

Creative Dramatic  
Play in the  
Kindergarten  
Classroom: We All  
Love to Play!

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**My Teaching Context**

I am an intern teaching in a self-contained kindergarten classroom at Park Forest Elementary Annex. Our class consists of twenty students, mentor teacher, intern,

classroom paraprofessional, and a special education paraprofessional. Within our diverse classroom there are students from many different ethnic backgrounds. There are eight girls and twelve boys. One student is ESL, one student has Asberger's syndrome, two are emotional support and five are learning support.

There is a wide spread of developmental differences within my teaching context. For our morning centers, the class is split into four different groups based on classroom performance and achievement. The groups change depending on the periodic assessment of the student's performance over time. In order to meet the individual needs of the students in the classroom, I was able to differentiate my inquiry instruction for each group.

### **The Pathway to My Inquiry**

As an advocate, performer, patron and teacher of the arts I was thrilled to have the opportunity to share my passion for the arts with my kindergarten students. Theater, like life, is often unpredictable. For this reason I welcomed the many changes and innovative creativity to blossom in our classroom. To fully understand how important the arts are to me, it would be helpful to explain my background. As a child I was encouraged and supported to participate in community theater productions, community vocal ensembles, private voice lessons, private piano lessons, private French horn lessons, ballet class, jazz class and lyrical dance class. The repeated exposure to the arts opened many doors for me throughout my educational experiences. I was involved in school musicals, school vocal ensembles and theater productions.

In college, I was cast in the Penn State's 2004 production of Cabaret performed in Eisenhower auditorium where I performed as Fraulein Kost. I have traveled across the eastern United States on a spring tour with the Penn State Singing Lions. Because of my talent and passion for the arts many other opportunities have arrived. I have had the chance to sing at Joe Paterno's private Christmas parties, performing onstage with the Penn State Thespians for three main stage shows, working backstage on costumes at the Boal barn theater and I have participated in the State College Area Talent show in February 2005. Throughout the year, I earn extra money singing at weddings.

I was also invited to be a soloist at the Penn State MasquerAIDS benefit to raise money for victims of AIDS. In addition, I was selected as a soprano in Penn State's University Choir. Through my many experiences in the theater, I have learned that theater mirrors life. Just as theater mirrors life, I began to notice that my student's play during recess imitates real life.

As soon as I learned about the inquiry project I began to brainstorm areas of my teaching where I felt a burning desire to dig deeper. I looked through various literatures hoping to come across something that would spark my interest. I found the quote by Albert Einstein, "Imagination is much more important than knowledge." I felt that this was an ironic quote coming from the most intellectual genius and yet he is speaking about the importance of imagination. This quote jump started my brainstorming process and thus led to many of my original brainstorming questions listed below:

- How would students benefit if I increase the use of music in my instruction?
- **Would the sound club kids benefit with learning letters and sound through music?**

- Would students be more willing to participate if I use music?
- How can I create a musical to help us develop stronger content understanding of letter and sounds?
- Will having students participate in a class alphabet musical increase the success and mastery of letters and sounds?
- How can I maximize my student's motivation and engagement?
- How can theater help my Kindergarten students learn their letters and sounds?

What impact would music/theater have on classroom management?

Thus this led me to my inquiry. I wanted to see *how I could use creative dramatic play to increase student's motivation, participation and desire to learn*. I think that this topic is very important because I wanted to find a way to encourage my students to be as excited about learning, as they were about playtime. I felt if I could find a strong connection, I would really be onto something very exciting!

I hoped to increase my student's motivation, participation and desire to learn. I did not realize at the beginning of my project how profound of an effect it would have for me to incorporate creative dramatic play into the classroom.

At first, I attempted to use music to help students learn their letter and sounds. I thought this was important because children need to recognize letters and sounds before they can learn to read. I also thought it would be something that I would enjoy doing because I love to sing. However, I began testing the students individually and was surprised to find that that a large portion of my students knew both their letters and their sounds. Although it would have been a worthwhile endeavor to aid the students who

needed additional instruction, I was more interested and intrigued to conduct an inquiry project involving the class as a whole.

