Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies (ITAS) Program and its Impact on Teachers’ Integration of Theater Arts Strategies in Targeted Literacy Skills

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Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies (ITAS) program and its impact on teachers’ integration of theater arts strategies in targeted literacy skills

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Seton Hall University
2017
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Abstract

Visual and performing arts can be taught in isolation or integrated with other core content subjects such as literacy, math, science, and social studies. Jersey City Public Schools (JCPS) implemented the Integrated Theater and Arts Strategies (ITAS) program beginning in the 2008-2009 school year and lasting through the 2010-2011 school year with eight targeted schools. Visual and performing arts standards exist in both the state’s core curriculum standards and national standards. Despite these existing standards, implementation is minimal in JCPS. JCPS plans to develop and implement the ITAS program for targeted schools with sixth and seventh grade students. Language Arts Literacy scores on standardized tests for some of the targeted schools are among the lowest in the district. One of the purposes of the study was to determine if the workshops, training and support given to targeted teachers through the ITAS program have an impact on successful lesson implementation and students’ literacy skills, integrated through the program, in targeted sixth and seventh grade classes in Jersey City Public Schools (JCPS).

The goals and objectives of the program are aligned to the New Jersey and National Core Curriculum Content Standards. Teachers in the targeted schools will be provided with professional development that will include strategies to integrate arts within the language arts literacy curriculum. Results from the study and training materials will be shared with educators both within and outside of the district.
Dedication

This book is dedicated to my family who are my pillars of strength and encouragement. Thank you Mom, Michelle, Howard, Grandma, Sam, Mama Bear, and Papa Bear. Thank you for your belief in me and for always reminding me to keep my eyes on the prize. I share this prize with you for being there with me throughout this journey. Thank you also to Norm and Princess, my library roommates, for their encouragement and friendship.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mentor Dr. Daniel Gutmore for his support and direction through this journey. Thank you to my reader Dr. Elaine Walker, who gave me the opportunity to conduct my study based on the larger study she conducted of the Jersey City Public Schools Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies program. My smaller study of this project was enlightening, informative, and encouraging. The positive results of the study have increased my support of the arts in schools and its integration into the curriculum.
# Table of Contents

List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... x  

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1  
  Background .............................................................................................................................. 4  
  Research Problem .................................................................................................................. 8  
  Theoretical Framework .......................................................................................................... 8  
  Significance of the Study ........................................................................................................ 8  
  Definition of Terms ................................................................................................................ 10  
  Limitations and Delimitations ................................................................................................. 11  

Chapter 2: Literature Review .................................................................................................. 13  
  A Definition of Arts Integration ................................................................................................. 13  
  Arts Education at the Federal Level ....................................................................................... 13  
  Arts Education and Arts Integration’s Relevance to Curriculum and Student Achievement ... 15  
  The Arts and Brain Research .................................................................................................. 23  
  State Policy Standards for Arts Education in New Jersey ........................................................ 24  
  Teaching the Arts Through an Interdisciplinary Approach ..................................................... 25  
  Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) Program ....................................................................... 25  
  Effective Professional Development and Arts Integration ....................................................... 27  

Chapter 3: Design and Methodology ....................................................................................... 33  
  Research Questions ................................................................................................................ 33  
  Design ................................................................................................................................... 34  
  Population ............................................................................................................................... 34  
  Instrumentation ....................................................................................................................... 36
Research Questions ........................................................................................................ 41
  Research Question 1 ................................................................................................. 41
  Research Question 2 ................................................................................................. 41
  Research Question 3 ................................................................................................. 42
  Research Question 4 ................................................................................................. 42
Survey Question 1- Demonstrated Active Listening .................................................. 43
Survey Question 2- Asked Stimulating Questions ..................................................... 44
Survey Question 3-Was Able to Work in Groups/Pairs ............................................. 45
Survey Question 4- Was Able to Focus on Writing Piece ......................................... 47
Survey Question 5-Was Able to Make a Connection With the Novel ...................... 48
Survey Question 6- Put the Lesson Plan Into Action Successfully ......................... 49
Survey Question 7- Challenged Students’ Critical Thinking Skills ......................... 50
Survey Question 8- Was Able to Modify Lessons ..................................................... 52
Survey Question 9- Made Connection Between Dramatic Activities and the Novel .. 52
 Summary .................................................................................................................... 57

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations ....................................... 58
  Summary of Findings ............................................................................................... 58
  Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 59
  Implications ............................................................................................................ 61
  Recommendations ................................................................................................. 62
  Further Recommendations ...................................................................................... 66
 References ............................................................................................................... 68
List of Tables

Table 1 2009-2010 School Report Card ......................................................................................... 35
Table 2 Paired Samples Correlations........................................................................................... 40
Table 3 Demonstrated Active Listening ......................................................................................... 44
Table 4 Asked Stimulating Questions............................................................................................. 45
Table 5 Was Able to Work in Groups/Pairs .................................................................................. 47
Table 6 Was Able to Focus on the Writing Piece ........................................................................... 48
Table 7 Was Able to Make a Connection With the Novel ............................................................... 49
Table 8 Put the Lesson Plan Into Action Successfully ................................................................... 50
Table 9 Challenged Students’ Critical Thinking Skills ................................................................. 51
Table 10 Was Able to Modify Lessons ............................................................................................ 52
Table 11 Made a Connection Between Dramatic Activities and the Novel ................................. 53
Table 12 Paired Samples Correlation ............................................................................................. 54
Table 13 Paired Samples Test ........................................................................................................ 56
Chapter 1: Introduction

Research has shown that inclusion of the arts in the curriculum with integration of core content subjects can contribute to students’ academic and social development. This finding has been a common theme throughout the literature on integration of the arts. Research continues to be conducted on the strength of the relationship between arts integration and student achievement. Student outcomes in studies of the arts have been measured academically and with varied subgroups and factors (e.g., age, gender, socio-economic status, geographic location).

Despite district, state, and national standards and the No Child Left Behind law, that are inclusive of arts standards, many school districts do not fully implement the standards. Champions for arts integration, such as Deasy (2002), view the arts as an integral part of a basic education that can yield positive results for students at all grades levels. “This is why every young person, without exception, should be given access to the arts, not to become artists, but to be better educated.” (Fowler, 1996, p. 6). Arts organizations nationwide continue to lobby for the arts to share equal billing with the other core content subjects such as math, reading, writing, science and social studies. However, the arts are often the first to be eliminated when budget cuts arise in schools and/or districts.

