residents speak a language other than English at home, children may have limited opportunity to learn oral English in informal settings. Therefore, opportunities to improve listening and speaking skills at school are crucial.

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Appendix

Grade 1 Theatre Introductory Lesson

Note: The teaching artist will lead this lesson the first week. Each following week, the teacher will lead a version of this lesson immediately prior to the arrival of the teaching artist.

Warm Up

The teacher introduces the theater lesson, telling students that they will all learn how to be actors and audience members. The teacher asks students: What do you think an actor does? The teacher follows this discussion with an explanation that actors use their bodies like an instrument and they have to tune that instrument every day.

Modeling

The teacher arranges students in a circle, emphasizing personal space or "bubble." (Students must keep enough distance between them not break the bubble that constitutes someone else's personal space.) Then the teacher demonstrates how students are to introduce themselves, circling an arm in an exaggerated wave, being sure to cross over the midline of the body, and saying their name in a loud theater voice. Students take turns doing this around the circle.

Guided Practice

Have students follow the instructor through a series of warm-up theater activities to improve focus and concentration while warming up the body, voice, and imagination. These may include: stretching, yawning, tongue twisters, mirroring, loud/soft voice, large/small shape, humming.

Debrief

Pull the class together to discuss what an actor does, how to use their body, and why focus and concentration are important. Remind students of any rules of conduct that need to be shared.

Grade 1: Lesson 1, Facial Expression

Modeling

Choose two classroom texts, one fiction and one non-fiction. With the class, review the pictures in each book without looking at the words. Assist students in describing the people/characters with words. Assist students in making "I wonder…" statements about the people/characters. (Example: I wonder if she is feeling sad/happy/scared/curious/worried, etc.)

Guided Practice

In pairs have one student (A) create a facial expression to portray one of the people/characters in the book. The other student (B) mirrors this facial expression. Repeat with the other characters in the book, alternating who leads and who mirrors. Circulate among the students, calling out specific details about the facial expressions they are creating. Read the books to the class.

Debrief

Lead a discussion focused on the following questions: How does an actor use the face to show emotion to an audience? What kind of emotions did we see in the fictional book? What kind of emotions did we see in the non-fiction book? Were the emotions we came up with in class the same as the emotions described by the words of the story?

Table 1.1: Experimental and Comparison Group Student Ethnicity

	Student Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Experimental	African American	11	4.1
	Asian/PacIsl/Filipino	10	3.7
	Hispanic	239	89.5
	White	7	2.6
	Total	267	100.0
Comparison	African American	102	3.4
	Asian/PacIsl/Filipino	293	9.8
	Hispanic	2571	86.2
	White	15	.5
	Total	2981	100.0

Table 1.2: Measure of Student SES by Experimental and Comparison Group

	Parent Reported Level of		
Education		**Frequency**	**Percent**
Experiment	Graduate school/post-graduate	6	2.2
	College graduate	20	7.5
al	Some college/AA degree	35	13.1
	High school graduate	75	28.1
	Not a high school graduate	58	21.7
	Declined to state or unknown	73	27.3
	Total	267	100.0
Comparison	Graduate school/post-graduate	56	1.9
	College graduate	130	4.4
	Some college/AA degree	273	9.2
	High school graduate	901	30.2
	Not a high school graduate	960	32.2
	Declined to state or unknown	661	22.2
	Total	2981	100.0

