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BOOSTING LANGUAGE SKILLS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS THROUGH DRAMATIZATION AND MOVEMENT

Christa Mulker Greenfader ■ *Liane Brouillette*

How can K–2 teachers foster the language development of students who have limited English backgrounds? This article explores using performing arts activities to boost the oral language skills of English learners.

Depending on where you look, the city of San Diego can appear to be either the quintessential American city—home of Sea World and the San Diego Zoo—or an exotic Pacific Rim locale where the first day of school often resembles a family-oriented version of the United Nations. Parents say goodbye in a dozen languages. Kindergarteners stare at teachers in shy silence. What comes next? Each kindergartener walks in the door with five years of

life to offer: experiences, abilities, and dreams. But how do teachers tap into these funds of knowledge when, during these first days of school, there is no

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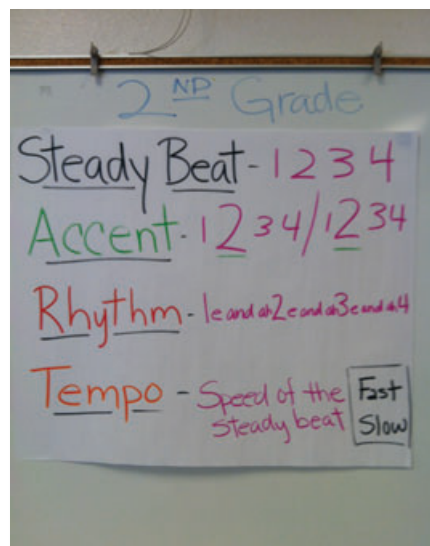
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common tongue that all in the classroom share?

Nationwide, the number of school-aged English learners (ELs) is growing rapidly. Between the 1997–1998 and 2008–2009 school years, this segment of the school-aged population increased by 51% (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2010). Currently, nearly 70% of ELs read at a below basic level (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011), performing 20 to 50 percentage points below native speakers (Menken, 2010). This problem is especially acute in California; one in four California kindergarteners speaks a language other than English at home (Education Data Partnership, 2010). Yet many teachers in the primary grades have not received adequate preparation for teaching students who have little knowledge of English.

In Southeastern San Diego, where ELs form a majority of new students, many teachers are becoming adept at using arts-based teaching methods as one way to overcome language barriers. Using drama and dance lessons designed to address the oral language segment of

English Language Development (ELD) standards, the Teaching Artist Project (TAP) affords students the opportunity to practice speaking and listening skills in a comfortable and fun environment. This article describes the teaching strategies used in TAP and highlights findings from a research study that found TAP to boost the oral language skills of young ELs, providing evidence that creative arts activities can provide valuable opportunities for ELs to develop foundational literacy skills.



Oral practice in the classroom serves both students and teachers, affording students the opportunity to learn and demonstrate language skills and providing teachers a means of gauging student vocabulary, syntactic skills, and comprehension. Monolingual learners benefit from oral language practice; ELs need such practice even more (Castro, Páez, Dickinson, & Frede, 2011)

because they have limited opportunities to use English at home and therefore rely on classroom experiences.

As evidenced by state ELD standards, practitioners and researchers acknowledge the importance of oral language instruction; however, many teachers receive little training in using this resource during certification programs. Verbal interactions in the classroom have waned in the face of pressure to prepare students for written tests. Many teachers feel—and are, in fact—underprepared to address the needs of EL students (Télliez & Waxman, 2006).

In the past decade, many U.S. classrooms have replaced oral language practice with large blocks of reading instruction. In a study of San Diego's literacy reforms, Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, and Socias (2009) determined that verbal interaction was limited, even in the district's "balanced literacy" program. The design of the program emphasized the employment of *accountable talk*, an interactive learning strategy designed to foster student-led discussion and help students draw meaningful

Conceptual Framework

Research supports the pivotal importance of oral practice to English language development (Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Oral language has been linked to future reading ability, academic success, and social dispositions (Spira, Bracken, & Fischel, 2005). Storch and Whitehurst (2002) presented a useful framework that highlights key components of oral language: semantic knowledge (vocabulary), syntactic knowledge (structural and grammatical rules), conceptual knowledge (topic understanding), and narrative discourse (story construction and/or recall). This comprehensive model, which includes both mechanical and cognitive elements, suggests why oral language is a critical foundational literacy skill. Furthermore, beyond the vocabulary and comprehension levels of oral language, there is a social dimension that promotes a higher level of communication, aiding comprehension.