In order to implement and integrate arts standards in the curriculum, teachers must receive training. Some schools and school districts across the United States have implemented arts programs that provide professional development in various formats for teachers in an effort to fulfill arts standards, integrate the arts with core content areas and enhance student achievement. The quality and amount of time teachers are exposed to professional development can positively affect teachers’ implementation of arts integration programs, practices and strategies.
Both theoretical and empirical data exist on the study of the effects of arts integration in the curriculum, teachers and teaching artists and student learning. Sample sizes for the studies have varied, as well as the duration of studies and the ages of students. Findings from these studies have been used to introduce or support theoretical ideas. For example, Graziano, Peterson and Shaw’s (1999) study found enhanced learning of proportional math training through music training and spatial temporal reasoning. The group exposed to piano instruction outperformed their peers on a math video game. Similarly, the Education Arts Team (EAT) also found a significant difference in the achievement on NJASK, a standardized test, between a large sample of students who were exposed to the Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies (ITAS) program and those who were not (Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011). Students involved in the program also outperformed their peers who were not exposed to the program as evidenced in two 3-year studies with fourth- and fifth-grade students and then sixth- and seventh-grade students.

Although research has demonstrated the link between the arts and student achievement, state and national standards remain the same and varied levels of implementation exist in schools and/or school districts. Some schools and school districts are making efforts to strengthen and/or integrate the arts into the core content areas. In contrast, some policy makers, educators and parents see the arts as a luxury justifying its elimination when budget cuts arise. Regardless of these cuts, national standards for the arts still exist.

Studies conducted on the effects of arts integration in the curriculum in elementary school through high school grades were the major influence on the design of this study and the research questions. The results of the studies on the ITAS program in Jersey City influenced the literature presented in Chapter II. Studies and research completed on other arts programs and
their influence on student learning and teacher practice complimented the data presented from the ITAS program.

In addition to the studies on arts integration, studies that examined professional development for teachers also influenced this study. The work of Walker, Finkelstein, Tabone and Weltsek in 2010 and 2011 presented findings on the positive effect an integrated theater arts program had on fourth-, fifth-, sixth- and seventh-grade students’ LAL achievement in Jersey City Public Schools. The studies that provided data for a period of at least 3 years influenced this study the most.

Jersey City, which is the second largest city in the state of New Jersey, is a state-run school district since 1989 where students have continued to fall below state benchmarks on standardized tests in the area of Language Arts Literacy. The District has a strong history of supporting theater arts. However theater arts was not integrated into the language arts curriculum. Visual and Performing Arts standards are included in both state and national standards. The District applied for and received a federal grant. Through the grant, JCPS implemented a 3-year program titled Integrated Theater and Arts Strategies (ITAS). The district recognized a need for improvement in Language Arts Literacy (LAL) throughout the grade levels and particularly in middle school grades. In response to data from standardized tests, such as the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK), Grades 6 and 7 were targeted in eight schools in JCPS for the arts program. One of the predicted outcomes for the program included improved literacy and arts lesson implementation within the context of the literacy curriculum and standards and the improvement of targeted literacy skills.

In 2005, the JCPS Theater Arts Infusion – Arts in Education grant started a project with fourth and fifth graders who were exposed to theater arts strategies in an effort to improve
literacy achievement. The results indicated that the students, who were exposed to the theater arts strategies, outperformed their peers who were not exposed to the program on the NJASK in literacy. The success of the program led to the ITAS program continuing with a second grant in 2008 with sixth and seventh grade students and classrooms.

Background

JCPS students have scored among the lowest in language arts on New Jersey standardized tests at all grade levels. Approximately 7.7% of the students receive ESL and bilingual instruction, and there are more than 30 languages other than English that are spoken by students. Free and reduced-price lunch status ranges from 77%-88% among the eight schools that are targeted in this study.

A significant percentage of students performed below standards on the state assessments. In the 2006-2007 school year the literacy assessment results for the district did not meet state standards. 62% of fourth grade students were proficient or above in language arts literacy. Only 51.6% of eighth grade JCPS students in the same year were proficient or above on the NJASK8 in language arts literacy. At the high school level, 65.4% of 11th graders were proficient in LAL on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). Six schools in the study had scores that were among the lowest in the district.

The ITAS Project provided professional development on arts integration to a treatment group of 22 teachers as part of the grant. The teachers met four times during the school year to discuss their use of drama strategies in their classrooms. Demonstration lessons on the book *Magic Circle of Drama* were done by Educational Arts Team (EAT) staff the previous year before the teachers taught the lessons on their own. Teacher reflection through journals and
discussion was also a part of the professional development process. They worked in groups of four or five to develop lesson plans using the strategies they learned and experienced.

The fourth- and fifth-grade teachers were asked to complete a survey regarding their attitudes towards the usefulness of the arts in their classroom after a 3-hour workshop. A Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most favorable, was used for five statements. The results showed that classrooms who participated in the workshops had favorable attitudes towards the usefulness of the arts in their classroom. A total of 90.7% of the teachers responded that “drama can be an effective way of motivating students to become better readers”; 93.8% of the teachers responded that “by using dramatic role playing students can get a better understanding of what characters are experiencing in stories”; 90.2% of the teachers responded that “workshops like the one today can help me become more effective teaching language arts”; 89.4% of the teachers responded that “as a result of this workshop I have a better understanding of how to use drama in my classroom”; 89.1% of the teachers responded that “the kinds of activities we learned in today’s workshop can help my students get along better with one another.”

Teachers were also surveyed regarding their use of drama strategies by the number of training hours they had. 69.5% of the teachers with three hours of training and classroom demonstrations responded that they used drama strategies in their classroom. 87.3% of the teachers with six hours of training and student classroom demonstrations responded that they used drama strategies in their classroom. As evidenced by the data it, “appears that the more teachers are exposed to the drama education training and classroom demonstrations the more likely they are to use drama as a strategy.” (Tabone, 2004) 17.8% more of the teachers who were trained for six hours subsequently used drama strategies in their classroom compared to teachers who were trained for three hours.
This project is an expansion of the 2005 JCPS *Theater Arts Infusion – Arts in Education* grant that was funded by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The Educational Arts Team (EAT), a nonprofit organization that has worked with JCPS since 1974, collaborated with the district on this project. Targeted fourth- and fifth-grade students were exposed to the arts in seven schools. Twenty-eight classrooms from these schools were randomly selected and assigned to the project. Another 28 classrooms that were not assigned to the project served as the control group. The program resulted in positive results in academic gain for the targeted fourth- and fifth-grade students. These students outperformed their peers who were not a part of the treatment group. 90% of over 550 fifth-grade students who were involved in the project in grades four and five passed the LAL section of the NJASK 5. Only 71% of the control group of over 550 students who were never exposed to the project passed the LAL section. Seventeen percent of fifth-grade students who were part of the 2005 Integrated Theater Arts project as fourth graders’ results were Advanced Proficient in LAL. Two percent of fifth graders who were not part of the project as fourth graders scored Advanced Proficient. A survey was also given to students to determine their attitudes about the project. Their survey responses consisted of yes or no responses. Overall, an overwhelming majority of the students enjoyed being a part of the project and saw its benefits through their achievement in literacy on the NJASK5.