I decided to turn my attention to my next passion, theater. I began taking surveys with my students, eager to continue with my inquiry. The first question of the survey was, “What is your favorite part of the school day.” Not surprisingly, my students were very truthful in that almost all of them admitted that playtime was their favorite time of the day. This was exciting because I thought that we could put on a play!

Next, I began researching creative dramatic play in the classroom and soon began to realize that the play that my students engage in is much different and yet very similar to the plays and theater I was familiar with. The more I researched, I learned that my students already were engaging in creative dramatic play during recess. As I continued to research, I felt that spontaneous creative dramatic play fit well with my teaching style and philosophy.

The next step was to see if I could incorporate creative dramatic play into the classroom as an academic endeavor. With the focus on the standards and the less time for such activities as creative dramatic play, I wanted to see for myself if the research on the validity and necessity that spoke of the benefits of creative play would show themselves in my classroom and with my students. This led me to my overall wonderings. Would it be worthwhile for a kindergarten teacher to use creative dramatic play and make it an important part of the classroom routine? How could I incorporate creative dramatic play into the classroom to increase student’s participation, motivation and desire to learn?

## **This Inquiry is Important!**

My inquiry is important for a variety of reasons the first is that many kindergarten classes are now full day, as opposed to half –day, that used to be the norm. With the increase of full day kindergartens, teachers have more standards that students are required to meet, thus leaving almost no time for creative dramatic play. I wanted to see if the research was true and discover for myself if creative dramatic play could be used to teach curricular objectives in an already full schedule, as well as increase participation, motivation and desire to learn.

Second, kindergarten children are five and six years olds, who developmentally need to explore their environment through creative dramatics. It is through this exploration that children can experiment with different roles in society, as well as learning how to behave in different social situations. Children need different scenarios where they can interact with other children. It is essential for kindergarten teachers to teach developmentally appropriate lessons so that the children can best learn.

Finally, I love to have fun! I do not know one person who does not like the idea of having fun! Everyone can attest to the joy of play. If play can be incorporated into the classroom in a meaningful way, then I completely support it! Play is indeed part of the human genetic code. Everyone enjoys playing and there is research attesting to the positive benefits of “playing” in the classroom one would assume that if playing and learning can be combined, it must be worthwhile and fun!

## **What do the experts have to say?**

Before a teacher decides whether or not to implement creative dramatic play into the classroom, one must define what creative dramatic play is as well as investigate the results of using it in the classroom. “Creative drama essentially is a form of imaginative play...It differs from random play because it is facilitated by a leader or a teacher who attempts to structure the play into a definite form. Often this form consists of a beginning, middle, and a conclusion. By emphasizing form, the teacher takes amorphous and random play and elevates it to the educational domain (Kelner, 3).”

There many resources available to a teacher who is interested in incorporating creative dramatic play into the kindergarten classroom. The research supports the many benefits of creative dramatic play in the areas of cognitive development, social development, emotional development, physical development and creative development.

### **Cognitive Development**

Children’s cognition develops as they begin to make connections between the imaginary world structured by the teacher through dramatic play, and the reality that surrounds them in their everyday life. By stretching a story out, the children begin to practice their decoding skills as well as their sequencing skills. After having a chance to experiment with acting out a story, the children’s verbal skills are expressed through vivid descriptions of what happened during the activity. Many researchers believe so

much in the importance of the creative dramatic play that persuasive statements can be made; “*Serious text on cognitive development through drama and should be studied by teachers of young children, and by all educators. For the “as if” mode of mental behavior naturally adopted by most children in their play can be harnessed for curricular end.*”( *Brown and Pleydell, ix*)

### **Social Development**

Children who are involved in creative dramatic play have the opportunity to interact with their classmates in a structured learning environment setting; thus they are attaining vital social skills that are necessary for life. The teacher focuses on a set of specific objects and leads the class. The students collaborate with one another to solve problems and then resolve problems within a group consensus. The conversation and interaction among students during creative dramatic play mirrors the dramatic play most children engage in naturally. Therefore, students are engaged in learning much like they are engrossed in their unstructured creative dramatic play( *Brown and Pleydell, ix*).