Pause and Ponder

- Are you able to work daily oral language practice into your classroom schedule?
- What techniques do you use to engage the English learners in your classroom?
- Are there times when children tend to get restless, when acting out a brief scene from a story might provide a chance to physicalize action and practice speaking?
- How might drama and/or creative movement activities enrich your morning literacy block?

connections between text and prior knowledge.

Researchers found, however, that in practice it was primarily the teacher, not the students, who directed this talk. Students did not engage in interactive dialogue with one another; instead, they responded directly to the teacher with little elaboration. The study revealed that reading instruction accounted for 87.3% of literacy instruction segments, with an average of 11.6% of the remaining segments focused on composition and writing. This left little time (1.1%) for oral language instruction, phonics, and so forth.

Nationwide, other content areas that provide oral language opportunities have faced dramatic cutbacks. Since 2007, almost 71% of U.S. schools have reduced—or eliminated—instruction time in such subjects as arts, music, history, and foreign language (Grey, 2009). The arts can expand opportunities for verbal interaction by promoting interactive and engaging learning environments, which allow ELs to feel comfortable practicing oral language skills (Castro, Páez, Dickinson, & Frede, 2011).

For the purposes of this article, we use the terms *arts activities* and *the arts* to refer to the performing arts disciplines of drama/theatre and creative movement/dance. Such structured arts activities can offer rich opportunities for students to hone important early literacy skills. By integrating movement and gesture with vocabulary lessons, plot discussions, and dialogue, teachers facilitate the development of students' semantic and conceptual knowledge, as well as narrative discourse. Additionally, the timing and structure inherent in drama and dance may help students' syntactic understanding; rhythm is a predictor of future reading abilities (Huss, Verney, Fosker, Mead, & Goswami, 2011).

“Dramatization helps students better understand the plot and the feelings of the characters, even if they do not initially comprehend all of the words.”

Dramatic play and creative movement come naturally to young children and serve a crucial role in their construction of meaning (Piaget, 1962). Children possess a sense of dramatic narrative they can put to use in classroom arts lessons by acting out stories or discussing plot, character, and themes. This is especially valuable for ELs as it allows them to inject their own cultural understanding into the story, using other modes of communication to take part in a meaningful dialogue despite a limited English vocabulary. In a study of drama in multilingual classrooms, Medina and Campano (2006) discovered that “through *teatro*, the students found a safe space to *fictionalize reality* and enact more empowering individual and collective representations from which others might learn” (p. 333).

When children improvise scenes from stories, they immediately bring their own experiences to bear. Dramatization helps students better understand the plot and the feelings of the characters, even if they do not initially comprehend all of the words. Mages (2006) proposed a causal model to explain the impact that creative drama has been shown to have on literacy and language development. By using their bodies and voices to dramatize the characters' words and actions, children gain a sense of how interactions among the characters shaped the events described in the story. “In this way they can touch, see, and experience the meaning of the words in the text” (Mages, 2006, p. 335).

As children continue to dramatize stories, they may build a stronger and more direct pathway from the decontextualized language on the page to comprehension of what the words mean. As Harris (2000) explained: “the role player projects him- or herself into the make-believe situation faced by the protagonist” (p. 36). Having fed the make-believe situation into their own knowledge base, children arrive at feelings and utterances appropriate for that role. By fully engaging their imaginations, children may increase their ability to mentally simulate the events, characters, and nuances of a story. Eventually, as the children become better able to project themselves into the make-believe world of the story, they may reach a point where dramatization may no longer be needed to facilitate comprehension.

Teaching Artist Project

TAP is a 2-year, K–2 arts and literacy program that has been implemented in 30 San Diego schools serving neighborhoods with large populations of ELs. Funding for TAP currently comes from a U.S. Department of Education Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination grant. TAP integrates ELD concepts with drama and dance through weekly collaborations between teaching artists and classroom teachers. The objective of TAP is two-fold: to provide K–2 teachers with professional development that enables them to stimulate engaging verbal interactions in the classroom, and to bring standards-based

arts instruction into schools where it has been all but eliminated in the primary grades. Our discussion focuses on the K-1 segment of the program as it has thus far been shown to have the greatest impact on student achievement.