Students in classes taught by Action Research Project teachers outperformed students in the control group on standardized language arts tests by 26%. The success as per the results and findings from the past Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies program made the current project proposal promising for the predicted outcomes of the 2008 project.

Currently, district-wide professional development for arts standards and integration do not exist in JCPS. Exposure to visual and performing arts in the district has been minimal with
the exception of the Theater Arts Infusion – Arts in Education grant that was funded by the DOE in 2005. Targeting the middle grades is important as research on middle level education continues to find encouraging results on academic and social achievement through integration of the arts. Fowler (2006) stated the following, “The effect of arts study on learning in general, though not yet substantiated sufficiently, can be surprisingly positive. Students that study the arts seem to do better overall” (p.138).

The Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies program provided teachers in the targeted schools with professional development on how to integrate arts strategies across the curriculum with alignment to the standards. Training includes classroom demonstrations by EAT staff, lesson plan development and teacher reflection. During the 2008-2009 school year, teachers in the program received two 6-hour training workshops. They also received two 6-hour training workshops during the 2009-2010 school year. The results and research from the project will be shared within the JCPS district as well as with educators in other districts.

The larger study from 2005-2008 by Walker, Tabone and Weltsek examined student achievement in Language Arts Literacy on standardized state tests after being exposed to the ITAS program. This study adds to the larger study by examining teachers’ ability to implement the theatre arts lessons in literacy and students’ demonstration of targeted literacy skills as reported by their teachers throughout the program. The results from this study add to the body of evidence that exists that theatre arts strategies infused with literacy can have a positive effect on not only the learning process, but also the teaching process. The shift in teaching practices had an impact on students’ ability to demonstrate and improve literacy skills such as active listening, asking stimulating questions, focusing on the writing piece making a connection with the novel and dramatic activities in the novel.
**Research Question**

How does the number and frequency of teachers’ training hours in an integrated arts program to improve LAL, that is aligned with state and national performing arts standards, impact lesson implementation and students’ literacy skills in targeted sixth- and seventh-grade classes in Jersey City Public Schools (JCPS)?

**Theoretical Framework**

Visual and Performing Arts are part of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS). These standards build upon the National Standards for Arts Education. As per the NJCCS, it is expected that all students demonstrate the ability to communicate at a “basic level” in each of the four arts disciplines (dance, music, theater and visual art) by the end of fifth grade. Visual and Performing Arts education and programs continue to be affected by school budget cuts despite evidence of the support it lends to core content subject areas such as LAL. Fowler (1996) stated, “Research has shown that what students learn in the arts may help them to master other subjects, such as reading, math or social studies.” In his book, *Strong Arts, Strong Schools: The Promising Potential and Shortsighted Disregard of the Arts in American Schooling*, the Fowler shared that “the arts strengthen schools and student achievement” (p. 6).

**Significance of the Study**

The above stated problem is worthy of study as it explores the outcomes of a program that is designed to improve targeted JCPS middle school students’ LAL skills through theater arts integration. Teacher responses to the survey will indicate students’ use of the targeted literacy skills, taught using theater arts strategies and teachers’ implementation of lessons after workshops with teaching artists. Achievement was measured by teachers’ feedback regarding the implementation of lessons and evidence of students’ Literacy skills being addressed
(Demonstrating active listening, Asking stimulating questions, Ability to work in groups/pairs, Ability to focus on writing piece and Ability to make a connection with the novel). The skills are related to the integrated LAL lessons. The targeted schools have standardized test scores that are among the lowest in the district in LAL. This study provided insight into the implementation of the ITAS program.

JCPS is not addressing the visual and performing arts standards as outlined in the NJCCCS and national standards. The Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies Program was aligned with the arts standards and infused the arts into the LAL curriculum. The project provided staff development for teachers at the targeted schools that included the following:

An Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies Handbook – The handbook provided activities and lesson plans that teachers can integrate into the curriculum.

A Training Guide – The guide provided training topics and strategies that can be used by trainers to coach teachers.

A Training DVD – The DVD provided an overview of the program’s strategies that could facilitate teachers’ training.

The ITAS handbook was given to all of the sixth- and seventh-grade teachers during the third year of the project. The researchers intend to do a follow-up survey to determine how many of the teachers are actually using the handbook and the theater arts integration strategies presented during the program. The training guide and the DVD are intended to be used in other school districts by trainers doing professional development with their teachers. The training guide has since been shared with educators in other states during professional development. A former teaching artist from the program who currently teaches at The City University of New York (CUNY) uses the handbook in her coursework.
This study is significant to current and future research on the effects of performing arts integration in the curriculum for middle grade students. The materials from the program and the results of the study can motivate and/or encourage future research and the results of the study will contribute to the field. Arts education advocates continue to compile research and data that show a correlation between involvement in the arts and academic achievement. The results of the studies on the ITAS program in Jersey City, N.J. support the integration of theatre arts strategies in the literacy curriculum after significant changes in students’ achievement in language arts literacy and teaching practices after exposure to the program and teacher training. The positive results for student achievement in both three-year studies in 2005 and 2008 suggest that school leaders and educators critically consider the strategies and teaching practices utilized for their own school districts and schools.

In addition to the significant research that will be produced and contribute to the field, the *Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies Program* will address the LAL weakness identified in the district by integrating the arts for the targeted sixth and seventh grade students. The JCPS and educators in other districts will have access to the results and materials used in the program for continued use.

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic achievement:* NJASK Literacy Scores and students’ achievement with targeted literacy skills.

*NJASK state benchmark:* Minimum expected proficiency scores in New Jersey.

*Professional development:* Support through training and workshops for educators

*Teaching artist:* Professional working artist who also teaches in schools.
Theater arts integration: The integration of theater arts in the core content area curriculum.

Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation in this study is responses to the survey question regarding successful lesson plan implementation are self-reported by the teachers. Ratings given for this question on the Likert Scale can be subjective. The results of student performance of the identified literacy skills are also reported by the teacher through Likert-style survey responses open to subjectivity. Finally, teachers were randomly selected with their classes to be a part of the Integrated Theater and Arts Strategies program. Teachers’ experiences with theater arts may vary as well as their willingness to effectively and consistently implement the strategies of the program in their literacy curriculum.

There were also delimitations in this study. The level of the treatment group teachers’ background in theater arts was not examined before or during the study. The NJASK scores of sixth- and seventh-grade students in both the treatment and control groups are mentioned in Chapter III, however their achievement on the targeted literacy skills in the study were not compared. Additionally, it is possible that sixth- and seventh-grade students in the treatment group were also exposed to the 2005 ITAS program when they were in the fourth or fifth grade. This information is also delimitated in this study.