### **Emotional Development**

As children learn to empathize with characters in a story, they begin to recognize their own feelings when dealing with similar sensitive situations. They are allowed the freedom to explore feelings without the sometime harsh realities to lock them into thinking that they need to behave a certain way. “In the symbolic world of make-believe, children often express thoughts and concerns that would otherwise go undiscovered or

remained repressed (Bolton, 5).” Creative dramatic play is an excellent tool for teachers to use to learn more about their students. As a result teachers are able to teach more effectively because they have a better understanding of the many emotions that children experience.

### **Physical Development**

When children are actively participating in classroom dramatic play they are allowed the freedom to move about the room freely. By manipulating various props they are continuing to develop their fine motor skills. Activity such as manipulating props, using finger-plays, finger puppets, and miming various hand tasks, exercises fine motor control (Pleydell, 4). Other forms of creative dramatic play incorporate gross motor skills as the students use creative movements to express themselves. During my “How old am I?” lesson, the children had many opportunities to explore gross motor skills as they pretended to be different ages.

### **Creative Development**

Finally, creativity is the basis for any classroom dramatic activity. The children must use their imagination for any of the dramatic play in the classroom to have any real value to their learning. “Through creative problem solving, creative movement, or the spontaneity of an improvisation, drama engages children’s imaginations and stretches their creative thinking (Pleydell, 7).

Teachers need to concern themselves with the tremendous influence of television on our students. Creative dramatic play allows for students with limited imaginations to create new vistas that would have otherwise been smothered by television's force feeding of images into student's imagination (Kelner, 3).

### **These are my wonderings**

The essential question that outlines the purpose for my inquiry is:

*How can I incorporate creative dramatic play into the Kindergarten classroom? By incorporating creative dramatic play in the classroom would I see a positive change in my student's motivation, participation and desire to learn?* My inquiry was very successful in that there were many parts of the school day in which I could experiment by working with my students.

### **My Inquiry Plan**

This section explains the steps in which I took to carry out my inquiry plan.

My brainstorming question, "Would the sound kids benefit with learning letters and sounds through music," became what I had originally thought I would do my inquiry on. As I discussed above, I found that when I began to assess my students, the children had a better foundation of letters and sounds than I previously thought. I had to find a new route.

I turned my ideas to theater and began researching creative dramatic play, which I soon learned was very different from my previous misconceptions of how theater would

look like in a Kindergarten classroom. Before I knew it, my inquiry began to become a vital part of every day as creative dramatic play began to sneak itself into many different areas of the school day!

The spontaneous nature of creative dramatic play allowed me to be flexible in the ways that I wanted to present it to the class. There were countless instances throughout the semester that the class and I engaged in creative dramatic play. The following list highlights the most effective sessions.

- 1.) Nursery Rhyme Theater- “Introduction of theater!” Appendix A**
- 2.) “Stellaluna” Story Dramatization Appendix B**
- 3.) “How old are you?” Appendix C**
- 4.) Abraham Lincoln comes to Kindergarten! Appendix D**
- 5.) Freddie the Moon Alien comes to Kindergarten Appendix E**
- 6.) Creative Dramatic Role Play- “Help me solve my playground problems!”**

#### **Nursery Rhyme Theater- “Introduction of theater!”**

The Nursery Rhyme Theater was the student’s first experience with my inquiry project. The students were learning about nursery rhymes as part of the curriculum and I wanted to introduce theater to them. I worked in small groups with the students and together we talked about putting ourselves in another person’s or animal’s shoes. The children had various roles to choose. For the students who were not as comfortable

performing in front of the class, they had the option where they could participate by holding the cue cards for the other students.