In San Diego, TAP employs a coaching model during the first year, providing teachers an opportunity to co-teach with a teaching artist in their own classrooms. Together, the teacher and the teaching artist implement a prepared, 50-minute lesson, consisting of arts activities designed to meet both the Visual and Performing Arts and the ELD standards. Teachers outside San Diego can access a “virtual coach” by making use of the TAP curricular materials online. Lesson plans for dance and theatre, including streaming videos of teaching artists modeling the activities in actual classrooms, are available free of charge.

Over time, teachers become comfortable using interactive arts lessons to offer ELs engaging opportunities to practice oral language and rehearse vocabulary. In the second year, the San Diego teachers implement the lessons on their own, with support from district resource teachers. The online lesson plans and videos of the first nine lessons are available to remind teachers of lesson details, providing novice teachers with an easily accessible resource.

And, Action!

Let’s take a look at a TAP lesson in progress:

“Actors, five point position, please!” The kindergartners jump to attention, standing with hands at their sides, heads high, feet together. Most of the children have limited English skills, yet they follow along easily because their teacher demonstrates as he speaks. “I am going to read a story about a bear hunt. There

are lots of sounds we can make to tell the story. I need you to help me create some sounds for *setting* the story. But first let’s practice making some sound effects of our own.” He begins patting his legs gently to represent a light rain; then he pats more strongly for heavy rain. He asks the students to *mimic* him. Twenty pairs of hands pat their legs, creating a rainstorm in the classroom.

Now it is time for the bear hunt.

In a soft voice the teacher begins, “Going on a bear hunt”; then he switches to a loud voice, “going to catch a big one!” The students mimic his words and dynamics. As they continue with the poem, he shows the students how to insert their own sounds to create the “setting”: squishy grass, gooey mud, tall trees, a deep river, and dark cave.

These activities are simple, yet engaging; they provide ELs with a rich opportunity for vocabulary development. Such lessons complement what many teachers are already doing in their classrooms. “[TAP] is so connected to all the literacy stuff we do... It’s really just one thing. So, I think that’s really helpful for our English learners,” observed one first-grade teacher. Furthermore, certain TAP concepts are closely related to the K-2 English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards, specifically to Speaking and Listening. The first ELA Speaking and Listening standard for each of these grade levels is for students “to participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners... with peers and adults in small and



larger groups” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Through dramatization and movement, students engage in call-and-response communications with each other and their teacher(s).

Arts lessons also provide students with the opportunity to practice pronunciation, tone, and gesture, helping them learn to “speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly” (a Common Core Standard for kindergarteners). One TAP lesson focuses on voice projection. As a teacher noted, “we talked about voice projection, and I still use that. Well, I call it ‘loud and proud’... So I would bring that into my lessons when we’re having a discussion, and I’ll be like, ‘okay Michelle, I’m going to call on you, give it to me loud and proud.’” Another teacher added:

In theatre, a lot of the vocabulary words were using your imagination, using expressions. So that kind of lent itself to when you read a book and there’s an exclamation mark. You’re not going to read it like you’re normally talking. You’re going to read like you’re excited because you’re going to the park or swimming. So, let’s change your voice. In Goldilocks, when she saw the bears,

she didn't say "oh, my," she said "Oh, My!"

Yet, many teachers do not use arts-based activities as strategies to teach standards. A 40-year veteran teacher commented, "I never thought of arts as standards-based. I never even thought about *what* it was you were supposed to teach in arts!" Video demonstrations by teaching artists and TAP curricular materials illustrate how the arts are not only fun and engaging activities, but also effective instructional tools for addressing standards.

TAP Works!

A mixed-methods study, consisting of standardized tests, interviews, and focus groups, was conducted to determine the impact of TAP on the early literacy skills of ELs. (Please see the appendix for a description of the research). We discovered that TAP had a significant positive impact on the oral language skills of K-1 ELs, especially at the kindergarten level. This is noteworthy, considering the consensus among researchers on the strong connection between early oral language abilities and future literacy. This evidence justifies teachers acting on what many intuitively sense: oral language is important. When early elementary teachers integrate arts lessons that emphasize oral language, children build an enhanced foundation for literacy.

"We discovered that TAP had a significant positive impact on the oral language skills."

"It's the kinesthetic piece... ELL students are hearing it. They're doing it. They are understanding it. It's huge... This is how people learn."