This chapter includes an introduction to the study, provides data on the 2005 study, defines terms and presents the study’s limitations and delimitations. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature and empirical and theoretical research found on theater arts, its effects on student achievement and integration into core content subject areas. Chapter 3 outlines the study’s framework, research questions that drive the study, its design and population. The results of the
research study are found in Chapter 4 where the research questions are answered based on the data provided.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

A Definition of Arts Integration

The Kennedy Center Changing Education Through the Arts (CETA) defines Arts Integration as, “an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form.” In 1999, the Kennedy Center expanded their offerings in arts education by establishing partnerships with five elementary schools in the Washington, DC metropolitan area to focus on arts integration. By 2009, the CETA program grew to include 20 schools in six districts in the same area. “The program’s goal is to increase student learning by impacting how teachers teach—building the capacity of all teachers in the school to provide arts-integrated instruction.” (CETA, 2009) To meet this goal the CETA program offers professional development activities and experiences through classes and workshops for teachers.

A review of the literature included in this chapter influenced the conclusion that arts strategies, when effectively implemented, can have an effect on student achievement. The studies included support the arts as a strategy to increase student achievement in core content areas, encourage critical and higher order thinking. Teacher practices and pedagogy are also studied as teachers infused the arts into the curriculum. Varied formats of professional development are presented as well as teachers’ implementation.

Arts Education at the Federal Level

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) includes the arts as a discipline that is equal to the other designated core subjects. On August 13, 2009, U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, released a letter to educators that emphasized the importance of arts in primary schools. In this letter, he underscored the fact that under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), arts education is considered a “core academic subject and part of a complete education
for all students” (Duncan, 2009, para. 7) In 2010, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) released *A Blueprint for Reform The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* with the purpose of supporting U.S. President Barack Obama’s goal of providing all students in the U.S. with a “complete” education.

President Obama’s goal, as it relates to the ESEA, is to enable all students to be contributing citizens of their country who have the ability to thrive in a global economy. The Blueprint was designed to reform the federal government’s role in supporting states, school districts, school leaders and teachers in implementing a more complete and well-rounded education. Federal grants to strengthen the teaching and learning in the areas of the arts, foreign languages, history and civics, financial literacy, environmental and other subjects would be available for support and to provide assistance. Grant applicants that infuse teaching and learning across the academic subjects are given priority for the grant funds. Inclusive of these expectations is high quality and evidence-based instruction that results in improved student performance in one or more of the content areas.

Forty-nine states in the U.S. have content and/or performance standards for the arts. Forty-three states require arts instruction. Eight states have arts integration standards and two states have arts integration standards in limited disciplines. Despite the existence of the Visual and Performing Arts Standards at district, state and national levels, implementation in many schools and school districts is lacking or nonexistent. Fowler (1996) stated, “Research has shown that what students learn in the arts may help them to master other subjects, such as reading, math or social studies.” In his book, *Strong Arts, Strong Schools: The Promising Potential and Shortsighted Disregard of the Arts in American Schooling*, Fowler shared that the arts strengthen schools and student achievement. He supported the theory that the arts can be transferred into
any subject. He further argues the idea that processes and teaching strategies that are used in the arts can also be applied to subjects such as math, science, LAL and social studies. Fowler (1996) said, “The complimentarily of the arts with other subjects such as social studies and history provides a mechanism to cohesive, thematic curricula.” (p. 143)

As with any other subject or content area, teachers require training. Teachers who are generalists do not typically have the training for the arts which poses a problem and even reluctance by the teacher when asked to infuse the arts into their curriculum. Training and professional development in this area can lend support and efficacy to the integration of the arts with other disciplines when effectively implemented. This chapter outlines some of the important and relevant literature related to the primary problem and its sub-problems and the relevance of arts infusion and inclusion in the core curriculum.

**Arts Education and Arts Integration’s Relevance to Curriculum and Student Achievement**

Learning through the arts can be aligned with Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, musical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist). While Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has been highly regarded in the field of education, critics do exist and question his theory. Some educators, researchers and scholars argue that there have not been enough rigorous experiments or empirical evidence that identify and measure the different types of intelligence that Gardner proposed exists within individuals.

Studies have shown the arts to be beneficial to student achievement on standardized tests. The College Entrance Examination Board conducted a study in 1993, 1994 and 1995 of the correlation between study of the arts and scores on the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT). The results showed that students who studied the arts outperformed their peers, who did not study the
arts, on the SAT. The study also considered the possible cause and effect of better students gravitating towards the arts.

The Education Arts Team (EAT) is a New Jersey-based, not-for-profit performing arts organization that has “adopted an approach to language arts that seeks to make the school curriculum accessible through multimodal drama-based strategies” (Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011) Selected teachers were given workshops on integrating arts into their language arts curriculum and were guided by a teaching artist who modeled lessons. Materials, such as a DVD, handbook and sample lessons were designed to support the teachers in the program. EAT plans to share the data and materials with other schools and districts to encourage the use and integration of arts strategies in the curriculum.

EAT received two grants from the United States Department of Education (USDOE) through the Arts Education Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) program. The first grant, which began in 2005, examined the results from standardized achievement tests after fourth- and fifth-grade students in randomly selected schools in Jersey City, New Jersey were exposed to a program that integrated drama into social studies and language arts. The program was aligned with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS). Walker, Finkelstein and Bosworth (2010) found that “the integration of the arts into these subject areas contributed significantly to students’ achievement in language arts.”

In 2008, the second grant supported the infusion of into language arts for sixth- and seventh-grade students at randomly selected schools in Jersey City. The results again showed improvement in the area of language arts for students in the treatment group on a standardized achievement test. The EAT team also examined the passing rates on standardized achievement tests for mathematics. Students in Arts Integrated classrooms outperformed their peers in
Traditional Classrooms in the areas of language arts and mathematics on the test. Approximately 56% of the students in the treatment group passed the language arts section of the state assessment compared to their peers in the control classrooms that had a 43% passing rate. Forty-seven percent of the students in the treatment classrooms passed the mathematics section of the state assessment compared to 39% of the students passing in the control classrooms.

Bolak, Bialach and Dunphy (2005) argued that “integrating the arts with the core curriculum is an energizing solution at the middle level” (p. 9). They support Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and feel that the arts can address the multiple intelligences he has identified. Bolak et al. witnessed the increase in middle school students’ academic growth through the integration of the arts in a small Midwestern urban school district. The project provided staff development in the arts for teachers. At the end of the school year, results showed improvement on the standardized state test (Stanford Achievement Test). Even students who previously had the lowest scores showed improvement.

Advocates of the arts in schools, such as Fowler (2005), have identified the arts as being one of the first programs that schools and school districts eliminate when budget cuts arise. Rupert (2006) states, “In schools across the country, the opportunities for students to participate in high-quality arts instruction and activities are diminishing, the result of the shifting priorities and budget cuts.” U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, argued during a conference call with arts educators, advocates and reporters on August 18, 2009, “Particularly in times when budgets are tough, we worry about the arts.” On March 1, 2011, the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to provide funds for 2011. The CR was proposed for 2 weeks in order to avoid federal government shutdown. Additionally,
the CR makes a $4 billion cut in domestic spending. $40 million of this budget cut is allocated for the Arts in Education program.

*Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development,* written by Deasy (2002), further outlined studies of the academic and social effects of learning in the arts. Studies in the areas of drama, “multiarts,” music, visual arts and dance resulted in improvement in students’ skills and development in core academic subjects and social development. These studies in *Critical Links* support integration of the arts at all grade levels and encourage further research on the correlation between arts integration and student achievement in core content areas.

In his book, *Arts With the Brain in Mind,* Jensen (2001) promotes the theme that "the arts promote the development of valuable human neurological systems" (p. 2). He warned against the arts being considered a "quick fix" to deficiencies in curriculum, letter grades, progress or learning. Fiske (1999) even suggested that "the influence of the arts is far wider and deeper than simply improved letter grades." Jensen used music as an example, with evidence, as an area of the arts that adds value in education and our society. He compared the universal language of music with the symbolic way in which mathematics is represented in the world. He further discussed Graziano, Peterson, and Shaw's 1999 study where a 4-month experiment was designed to explore the impact of music on math. Three groups of second graders were compared. Two of the groups were given a math video game designed to enhance spatial-proportional skills. One of these groups used the math video game and received piano instruction. A second group received computer-based English training and the math video game. The third group was the control group, which received no piano or video game. Math scores were boosted by 36% over the
control group. The experiment group that also received piano instruction scored an additional 15% over the group that did not receive piano instruction.

Fowler (2001) has provided evidence in his book *Strong Arts, Strong Schools: The Promising and Shortsighted Disregard of the Arts in American Schooling*, that schools that integrate the arts are stronger schools than those that do not. He discussed the fact that some policy makers and educators view the arts as a luxury that takes a back seat to the other core content subjects. Fowler emphasizes that the arts enhance education as evidenced by his studies of schools. He maintained that the arts are a vital part of education at all grade levels and should be integrated into the curriculum. Fowler described the inclusion and integration of the arts in schools as providing a comprehensive education. Like other arts supporters and researchers, he believed that the arts can be linked to and enhance all subjects and provide a more engaging educational experience for students.

In 1993, Walter H. Annenberg, a philanthropist and U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, announced the half billion dollar “Annenberg Challenge.” The purpose of Annenberg’s gift was to invest in the survival of public schools in the U.S. A large Midwestern urban school district received $3.2 million of the Annenberg Challenge money to implement the Arts for Academic Achievement (AAA) in their K-12 schools. The goal of the project was to increase student achievement in the district through the integration of arts into all of the core content subject areas. The mission of the project was to not only raise student achievement, but to provide teachers with the tools that they need to change their practice. AAA believed that making the necessary changes to teachers’ teaching practices would reach low-achieving students more effectively.
Werner and Freeman (2001) conducted a study in 2001 which was part of the Annenberg Challenge grant. The grant funded 37 schools in a Midwestern public school district to participate in the AAA project during the 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 school years. The project aimed to, “change the way teachers teach, students learn, schools are run, and policy is made.” (Werner & Freeman, 2001, p. 4) Each of the schools in the project had differing goals regarding arts integration. Some schools were looking to expand their already existing fine arts programs and some schools sought to create a new curriculum based on the arts. Collaboration from partners also differed among the schools. Some schools wanted to increase or tighten their relationships with collaborative arts partners and others wanted to begin relationships with at least one partner.

Personal teacher interviews, group interviews and classroom observations were the data collected for this study. After analyzing the study’s results, the researchers found that the majority of the teachers made and were willing to continue to make changes to their teaching practices. Werner and Freeman found through their observations that “teachers found co-teaching with artists, the most powerful professional development activity of the project.” They also found that the climate in the classrooms involved in the project changed due to the arts activities. The classrooms shifted from adult-centered to child-centered as students became more in charge of their learning.

The AAA teams admit that their biggest challenge in the project was getting teachers to think differently about their teaching practices and the way that teaching and learning should take place in their classroom. As professional development and support increased, so did the teachers’ level of comfort. Teachers began to feel more comfortable integrating the arts into their curriculum. Observations from the study also revealed that teachers began to think differently
about their practice as they felt “re-energized,” took risks and made more connections to the core curriculum. As teachers made connections to the core curriculum, they were able to see how the arts overlapped with the non-arts subjects. Most of the teachers felt comfortable taking risks because they were supported throughout the program.

Jensen, researcher and author of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) book *Arts with the Brain in Mind*, proposed that the arts enhance the teaching and learning process and should be a major discipline in the schools. Jensen wrote, “Not only can the arts be a powerful solution for helping teachers reach a wide range of learners, they also enhance the process of learning.” Jensen argued that the arts support and drive all of the other content areas. Art forms such as musical, visual and kinesthetic are the focus of his book. Jensen further supports his argument with studies that have found a relationship between artistic activities and learning or brain development. Through his review of research studies on the arts in education, the brain and learning, he became an advocate for the arts in education. Jensen maintains that the arts should be studied in schools every day due to research that he briefly describes as resulting in a correlation between the arts and student learning.

Winner and Hetland (2009) offered support for arts integration in schools. They agreed that students who are involved in the arts outperform their peers who are not involved in the arts as evidenced by SAT scores. Winner and Hetland contended that “correlation isn’t causation” and that the results of a study they conducted showed no evidence that the arts education caused test scores to rise. Conversely, they argued that the arts instead provide an array of mental habits that may not be presented in other content areas. As part of their study at the Boston Arts Academy, where students were in classes for at least three hours a day that focused on visual arts, drama or dance, Winner and Hetland videotaped classes observed student-teacher
interactions and identified the specific habits of mind and skills that were evident. They noticed that persistence, expression, making clear connections between schoolwork and the world outside the classroom, envisioning and innovation were skills being taught in addition to artistic craft. Winner and Hetland suggested that the skills being taught in the arts classes they observed also prepare students for life outside of their classrooms.

In 1992, the Arts Integration program (AIP) of the Tucson Pima Arts Council in Tucson, Arizona, received a grant to further examine the assumptions made about the program as they related to integrating arts activities into classrooms. AIP supports generalist teachers who have an interest in using the arts in their classroom. Pre-post student questionnaires, content tests, teacher interviews and observations were used for the study. Students were given a pretest and posttest on specific content areas. The results in the first part of the study showed that students’ test scores were higher after their arts lessons. Students’ scores in the experimental classes were also higher on the posttest than those of the control group.

The AIP program also focused on the teachers. Teachers’ experiences with the arts varied from no experience to 12 years or more. Guest art specialists worked with the teachers throughout the semester. By the end of the program, teachers were enthusiastic about what they learned and how their students performed on the tests. Teachers who were a part of the study’s mentor-teacher model of professional development also showed favorable responses and attitudes toward the program. Betts, Fisher, and Hicks (1994) concluded, “They [teachers] reported at the end of the year that they were comfortable adapting and integrating the AIP lessons into their reading” (p. 2).