### **“Stellaluna” Story Dramatization**

When I began the “Stellaluna” story dramatization I was looking to see if acting out a story would increase student’s participation during a read aloud. The students were very anxious to act out the story and everyone wanted a turn. The students that were hesitant soon saw the fun that the others were having and before I realized it, the whole group wanted to be a part of the story.

#### **How old are you?**

**Please see Appendix C**

In this lesson the children first listened to a story about a baby boy that grows up to be an old man. After reading the story the children and I discussed how we could use our imagination creation stations to pretend that we were different ages. The children enjoyed pretending to be babies, and then grandparents! They were exercising their gross motor skills as they were allowed freedom to move about the classroom.

#### **Abraham Lincoln comes to Kindergarten!**

**Please see appendix D**

#### **Freddie the Moon Alien Comes to Kindergarten**

**Please see appendix E**

The introduction of Freddie the alien into my kindergarten classroom as part of my inquiry became one of the most exciting and worthwhile experiences for both my students and myself. When I introduced Freddie, the moon alien, I was interested in what would happen when I introduced an imaginary classroom visitor. How would the students respond?

Before I began the space unit, I wanted to find a way to spark student's interest, motivation, participation and desire to learn about the new unit. To do this I incorporated creative dramatic play by introducing an imaginary space alien name Freddie. Freddie the alien would write letters to the students in the form of morning letters. I made Freddie know less about morning letters than the students did, so the students corrected Freddie's letters daily. Not only did the student's help to fill in some of the letters that were missing, Freddie also shared an interesting space fact that had to do with the space lessons that were coming up.

I was able to continue to use Freddie throughout the space unit. Freddie helped with various lessons in the classroom across the curriculum in these subjects:

### **Math**

**Please see Appendix E for an example of student's Freddie math work.**

I used Freddie the Moon alien with a math lesson for the students. I presented the story to them that Freddie lost his moon rocks and they needed to sort and classify the moon rocks (really m & m's) before Freddie could make it back to his home on the moon.

## **Writing**

**Please see Appendix E for student's Freddie writing work.**

Students were allowed the opportunity to write in their journals as a choice time activity first thing in the morning. Many students chose to write letters to Freddie, as well as write stories about him. Also, during instructional language arts centers, the students were encouraged to include Freddie in their writing.

## **Playtime**

**Please see appendix E for letters students wrote to Freddie during playtime.**

Many students chose to write letters, or draw pictures to give to Freddie. Freddie would write letters back to students answering any questions that they had.

## **Classroom management**

Having a pretend alien visit the classroom especially helped me in managing the classroom's behavior. When the students were misbehaving and engaging in off task behavior, I simply did not have Freddie write them a letter the following day. The students enjoyed hearing from Freddie so much, that when reminded that good behavior

might mean a letter from Freddie, it was usually enough to remind the students to get to on task behavior.

### **Team Building**

#### **Please see Appendix E for team building with Freddie!**

The students had to work together in the morning to look around areas in the room to see if Freddie had indeed wrote them a morning letter. The students were very eager in the morning to come and see if there was a letter from their favorite space alien.

Finally, it was a vital part of the Freddie part of my inquiry for the students to understand the Freddie was only real if they used their imaginations. By students turning on their imagination creation station that was introduced in the Abraham Lincoln lesson plan the students began to make clear connections between reality and fantasy.

I was also able to incorporate Freddie into other areas of the curriculum as I began to see that the students enjoyed having Freddie in the classroom, as my evidence will clearly state in section three of my paper.

#### **Creative Dramatic Role Play- “Help me solve my playground problems!”**

During the week of April 3, 2005 the students in my kindergarten class were having difficulties on the playground. Some of the students were excluding other members in our class during recess. I wanted to find a way to try to solve the problems on the playground; hoping that by addressing the issues as a class through creative dramatic play would be a way to help the students solve their problems.

We started the lesson with a class discussion about different experiences with friends on the playground. Working collaboratively, the class came up with three different scenarios in which the students were having particular difficulty. Students volunteered to participate in the different situations. After the role play there was ample opportunities for the students to discuss the various choices they had whenever they were having problems on the playground.