To get a close-up look at what was happening in classrooms, five school-level focus groups (with 16 veteran teachers) were carried out in 2010-2011. The majority of teachers found that the TAP lessons were beneficial and cited improvement in literacy skills, comfort levels, and engagement of all students, especially ELs. One teacher commented, "...the children who had been in kindergarten last year, and are now my first graders, moved two levels [on the CELDT]. Two full levels!"

The interviews revealed that the student gains from TAP were noticed by teachers in all grades. In addition, although teachers indicated that ELs had benefited most from TAP, they affirmed that native English speakers also had profited from TAP lessons.

Discussion

In the following section, we explore teacher perceptions shared during interviews and focus groups concerning why TAP had a significant effect. Interestingly, teachers described both direct and indirect impacts the arts activities had on participating students. At the individual-level, teachers credited multisensory activity (i.e., pairing gesture and language), rhythm and syllable practice, and student engagement as having a direct impact on children's language skills.

Beyond this, many teachers indicated that TAP initiated a shift in the classroom climate that transferred outside of the arts lessons. In their interviews,

teachers commented that the arts activities created a comfortable environment for student participation and collaboration; this helped with behavioral issues such as children keeping their hands to themselves.

Student Impacts

In accordance with the conceptual framework put forward by Mages (2006), a majority of teachers attributed the enhanced English language development to students "physicalizing" the language. They stated that movement and gesture helped ELs to learn and remember the vocabulary presented in the TAP lessons. One teacher commented, "It's the kinesthetic piece... ELL students are *hearing* it. They're *doing* it. They are *understanding* it. It's huge. It's hearing it and doing it *themselves*. This is how people learn. It's different from sitting at the table."

This observation supports Mages' argument that using bodies and voices simultaneously boosts comprehension and memory. Arts-based lessons provide visual, auditory, and kinesthetic input that, when combined, powerfully signals the importance of the new information, helping it to become integrated with existing knowledge. Such learning helps students to organize, rehearse, and recall material that they have encountered in other lessons (but which has not yet made its way out of working memory) and transfer it into long-term memory. This aligns with research on multisensory processing (Gardner, 2006). Different types of perception and

“The language alone was amazing. Kids who don’t ever speak, speak. You see a lot of kids shine that you don’t expect to shine....”

processing are reinforced and strengthened as they work both separately and in conjunction, enhancing mental activity and assisting the transfer of information from working to long-term memory (Shams & Seitz, 2008).

A kindergarten teacher talked fondly of a boy who, for the first month of school, spoke only in Spanish. She could communicate with him only through a translator and could not tell if he understood her words or not. A lesson about a grumpy bear became a turning point. Students were asked to act out the grumpy bear’s feelings, which helped this boy tremendously. Once he fed the make-believe situation into his own knowledge base, internalizing the grumpy bear’s moods, he was able to act those feelings out and associate those sentiments with vocabulary words. During each TAP lesson after that, he became more vocal and participatory.

A first-grade theatre lesson focused on nursery rhymes, highlighting how a teacher might scaffold language learning and comprehension. First, the teaching artist asked students to repeat after him, imitating his sing-song, rhythmic tone. In expressive voices, the students repeated: “Jack-and-Jill-went-up-the-hill-to-fetch-a-pail-of-wa-ter.” This emphasis on rhythmic enunciation, coupled with pitch variation, provided students with a syntactic framework for correct pronunciation, understanding, and memorization. Next, they began making movements while repeating the rhyme, physically defining the phrase.

As the lesson continued, the teacher divided the children into groups to act

out their own (different) versions of the story (e.g., maybe Jack and Jill are not siblings but good friends, or Jack decides that he does not want to go up the hill). They were allowed to add characters or plot lines and change the story any way that they chose. This interpretation phase built on cognitive learning theory, leading to stronger, more lasting effects through encouraging creativity and student participation.

Organic environments such as those associated with arts activities engage students, encouraging them to draw on existing knowledge, which promotes language development. Such contextual learning is both meaningful and memorable for the student. Children were excited about TAP, as shown by a boost in attendance on lesson days (Hinga, Brouillette, & Farkas, 2012). Teacher interview data also indicated that students were spontaneously practicing TAP activities outside of TAP time. This signified a level of student engagement and participation that was pivotal in building an effective learning environment. As one teacher observed, “The primary benefit to the teacher was the engagement of students, obviously. To see that every student has equal access to this curriculum and that they willingly and eagerly participate is huge.”