The Big Thought organization, based in Dallas, Texas, seeks to provide opportunities where all students are involved in the arts, imagination and creativity as part of their everyday
lives. The organization provides resources and information for educators and communities about the arts that can be integrated with curriculum in or out of school. Big Thought continues to provide professional development to educators on how to integrate the arts into the curriculum with students as active participants. The organization also supports Thriving Minds, a city-wide initiative in Dallas, Texas, that supports arts instruction in schools. The program has developed a curriculum that integrates fine arts into other content areas being taught. Both organizations seek to connect and expose students to art experiences inside and outside of the classroom. They advocate for arts education based on research they have found that shows its benefits to learning and student success both academically and socially.

In 2008, the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit institution that helps to improve policy and decision-making through research and analysis, completed a report which found that the arts and arts teachers were easy targets when budget cuts arose. The report identified a decline of the arts in public education over the past 30 years that is evident in schools today. As a result, some schools, school districts, arts advocates and communities across the country have made and are making attempts to revitalize arts in education.

The Arts and Brain Research

Researchers have explored the impact of students’ participation in the arts on learning. Brain-based research has proven significant benefits to students’ participation in fine arts and their achievement. Jensen (2001) found that “not only do the arts engage many areas of the brain, they also have multiple, far-reaching effects on the learner’s mind” (p. 13). % (2005) contends that “arts learning and experiences, to varying degrees, reorganize neutral pathways, or the way the brain functions. Therefore, extended and or deep learning in the arts reinforces these developments” (p.7).
Educators and scholars have begun to realize in recent years that “students learn best when they read and compose in multiple ways, when they use multimodalities to identify new and effective forms of literacy (podcasts, digital video, audio essay)” (Self & Selfe, 2008).

**State Policy Standards for Arts Education in New Jersey**

States in the United States have arts education policies for students and educators. High school students in the state of New Jersey are required to successfully complete five credits in at least one visual and performing arts course in order to earn a state-endorsed diploma. Content standards have been adopted for the arts disciplines, which include dance, music, and visual arts. By the end of sixth grade, students are expected to have a basic literacy in these four areas. As per the NJCCCS, students are expected to be proficient in their choice of one of these four disciplines by the time they graduate high school. The intent of the New Jersey state standards is for students to have an arts instruction in the four areas throughout their prekindergarten through Grade 12 education.

Candidates seeking certification at the elementary level must have a minimum of 60 credit hours of general education. These credit hours are distributed among the arts, humanities, mathematics, science, technology and social studies. New Jersey’s arts teachers are required to have a college degree with at least 30 credit hours in their arts major. Prior to June 30, 2007, arts teachers could also meet these qualifications in accordance with the NCLB Highly Qualified Teacher’s Act through New Jersey’s HOUSE standards by demonstrating content experience. Arts teachers are only allowed to deliver instruction within the domain they are certified. Additionally teachers in the state of New Jersey are required to document 100 hours of professional development in their field over a period of 5 years.
Teaching the Arts Through an Interdisciplinary Approach

In 2002, the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations published a document titled *Authentic Connections: Interdisciplinary Work in the Arts*. The purpose of the document was to “assist and support educators in interdisciplinary work and to clarify how the arts can be taught with integrity through the interdisciplinary arts content standards” (p. 3). The Consortium underscores the importance of interdisciplinary work in the arts as they support that the arts make meaningful and authentic connections across the disciplines. Jacobs, an author internationally recognized for her work in curriculum mapping and curriculum integration, notes that “interdisciplinary curriculum experiences provide an opportunity for a more relevant, less fragmented, and stimulating experience for students” (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 2002, p. 9)

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) Program

In 1982, of the University of Arizona designed the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) program, a computer-based thinking program for at-risk students in Grades 4 through 7. The use of dramatic techniques by the teachers in the HOTS program was integrated through technology and Socratic thinking techniques. Pogrow’s work focused on integrating the use of drama in an “intensive environment devoted to the development of Socratic thinking” (Pogrow, 2005, p. 61) He found that despite both traditional and progressive reforms in education, the achievement gap between whites and blacks’ reading has been the same since 1975. The HOTS program demonstrated the ability to accelerate the achievement of disadvantaged students after the third grade. As a result of his research and findings, Pogrow supports that teaching disadvantaged students at a higher level as opposed to being drilled with repetitive information to prepare for tests, yields better academic achievement results. He found that the amount of conversation that a
student has at home with adults can affect their learning. Pogrow (2005) contended, “The approach taken with HOTS from the beginning was to generate a very creative and intensive conversation environment. This approach was taken because the amount of home conversation varies dramatically by economic status” (p. 68)

Evaluations conducted by Pogrow and independently by school districts revealed that students in the HOTS program made twice the gain in reading as compared to students who were not in the program. Growth was also seen in math for the HOTS program students. One school involved in the program reported that their students gained 5.6 years in reading after 1 year in the HOTS program. In some cases, more than one test was used to assess students’ learning. Growth was found on both tests in reading and math.

All aspects of the HOTS program continued to be improved over time (curriculum, training, Socratic system, software and implementation). Teachers were trained to ask students questions and probe for answers as opposed to giving the answers to students. The program continues to develop and focus on disadvantaged students’ thinking with optimism. Pogrow (2005) wrote,

Having disadvantaged students succeed in thinking-in-content is the desired end; one that is achievable. But it cannot also be the means for developing the sense of understanding they need to be successful in thinking-in-content curricula. That needs to be done via a conversation based self-contained general thinking program. (p. 70)

While the program has proven to be successful for at-risk students’ achievement in reading and math, proven by large-scale research, it is noted that disadvantaged students in Grades K-3 and Grades 4-8 require different approaches.
Effective Professional Development and Arts Integration

Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos (2009) stated, “Effective professional development focuses on improving instructional practice by giving teachers new knowledge and techniques for assessing learning with the ultimate goal of improving student learning.” In 2007, Yoon et al. conducted nine controlled studies to how much professional development time is needed to make an impact. They found that the more time dedicated to the professional development, the better the results. Yoon et al. also found that “when efforts were less than 30 hours, they showed no significant effects on student learning. Efforts that ranged between 30 and 100 hours, with an average of 49 hours, showed positive and significant effects on student achievement” (p.).

Guskey (2003) wrote, “The ultimate goal of professional development is improving student learning outcomes.” The National Middle School Association (NMSA) recognizes that professional development for teachers of the middle grades (6-8) must engage teachers in targeted professional development activities and be ongoing. There has been evidence of the connection between professional development activities and student achievement. In 1998 a study in Texas involving a half million elementary and middle grades students in 3,000 schools revealed that teacher quality was the most important factor in student achievement (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2002). Results from this study also showed that professional development that was sustained and intensive had “an impact on enhanced teacher knowledge and skills, and ultimately student achievement, than shorter professional development activities” (Garet et al., 2001).