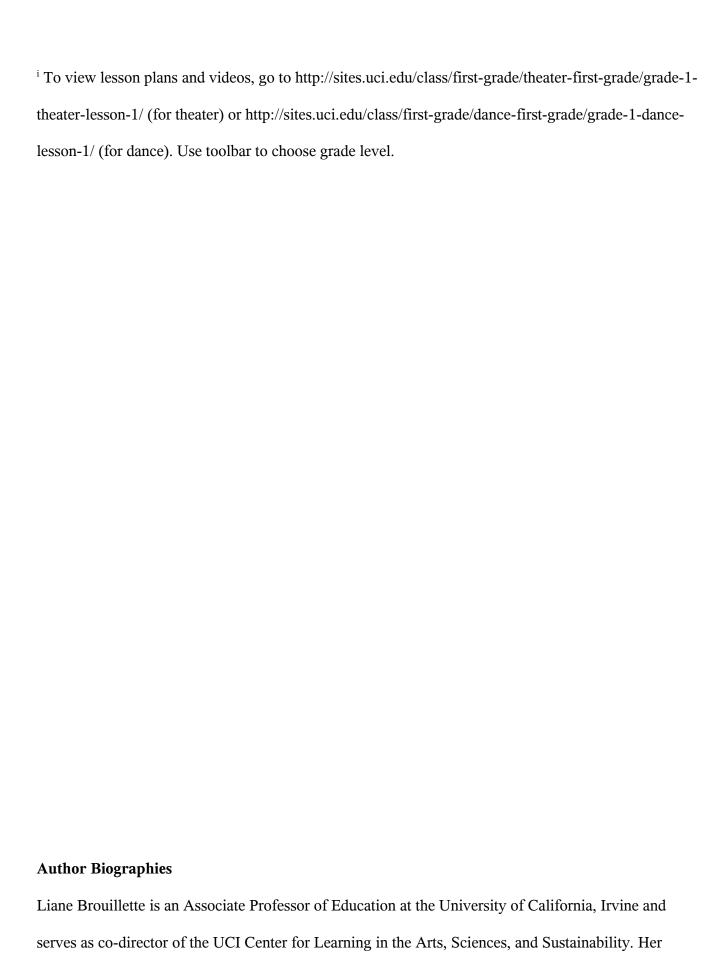Table 1.3: CELDT Scale Scores, Gain Scores, and Z-scores for Listening and Speaking

	Score Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	ListeningSS10	267	220	570	444.73	56.35
	SpeakingSS10	267	140	630	463.03	66.15
	ListeningSS11	267	267	640	497.95	62.71
	SpeakingSS11	267	330	630	500.54	46.32
	GainListening	267	-146.00	218.00	53.21	49.03
	GainSpeaking	267	-101.00	274.00	37.51	57.06
	Zscore(GainListen)	267	-3.37	2.98	.10	.85
	Zscore(GainSpeaking)	267	-2.31	4.24	.10	.99
Comparison	ListeningSS10	2981	220	570	440.39	61.35
	SpeakingSS10	2981	140	630	454.39	73.40
	ListeningSS11	2981	220	640	487.04	69.62
	SpeakingSS11	2981	140	720	485.12	52.49
	GainListening	2981	-206.00	289.00	46.64	57.92
	GainSpeaking	2981	-260.00	327.00	30.72	57.11
	Zscore(GainListen)	2981	-4.42	4.22	-.009	1.01
	Zscore(GainSpeaking)	2981	-5.09	5.17	-.009	.99

Table 1.4: ANCOVA Comparison and Experimental Group Listening Gain Score

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	359.377[a]	5	71.875	80.696	.000	.111
Intercept	160.711	1	160.711	180.434	.000	.053
ListeningSS10	279.261	1	279.261	313.532	.000	.088
Grade enrolled	3.515	1	3.515	3.947	.047	.001
Ethnicity	6.539	1	6.539	7.342	.007	.002
Parent Level of Ed	16.094	1	16.094	18.069	.000	.006
Grouptype	4.565	1	4.565	5.125	.024	.002
Error	2887.623	3242	.891			
Total	3247.000	3248				
Corrected Total	3247.000	3247				

a. R Squared = .111 (Adjusted R Squared = .109)

Table 1.5: ANCOVA Comparison and Experimental Group Speaking Gain Score

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1673.775[a]	5	334.755	689.841	.000	.515
Intercept	334.369	1	334.369	689.046	.000	.175
SpeakingSS10	1184.056	1	1184.056	2440.025	.000	.429
Grade enrolled	49.525	1	49.525	102.058	.000	.031
Ethnicity	7.694	1	7.694	15.856	.000	.005
Parent Level of Ed	2.096	1	2.096	4.319	.038	.001
Grouptype	9.872	1	9.872	20.344	.000	.006
Error	1573.225	3242	.485			
Total	3247.000	3248				
Corrected Total	3247.000	3247				

a. R Squared = .515 (Adjusted R Squared = .515)

[i] To view lesson plans and videos, go to http://sites.uci.edu/class/first-grade/theater-first-grade/grade-1-theater-lesson-1/ (for theater) or http://sites.uci.edu/class/first-grade/dance-first-grade/grade-1-dance-lesson-1/ (for dance). Use toolbar to choose grade level.

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