Classroom Culture

Teacher-led classroom instruction limits interaction. Confident talkers answer the questions posed by the teacher, whereas students who are not comfortable, or perhaps do not have the language skills to comprehend

or respond, remain silent. This limited interaction can handicap learners who do not have the tools to participate. Including arts activities is one way to encourage student participation. One kindergarten teacher commented:

I think for some of my ELL students, it (TAP) was good for them to be able to show me, instead of having to tell me. I have a couple of them who go to speech and it was good to see them act and they didn’t have to explain and feel embarrassed or anything. They were just moving around and doing it that way.

The TAP coordinator noticed that many of the students who were initially afraid to speak did speak when they were given a line to read. “Feeling confident enough to verbalize something, even if it’s given to them, is a good thing.” A first-grade teacher added, “The language alone was amazing. Kids who don’t ever speak, speak. You see a lot of kids shine that you don’t expect to shine...So it was really fun to see some new friends shine. That [encouraged] a new sense of confidence.”

To become orally proficient, students must feel comfortable in their social environment. The interactive arts activities promoted a supportive and collaborative classroom environment. One teacher commented:

I think of a couple of kids who are really shy when you’re just discussing something in class...they’re the ones who are spinning and dancing! So I think it changed a lot of them in the way that they felt more comfortable around each other. And if you can go do that in front of each other, why can’t you work as a group in the class? Because you’ve already been silly and had fun together. It just made... our classroom community seem tighter and better.

Another teacher added, “We have a very over-active group of boys. We really saw them shine in dance... really take it on and really like it. And it built such a

sense of community for our class. Kids that don't like each other were changing partners and dancing."

Teachers also mentioned that they used TAP strategies to mitigate behavior issues. One of the dance lessons uses an exercise in which children create a "personal bubble." The teacher asks the students to stretch out their arms and legs and imagine that a bubble surrounds their outstretched limbs. The children then dance around the classroom, starting out slowly and then moving quickly. They are encouraged to move their bodies creatively; the only rule is to not break out of their bubble and enter into anyone else's bubble. One kindergarten teacher found this exercise particularly beneficial in teaching her class about personal space.

I have a lot of kids that can't keep their hands to themselves. But when they're in [TAP] they're just different kids... When they're moving around the room, they have to keep their personal space. Even when they're moving fast and slow at different speeds, they still watch where they're going and I think they're more conscious of how other people are feeling and moving in there... So it's changed a lot with some of the behavior."

Implementing TAP Activities

Without question, one of the benefits of TAP in the San Diego classrooms was the teaching artist. However, access to teaching artists is not necessary for integration of drama and dance in the primary grades. As a teaching artist exclaimed to a group of teachers: "You're

"Because kindergarten and first-grade teachers routinely read out loud to students, most found it easy to guide children in dramatizing short scenes from stories."

already doing theatre. You just don't know it yet!" Because kindergarten and first-grade teachers routinely read out loud to students, most found it easy to guide children in dramatizing short scenes from stories. TAP teachers reported feeling comfortable showing children how to identify the beginning, middle, and end of a scene or to use facial expressions and gestures to convey feelings.

Some teachers felt less comfortable teaching dance. However, in such cases, most schools found the dance lessons valuable enough that they rearranged their schedule, appointing one teacher to teach dance to all classes across the grade level. Another alternative is recruiting parent volunteers to help. Involving parents with an interest in drama or dance not only helps the teachers, but also is a means of reaching out to the community and further engaging students.

New teachers who came into TAP schools after the teaching artist year mentioned that they relied on the online materials to learn the lessons. One such



teacher noted that the "the videos were really helpful." An afterschool teacher who has recently implemented TAP lessons on her own (separate from the TAP discussed in this article) suggested, "It helped me to take notes on the videos and use those notes to guide my instruction when necessary." She also noted that it was helpful to:

have a clear idea of the activities (ahead of time) so that the flow of the lesson is not disrupted. The teacher may want to write an outline on the board for both students and teacher to refer to throughout the lesson so that the teacher does not need to rely on looking down at her notes. The more familiar and comfortable the teacher is with the plans, the more smoothly the lesson will flow.

She concluded by commenting that "a background in arts is not necessary. These plans can be followed like any other and only require a thorough and clear understanding of the material and the particular set of students the teacher is working with."