The amount of time, in addition to the characteristics of professional development can influence the quality of teachers’ implementation of strategies and teaching practices in the
classroom. A national study conducted in 2000 revealed that “teachers who participated for more than eight hours in professional development activities were more likely than those who spent one to eight hours to report that it improved their teaching” (NCES, 2001).

In order for generalist teachers to integrate the arts in their curriculum, effective professional development is required. Districts and schools nationwide who support the integration of the arts in the curriculum have used different models of professional development. Some generalist and arts teachers work side by side to collaborate on the integration of the arts in the core content areas (math, literacy, science and social studies) in the classroom. The partnership between the generalist teacher and the specialist teacher or artist can encourage effective implementation with the expertise that both can bring to the planning and knowledge of content and pedagogy.

While the collaboration of the generalist and the specialist or teaching artist can prove to be valuable to the overall curriculum, the training required takes time. In his recent study, Scotchmer (2008) concluded that “a majority of teachers receive eight hours or less of professional development each year” (p. 1). He further argues that “professional development activities must take place over time, with contact hours made available throughout the school year” (p. 3). The increased amount of time that teachers have with professional development gives them an opportunity to internalize and reflect on the content and the practices being supported.

The A+ Schools Program, based in North Carolina, provides professional development in the arts for schools within North Carolina and throughout the United States. In order for a school to become a part of the A+ Network and a member, the following is required: 100% of the
school’s administrators must attend the A+ Institute and at least 85% of the staff must also attend.

The A+ Schools Program is committed to the role of professional artists as “teachers” in the A+ schools. The Program has seven key characteristics for their professional development:

1. Research-based reflecting context and culture
2. Whole-school and ongoing
3. Practitioner model of teachers teaching teachers
4. Grounded in a shared philosophy
5. Reflective and experiential
6. Capacity-building for teachers and schools
7. Network-building for teachers and schools

The A+ Schools Program uses a whole school approach where a high percentage of the staff (85%) is involved in the Program. The Program attributes their success and sustainability to high quality and ongoing professional development and continues to advocate for the role of arts in education.

The Arts in Basic Curriculum (ABC) Project has worked since 1987 to provide every child in the state of South Carolina with a comprehensive arts education. They have used professional development as one of their most important strategies. ABC assists and supports administrators and teachers in schools and districts across South Carolina with their efforts to

- develop and implement standard-based curricula
- teach arts integrated curriculum, sing collaborative planning and professional development
- increase the availability of arts discipline education
• move all arts educators to arts certification (Yap et al., 2005)

ABC has created networks of teachers in an effort to support their practice through the professional development process. The teachers have opportunities to network and follow up with colleagues. Master Arts Educators also offer support through the modeling of best practices for the network participants.

As part of a 10-year study, evaluators Seaman, Kim and Meyer (2004) found that “As ABC schools and their teachers began to learn how to make arts integration work and adapt to a stronger focus in their schools, the quality of arts education changed in certain schools.” They also examined the effect arts integration and achievement has on other content areas. Yap et al. (2005), revealed in their study, “When examining the relationships between arts achievement, math, and English Language Arts, five schools exceeded poverty predictions in a combination of areas, including one in music, English language arts, and math, and another in music, visual arts, and English language arts.”

A 2-year study by Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi and Gallagher (2007), examined an inquiry science program in Michigan with a sample size of 454 teachers and 28 professional development providers. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects that different types of professional development have on teachers’ knowledge and ability to implement the program. The professional development provided was aimed at preparing teachers to implement the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program, an international earth–science education program. The authors of the study looked closely at current research that examined and identified the “linkage between the design and implementation of professional development and student learning outcomes” (Pebuel et al., 2001, p.). They emphasize that the design of professional development has an effect on teacher implementation of a program and
student learning outcomes. The authors cited Loucks-Horsley et al. (1998) and Putnam and Borko (2000) regarding “Reform” versus “Traditional” professional development. They state that “there is a broad consensus among teacher learning researchers that ‘reform-oriented’ professional development tends to be more effective than ‘traditional’ professional development.” The GLOBE program study also examined the effect that the duration and time span of the professional development had on teacher implementation. The data showed “total hours of professional development provided by partners also mattered in whether teachers used the GLOBE protocols with students” (Penuel et al., 2004, p. 921).

Garet et al. published an article in the American Educational Research Journal in 2001, What Makes Professional Development Effective? Results From a National Sample of Teachers that analyzed the results of the data they collected as a national evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program (EPDP). The EPDP, Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), is focused on developing the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers through quality professional development. The Program is the federal government’s largest investment focused on teacher development. In 1999, Part B of the Eisenhower Program provided school districts and grantees, through state education agencies (SEAs) and state agencies for higher education (SAHEs), funding from an appropriation of about $335 million. Professional development in the areas of mathematics and science are primarily supported by these funds.

Garet et al.’s (2001) study was designed to “enable us to examine the relationship between features of professional development that have been identified in the literature and self-reported change in teachers’ knowledge and skills and classroom teaching practices” (p. 915). In their study, the researchers examined different structural and core features of professional
development such as time span, contact hours, collective participation, focus on content knowledge, active learning and coherence. Altogether 1,255 teachers were sampled in 312 districts. The sample population was comprised of institutions of higher education (IHE) and not-for-profit organizations (NPOs) with an Eisenhower grant that covered at least part of the 1997-1998 school year. At least one Eisenhower-assisted activity was offered during the 1997-1998 school year. They found that professional development that was sustained over time and involved a substantial number of contact hours was more likely to be of higher quality.

Teachers were surveyed on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all and 5 = to a great extent) to assess the effects their participation in the program had on their knowledge and skills. They were surveyed on a scale from 0 to 3 to report the change in their classroom teaching practice where 0 = no change, 1 = minor change, 2 = moderate change and 3 = significant change. A formal causal model was used for the data collected from the national sample of teachers to examine the effects the structural and core features of professional development had on teacher outcomes. Both school and teacher characteristics were included as control variables. The results showed that duration-time span and contact hours had a substantial positive influence on the professional development experiences reported by teachers. Garet et al., 2001 reported through their empirical data and results that “professional development that focuses on academic subject matter (content), gives teachers opportunities for “hands-on” work (active learning); and is integrated into the daily life of the school (coherence), is more likely to produce enhanced knowledge and skills.
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the possible effect sixth- and seventh-grade teachers’ training in a program, that integrates theater arts strategies with LAL skills, has on implementation of the strategies and students’ use of the targeted skills. This dissertation was building on the research project conducted by Walker and Finkelstein from Seton Hall University. The researchers conducted research on fourth- and fifth-grade students and their performance of literacy skills after participating in the ITAS program. The Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies (ITAS) program was based on an intervention model. As outlined in the program’s proposal, the assumption is that the ITAS program for middle grade students will

1. Place emphasis on teacher training in integrating the arts in the curriculum
2. Utilize an inquiry-based approach for student learning
3. Provide teachers with opportunities to reflect on teaching practices through action research
4. Afford students the opportunity to construct meaning through creating and performing pieces of literature

The following research questions were answered by examining teachers’ survey responses for the 22 classrooms.