As a result of incorporating creative dramatic play into this activity, I found yet another way that creative dramatic play in the classroom is beneficial to a kindergarten classroom. Please see my first claim to investigate what I learned.

## **Data Collection**

In order to have a successful inquiry, there must be a variety of different means in which the inquirer decides to collect data. Listed below are the different ways in which I collected data through the inquiry process:

Student Surveys

Parent Surveys

Anecdotal notes

Video recording

Journals

Student Work

Photos

### **Student Surveys**

**Please see appendix F**

Student surveys gave me a valuable insight into the thoughts, feelings and opinions of my students on an individual basis. If I had not done a student survey first, I would probably decided to do an entirely different inquiry. The student survey helped me see that students enjoyed recess as the best part of the day and therefore I was able to incorporate creative dramatic play as an academic endeavor.

### **Parent Surveys**

**Please see Appendix G**

The parent survey allowed me another method of collecting data about my students. Parents offered a different insight that was useful in planning creative dramatic lessons in the classroom. Their responses gave more signs that the creative dramatic

lessons in the classroom were valuable, because the students were taking home their school day and sharing their experiences with their parents. Through analyzing the data, I found that students were more likely to discuss creative dramatic play with their parents, rather than the regular lessons.

### **Anecdotal Notes**

It was very helpful for me to have as many adults in the classroom. My mentor teacher, my PDA, myself was all able to write anecdotal notes to observe for different occurrences through the inquiry process. These were especially important because this data provided me with the most detailed descriptions as well as specific remarks made by the students.

### **Video Recording**

There were two parts of my inquiry in which I thought it was important to videotape. The first was “The Nursery Rhyme Theater,” and the second was when Abraham Lincoln came to kindergarten. By video recording these classroom events, I was able to analyze student behavior taking on the role of a visiting teacher observer,

rather than the teacher teaching the lesson. This gave me a different, needed and important perspective while I was analyzing results.

### **Student Work**

#### **Please see Appendix H**

Student work was especially vital because it gave me the opportunity to analyze student growth on paper. This was concrete evidence that furthered my belief in the importance of creative dramatic play in the classroom and its ability to affect student's motivation, participation and desire to learn.

### **Journals**

I found it to be an indispensable part of the inquiry process to journal through my lessons involving my inquiry. Through reflecting about the lessons, I was able to adjust and make the necessary changes when I presented material for my inquiry the next time. Journaling was especially important due to the nature of creative dramatic play, the teacher and the students both need time to feel comfortable with the process. I felt more comfortable through each lesson because I was able to come to conclusions about the best ways and times to present creative dramatic play to my students.

### **Photos**

The photos taken during creative dramatic play were an excellent source of data that capture some of the spirit of excitement felt by the students and myself during creative dramatic play. It also helps to illustrate the different emotions evoked during creative dramatic sessions.

## **How did I analyze the data?**

### **Student Surveys**

The student survey was a tool in which, I was able to know right from the beginning what the students like about the school day. The surveys gave me a clear idea on where to begin my inquiry!

### **Parent Surveys**

The parent surveys were analyzed through looking to see what the students chose to speak about with their parents. By analyzing this data, I could clearly see that students were more likely to talk to their parents about creative dramatic play, rather than a “normal lesson.”

### **Anecdotal notes**

I analyzed the anecdotal notes by reviewing them many times to see if there were any significant quotes that helped to strengthen my inquiry. I found it very beneficial to not only have my own anecdotal notes, but to have my mentor and PDA record anecdotal notes while I was teaching a creative dramatic lesson in the classroom. Having different

perspectives gave me many different ways to see not only how I viewed the lesson, but also how other visitors in my classroom viewed the lesson.

I analyzed the video data by viewing it several times. Through watching the video, I could keep track of who was participating, who was on task, what was said and whether or not the students were enjoying themselves. In my appendix with “The Nursery Rhyme Theater” and Abraham Lincoln Lesson’s I have my anecdotal notes to view.