Keys to Success

Case studies of the successful implementation of TAP at two schools with

“Drawing on arts lessons throughout the day is one way to reinforce core concepts such as collaborative conversations and clear expression.”

differing demographic profiles suggested pivotal elements in success. In one school, 77.8% of students were ELs and 96% were eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; at the second school, 27% of students were ELs and 72% were eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Teacher Collaboration and Ownership

Teachers worked together closely at both sites. After the first year of co-teaching with the teaching artists, mentor teachers at each grade level facilitated regular meetings that allowed colleagues to generate ideas and swap strategies in grade-level groups. Teachers became resources for one another, collaborating on lesson planning, sharing what worked and what did not work from previous weeks. Cooperation fostered creativity, enabling teachers to find ways to

integrate TAP lessons throughout the curriculum. A kindergarten teacher recalled, “we would talk about the different projects and all see how we could take those art projects and activities and incorporate it in the curriculum because we didn’t want it to be separated from the academics.” Another teacher commented that hearing colleagues admit their initial nervousness or feelings of awkwardness helped build her confidence.

A second-grade mentor teacher in a school where a temporary classroom was used for the arts lessons indicated that the teachers structured their schedules to coordinate TAP lessons:

We picked the time the same day so that we followed one another... I was first, and then I wrote all the stuff on the board for what the lesson was about. And then, the next teacher came in and could use that for their thing. And then the last teacher could come in and use it.

Fidelity of Implementation

The success of any program is strongly connected to fidelity of implementation (O’Donnell, 2008). Teachers at both schools committed to doing all of the TAP lessons the year after they had co-taught with the teaching artists. Both schools decided to stick with the same schedule they had adopted when working with the teaching artists, teaching the arts lessons at the same time of day, on the same day of the week. Teachers jokingly pointed out that students remembered TAP lesson time, even if teachers had

forgotten. “We go through all the lessons because we have that special time and that’s the time we do it. And the kids wouldn’t let us forget!”

Curriculum Integration

Research has established that curriculum integration, an interdisciplinary approach to core skills and concepts, is an effective teaching and learning method (Beane, 1997). All of the TAP lessons were designed to have applications in other subject areas. At both schools, teachers found themselves frequently using TAP concepts and tools throughout the curriculum. Teachers used pantomime techniques for vocabulary study, dance (counting of beats) for math, tableau and improvisation with reading aloud, and warm-up techniques throughout the day to get the students’ attention or restore classroom order when needed.

Such an integrative approach is well-aligned with the objectives of Common Core expectations. Drawing on arts lessons throughout the day is one way to reinforce core concepts such as collaborative conversations and clear expression. One kindergarten teacher noted:

After we did our voice projection, when the kids were speaking during think aloud, we would use classroom voices, and then we would use our quiet voices in the library, you know our low voices, and our gruff voices when we’re acting out characters, but never when we’re talking to the teacher or our peer students.

Integrating Drama and Creative Movement

Improvising scenes or simulating actions through dramatization and creative movement enables children to tap into their own experiences. By using their voices to dramatize the characters’ words and actions—or their bodies

TAKE ACTION!

Arts strategies can be used with almost any lesson. Teachers who are interested in implementing TAP activities in their classrooms can access online K–2 lesson plans and videos of classroom teachers co-teaching with teaching artists, free of charge, at www.class.uci.edu/theatre-grades and www.class.uci.edu/dance-grades.

to create settings or moods—students learn to connect the decontextualized text used in the classroom to their experiences outside of school. Through engaging their imaginations in this way, children increase their ability to comprehend: to mentally simulate the events, characters, and concepts described.

Even if they do not initially comprehend all of the words, ELs can understand the plot and the feelings of the characters in a story through dramatization. By imaginatively touching, seeing, and experiencing the significance of the words in the text, children inject themselves into the situation described by the author and grasp the meaning of events in human terms. This allows each child to go beyond the limitations of his or her English language vocabulary and engage with literature on the child's actual developmental level.

Arts-based learning also introduces the attention-grabbing aspect of novelty. When teachers repeatedly use the same teaching methods, children become habituated to them. Sprinkling creative arts activities into a curriculum that has become routine not only engages young learners, but also serves as one way to incorporate standards-based learning and boost academic performance, notably the fundamental literacy skills of ELs.