I choose to view the videos several times. Each viewing I was able to concentrate on different aspects of my inquiry that I was interested in investigating. This was beneficial when it came time to come to my conclusions because my data was organized in a way that I could not only understand, but also be able to explain my ideas to another person.

### **Journals**

My journal was a way for me to communicate with my PDA about the process of my inquiry. This proved to be very helpful in deciding what steps to take further. Therefore, I did not use any of my journals to help me make my claims; rather the journal was a tool for me self assess as well as communicate with my PDA.

### **Student Work**

The student work analyzed in this section of my data analysis was completely spurred on by the wonderful imaginations of my students. The student work and letters written to Freddie were not part of any instructional time of the day. These students chose to use their free play/explore time in the classroom to write letters to Freddie.

I looked to the journals of student work to see how many students chose to write about Freddie the alien as a free choice activity as they came into the classroom. I allowed students the freedom to choose what they would like to write about in their journals. Many students chose to write about Freddie and continue to inquire about the science we were learning in our space unit. This led me to believe, that Freddie was motivating the students to choose to write, when they could have chosen to play.

### **Photos**

I analyzed the data from my pictures from simply looking at the pictures and describing what I see in the photos. The photos helped to capture a feeling in the classroom that words could not describe.

### **This is what I have learned!**

#### **Claim**

Creative dramatic play in the classroom can increase student participation in activities.

#### **Evidence**

In the morning students have an opportunity to write in their journals. I found that more students were likely to write in their journal after we did a play (see appendix H.)

The students were eager to write about what their role was in the play, as well as write about the play that we performed.

Students who were shy in the beginning of “The Nursery Rhyme Theater,” could not wait to participate in the different activities as the year went on! The more experience students had with creative dramatic play, the more they wanted to participate! The student’s work that is included here are the students who never wanted to write in their journals or participate in the play. By the end, students were choosing not only to write, but to write about their part in the play!

### **Claim**

Creative dramatic play can be incorporated into the classroom to teach different curricular objectives.

### **Evidence**

*Freddie the Moon Alien Comes to Kindergarten*

*Please see appendix E*

*The introduction of Freddie the alien into my kindergarten classroom as part of my inquiry became one of the most exciting and worthwhile experiences for both my students and myself. When I introduced Freddie, the moon alien, I was looking especially to see if having the students use creative play with an imaginary classroom visitor would increase student participation in activities, motivation and desire to learn. Before I began the space unit, I wanted to find a way to spark student’s interest, motivation, participation and desire to learn about the new unit. To do this I incorporated creative dramatic play by introducing an imaginary space alien name Freddie. Freddie the alien*

*would write letters to the students in the form of morning letters. I made Freddie know less about morning letters than the students did, so the students corrected Freddie's letters daily. Not only did the student's help to fill in some of the letters that were missing, but Freddie also shared an interesting space fact that had to do with the space lessons that were coming up.*

*I was able to continue to use Freddie throughout the space unit. Freddie helped with various lessons in the classroom across the curriculum in these subjects:*

#### *Math*

*Please see Appendix F for an example of student's Freddie math work.*

*I used Freddie the Moon alien with a math lesson for the students. I presented the story to them that Freddie lost his moon rocks and they needed to sort and classify the moon rocks (really m & m's) before Freddie could make it back to his home on the moon.*

#### *Writing*

*Please see Appendix E for all students' Freddie writing work.*

*Students were allowed the opportunity to write in their journals as a choice time activity first thing in the morning. Many students chose to write letters to Freddie, as well as write stories about him. Also, during instructional language arts centers, the students were encouraged to include Freddie in their writing.*

#### *Playtime*

*Please see appendix E for letters students wrote to Freddie during playtime.*

*Many students chose to write letters, or draw pictures to give to Freddie. Freddie would write letters back to students answering any questions that they had.*

### *Classroom management*

*Having a pretend alien visit the classroom especially helped me in managing the classroom's behavior. When the students were misbehaving and engaging in off task behavior, I simply did not have Freddie write them a letter the following day. The students enjoyed hearing from Freddie so much, that when reminded that good behavior might mean a letter from Freddie, it was usually enough to remind the students to get to on task behavior.*

### *Team Building*

*Please see Appendix E for team building with Freddie!*

*The students had to work together in the morning to look around areas in the room to see if Freddie had indeed wrote them a morning letter. The students were very eager in the morning to come and see if there was a letter from their favorite space alien.*

*Finally, it was a vital part of my inquiry for the students to understand the Freddie was only real if they used their imaginations. By students turning on their imagination creation station that was introduced in the Abraham Lincoln lesson plan, the students began to make clear connections between reality and fantasy.*

*I was also able to incorporate Freddie into other areas of the curriculum as I began to see that the students enjoyed having Freddie in the classroom.*

## **Claim**

Creative dramatic play helps to build community in the classroom.

## **Evidence**

When the students were having difficulty on the playground and I began to incorporate creative dramatic play through role-play to help eliminate the heavy affects of playground trouble. I could overhear students during recess talking about the role-play that we did during center time and they remembered specifically why they were not to exclude other people.

*Mike, Carl and Steve were all playing with their action heroes that they brought in for sharing. Mike and Carl were excluding Steve because supposedly Steve's action hero wasn't the same as Mike and Carl. I overheard Mike say to Carl, "Remember what Miss Gigliotti said about not playing with people?" Then much to my excitement Mike and Carl asked Steve if he wanted to play action heroes with them. Mike also said, "Its ok if your action hero is a little different than ours, we can all play together."*

*During the nursery rhyme theater the students had to work cooperatively as a whole class to decide the ways that they were going to design the background for the project. Because everyone had to share a large piece of paper, one person could not just start drawing unless his or her drawing contributed to the project as a whole. Through putting on a production as a class, the students were able to collaborate with one another and solve problems as they came up.*

*When the students were participating in the "Nursery Rhyme Theater" was a sense of pride in our classroom because the student's learned that the play could not go*

*on unless everybody was part of a team. Thus, as a result of our “Nursery Rhyme Theater.” the children worked together to have a finished product.*

*Creative Dramatic Role Play- “Help me solve my playground problems!”*

*During the week of April 3, 2005 the students in my kindergarten class were having difficulties on the playground. Some of the students were excluding other members in our class during recess. I wanted to find a way to try to solve the problems on the playground; hoping that by addressing the issues as a class through creative dramatic play would be a way to help the students solve their problems.*

*We started the lesson with a class discussion about different experiences with friends on the playground. Working collaboratively, the class came up with three different scenarios in which the students were having particular difficulty. Students volunteered to participate in the different situations. After the role play there was ample opportunities for the students to discuss the various choices they had whenever they were having problems on the playground. Thus, as a result the children had another avenue to explore when dealing with issues between classmates.*

### **Claim**

Creative dramatic play helps to develop student’s creative imagination.

## **Evidence**

*While researching I found many sources claiming that dramatic play helps to develop a child's creative imagination. "Creative dramatic play benefits the child by stimulating imagination and promoting creative thinking (Kelner, 7.)"*

*One of the most exciting parts of my inquiry was seeing the benefits of creative dramatic play even when I wasn't specifically looking for data to collect for my project. At the culmination of our space unit the students were busy working at my center making their space helmets and the students all asked if Freddie could come and hang out with them while they were working.*

*While I was overseeing the classroom centers, I was delighted to hear the students interacting with Freddie just as if he was real. The students were talking to Freddie and asking questions as well as telling Freddie how much they loved him and loved learning about space. It was awesome to see the students working academically and yet at the same time they turned on their imagination creation stations.*

*I also found evidence in my research stated earlier in my paper. I have stated it again as evidence.*

*Creativity is the basis for any classroom dramatic activity. The children must use their imagination for any of the dramatic play in the classroom to have any real value to their learning. "Through creative problem solving, creative movement, or the spontaneity of an improvisation, drama engages children's imaginations and stretches their creative thinking (Brown and Pleydell, 4).*

*Teachers need to concern themselves with the tremendous influence of television on our students. Creative dramatic play allows for students with limited imaginations to*

*create new vistas that would have otherwise been smothered by television's force-feeding of images into student's imagination (Kelner, 3).*

### **Claim**

Creative dramatic play helps to develop student's motivation.