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MORE TO EXPLORE

Articles on the Teaching Artist Project

- Brouillette, L. (2012). Supporting the language development of limited English-proficient students through arts integration in the primary grades. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 113(2), 1–7.
- Brouillette, L. (2011, Summer). Building the oral language skills of K-2 English Language learners through theater arts. *The California Reader*, 44(4), 19–29.
- Brouillette, L. (2010). How the arts help children to create healthy social scripts: Exploring the perceptions of elementary teachers. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 111(1), 16–24.

Lesson Plans for Puppetry Activities

- Kindergarten (Busy Spider): www.class.uci.edu/LessonUploads/Busy%20Spider.pdf
- Grade 1 (Three Billy Goats Gruff): www.class.uci.edu/LessonUploads/Three%20Billy%20Goats%20Gruff.pdf
- Grade 2 (Jabuti): www.class.uci.edu/LessonUploads/Jabuti.pdf

Even More!

- *The Poets of El Sol: Writing Poetry With Young ELs*: escholarship.org/uc/item/9t13c8ht#page-1
- *Research on the Arts and Academic Outcomes*: www.artsedsearch.org/students/research-by-age-level/elementary-school

Appendix

Quantitative Analysis

Sites that received the Teacher Artist Project (TAP) were randomly selected from the district's Title 1 (high poverty) schools, allowing for an unbiased analysis of the program's effects. The sample included K–1 English learners (ELs) from five treatment schools; the control group was made up of a matched group of ELs from similar schools. Table 1 presents the summary statistics of the sample. The control schools did not receive TAP lessons or an assigned condition; they conducted "business as usual."

We ran multiple regressions by grade level. For the outcome variable, we used the Speaking and Listening subtests and the overall score on the

2010–2011 California English Language Development Test (CELDT), a test taken by all California ELs until they are reclassified as English proficient. The key independent variable was whether the student participated in TAP. Control variables included gender, ethnicity,

parent education, and prior achievement. Results indicate statistically significant benefits for kindergarteners on Listening and Speaking assessments ($p < .05$) and marginally significant benefits for first graders on the overall CELDT score ($p \leq .10$) (Table 2).

Table 2 Impact of Teaching Artist Project on 2011 K–1 CELDT Scores

| | Overall | | Listening | | Speaking | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|
| | K | 1st | K | 1st | K | 1st |
| TAP Intervention | 0.12 (0.09) | 0.06[†] (0.04) | 0.14* (0.06) | 0.08 (0.05) | 0.35* (0.17) | 0.11 (0.09) |
| <i>N</i> | 1537 | 1675 | 1537 | 1675 | 1537 | 1675 |
| <i>R</i> ² | 0.53 | 0.64 | 0.43 | 0.34 | 0.47 | 0.36 |

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. Coefficients are standardized.

Controls include gender, ethnicity, parent education, and prior achievement (previous CELDT score).

* $p < 0.05$. † $p \leq 0.10$.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Sample

| Grade | Kindergarten | | | | First Grade | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Treatment | | Control | | Treatment | | Control | |
| <i>N</i> | 130 | | 1407 | | 131 | | 1544 | |
| Male | 54% | | 53% | | 49% | | 50% | |
| Hispanic | 91% | | 87% | | 88% | | 86% | |
| Parent graduated high school | 64% | | 59% | | 70% | | 59% | |
| CELDT | Pretest | Posttest | Pretest | Posttest | Pretest | Posttest | Pretest | Posttest |
| Overall | 423.01 (48.15) | 470.72 (44.03) | 417.89 (57.22) | 462.81 (50.64) | 463.66 (45.66) | 501.24 (47.88) | 456.73 (50.18) | 492.83 (47.40) |
| Listening | 421.01 (49.86) | 484.43 (50.76) | 417.38 (60.12) | 473.08 (63.55) | 470.22 (48.88) | 512.55 (69.19) | 461.97 (54.10) | 499.95 (72.48) |
| Speaking | 431.84 (65.08) | 500.44 (51.63) | 424.51 (72.73) | 478.26 (60.06) | 493.22 (51.84) | 501.87 (38.52) | 481.68 (63.02) | 491.37 (43.96) |

Note. Total sample $N = 3212$.

Mean CELDT scores. Ranges are as follows: Overall: 184–598; Listening: 220–570; Speaking: 140–630. Standard deviation is in parentheses.