### **Evidence**

*The parent survey that was sent out in the middle of my inquiry project helps to support the claim that creative dramatic play helps to develop a student's motivation. The data that I analyzed from the survey shows that the students in my classroom are more likely to talk to their parents about creative dramatic play in the classroom more than any of the other activities that I mentioned. For the students who did not talk to their parents much about the school day, they mentioned creative dramatic play before mentioning any of the activities.*

*Another exciting piece of data that I collected was the parent's comments regarding creative dramatic play in the classroom. The parents wrote how the student's loved certain activities. This led me to believe that the more positive experiences that can be presented through creative dramatic play the better the student's motivation to come to school and learn.*

*Perhaps the most telling data that I collected was student's work as they wrote letters to Freddie asking him about space, as well as sending him love notes. The students were exploring their new knowledge base of their understanding of the universe*

*as well as their ever-growing literacy foundation. The students chose to write letters to Freddie completely freely and chose to do so often on their own recess time.*

*Students also chose to write Freddie stories during free writing time in the morning before the school day begins. Therefore the students were developing their creative imaginations and being motivated to explore their literacy foundation.*

## **Conclusions and future directions**

Through the experience of inquiring into my teaching practice I feel stronger in my convictions that creative dramatic play/ drama will be a vital part of my future classroom. I want to use the findings and evidence from this inquiry and adjust them to fit whatever grade level I am teaching in. I believe that the benefits I found in the kindergarten classroom will also apply to other grade levels.

*“Without play—without the child that still lives in all of us—we will always be incomplete. And not only physically, but creatively, intellectually, and spiritually as well.” —George Sheehan*

## **New Wonderings**

Based on my inquiry there are few different ideas that I will continue to consider when I use creative dramatic play in the classroom. I also plan on doing a few things differently.

When I continue my inquiry as a teacher, I will use creative dramatic play in math. Although I used Freddie to help the students with their moon rocks, I did not have the chance to have my students act out story problems. This would be especially beneficial in the older grades where the math concepts continue to become more and more challenging.

I would also like to incorporate more music into my creative dramatic play. The piano that I had in the classroom was very beneficial and I would like to inquire more into this area of my teaching.

Through the course of my inquiry I have wondered whether the benefits that I found in the kindergarten classroom would be the same in other grade levels because drama in the older grades looks very different than creative dramatic play in kindergarten. I wonder if older grades would find it to be more difficult to improvise because perhaps they may be too self-conscious. I would want to inquire then and encourage older students to feel the freedom and excitement of creative dramatic play.

I am also interested in how I could maintain a creative dramatic imaginary character in the beginning of the year. I would like to try this again when I have my own classroom to see how it affects the climate of the classroom through the course of an entire school year.

There is one specific choice I will do differently next time. I will not try to inquire into as many parts of my inquiry as I have attempted to do in this project. By focusing on

one aspect of my teaching, perhaps I will be able to have more of the ideas straight in my mind! After this project, I still have many questions I would like to find out. I will take walk away from this project knowing that it is my first attempt at inquiry, and this means that my future projects will be more concise and specific.

Another important idea that I have learned through my inquiry process is that teacher inquiry is never finished! There are many different avenues that the teacher can try to explore and it is important not to try to inquire into too many ideas at once. Through my inquiry, I have realized that I could have just done an inquiry project of one aspect of creative dramatic play in the classroom, rather than the different avenues I decided to explore.

Finally, inquiry is an ongoing process that I plan to continue for the rest of my teaching career. I believe that awareness of my teaching strategies and implementations of lessons in the classroom I can only grow as an educator and thus be the best teacher for my students!

Kelner, Lenore Blank. The creative classroom: a guide for using creative drama in the classroom. Portsmouth, NH : Heinemann. N.p.: n.p., 1993.

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