Research Questions

1. As training progressed, were teachers able to put the lesson plans into action more successfully?
2. How does the number of hours of training teachers receive affect students’ performance of the targeted literacy skills?
3. As training progressed, were students able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the core novel (Animal Farm by George Orwell)?

4. Which area(s) regarding students' demonstration of Language Arts Literacy skills showed the most change in the classrooms between the second and fourth teacher workshops?

**Design**

The overall design for this study is crossectional. This method was chosen to evaluate if there is an improvement in students’ literacy skills that can be associated with teacher training. The responses on a Likert-style survey for teachers’ feedback about the lessons and students’ performance of the targeted literacy skills was reviewed. A paired samples t test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in teachers’ responses from their second to fourth workshop with teaching artists. The unit of analysis is the teacher and classroom but through the perception of the teachers

**Population**

Twenty-eight sixth- and seventh-grade classes in four schools in Jersey City participated in the study. These four schools were randomly selected to be involved in the project and the other four schools with 28 sixth- and seventh-grade classrooms were randomly selected to serve as the control group. Fourteen classrooms were involved in the project and 14 classrooms served as controls. There were a total of 1,200 students in the sample group and control group. Twenty-two classrooms in the treatment group were randomly selected for the sample in this study. Through the randomized design of the project, contamination was kept at a minimum as schools, and teachers were randomly assigned to the treatment and control groups. This study was only used to examine the results of the 22 classrooms that were exposed to the ITAS program. A
comparison of the eight schools’ 2008-2009 data from the New Jersey Department of Education’s (NJDOE) 2009-2010 School Report Card is shown in the Table below:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009-2010 School Report Card</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>PS 34</td>
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</table>

The eight schools’ data were similar in some areas. The average LAL passing rate on the NJASK6 for the four treatment schools was 50.85% compared to the average of the control schools, which were 62.85%. The average LAL passing rate on the NJASK7 for the four treatment schools was 42.87% compared to the average of the control schools which were 49.8%. There was a 4.4% difference in the average percent of students with disabilities between the treatment and control schools. (Treatment average = 43.2% Control average = 38.8%)
Instrumentation

Tabone (2004), a member of the Educational Arts Team (EAT), created the Likert-style survey for teachers’ responses after lessons. Outcomes were measured for both students and teachers. Student outcomes were measured by their performance of the targeted literacy skills taught with theater arts strategies. Teacher outcomes were measured by their responses on a Likert-style survey in response to their lessons (Teacher Classroom Rating Form). Teachers rated the following nine statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Not evident, 2 = Somewhat evident, 3 = Evident, 4 = Well, and 5 = Extremely well)

1. Demonstrated Active Listening
2. Asked Stimulating Questions
3. Was able to work in groups/pairs
4. Was able to focus on the writing piece
5. Was able to make connections with the core novel (Animal Farm by George Orwell)
6. Put the lesson plan into place successfully
7. Challenged students’ critical thinking skills
8. Was able to modify lessons
9. Made connections between dramatic activities and the novel

The survey responses after teachers’ second and fourth workshops were examined for this study. This survey measured students’ procognitive and prosocial development based on teachers’ responses. Measured teacher outcomes included their responses to evidence of students’ skills and the changes in their level of implementation of the lesson plan. Targeted literacy skills were: demonstrating active listening, asking stimulating questions, ability to work in groups/pairs, ability to make connections with the core novel and making connections between
dramatic activities and the novel. Teachers’ pedagogical skills, such as putting the lesson plan into place successfully, challenging students’ critical thinking skills and the ability to modify lessons were also examined through teachers’ responses to their own classrooms and lessons in the survey.
Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact that the Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies (ITAS) program in Jersey City Public Schools, implemented from 2005-2008, had on 22 sixth- and seventh-grade classrooms’ integration of theater arts strategies and students’ use of the targeted skills in language arts literacy. This quantitative study examined the relationship between the number of teachers’ professional development hours and students’ use of the skills and their achievement in language arts literacy. Teachers were engaged in 24 workshops of 45 minutes each with teaching artists over the 3 years. Teaching artists generally visited the classrooms once a week and did a 90-minute session with the teacher and the students.

The results in Chapter 4 are organized around the survey research questions. A Likert-style survey asked teachers to rate the evidence of the following in their lesson on a scale from 1 to 5: demonstrated active listening, asked stimulating questions, was able to work in groups/pairs, was able to focus on the writing piece, was able to make connections with the core novel, put the lesson plan into place successfully, challenged students’ critical thinking skills, was able to modify lessons and made connections between dramatic activities and the novel (1=Not evident, 2=Somewhat evident, 3=Evident, 4=Well and 5=Extremely Well).

The results from a paired samples t test were employed, using the survey responses of the second and fourth surveys administered to teachers, to answer the following research questions:

1. As training progressed, were teachers able to put the lesson plan into action more successfully?

2. How does the number of hours of training teachers receive affect students’ performance of the skills?

3. As teacher training progressed, were students able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the core novel (Animal Farm by George Orwell)?
4. Which area(s) of teachers’ responses regarding students’ demonstration of Language Arts Literacy skills on the lesson feedback survey showed the most change between the second and fourth workshops?

A paired samples correlations test (Table 2) shows that there is a significant correlation between the second and fourth surveys in teachers’ responses to students making connections between dramatic activities and the novel (Sig. .002). The researcher was cautious in reporting statistical significance due to the small end count (n= 21-22).
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Demonstrated Active Listening 2nd Survey &amp; Demonstrated Active Listening 4th Survey</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.230</td>
<td>.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>Was able to work in groups/pairs 2nd Survey &amp; Was able to work in groups/pairs 4th Survey</td>
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<td>-.251</td>
<td>.260</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
<td>Was able to focus on writing piece 2nd Survey &amp; Was able to focus on writing piece 4th Survey</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5</td>
<td>Was able to make a connection with the novel 2nd Survey &amp; Was able to make a connection with the novel 4th Survey</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.323</td>
<td>.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 6</td>
<td>Put the lesson plan into action successfully 2nd Survey &amp; Put the lesson plan into action successfully 4th Survey</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 7</td>
<td>Challenged students' critical thinking skills 2nd Survey &amp; Challenged students' critical thinking skills 4th Survey</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8</td>
<td>Was able to modify lessons 2nd Survey &amp; Was able to modify lessons 4th Survey</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 9</td>
<td>Made connection between dramatic activities and the novel 2nd Survey &amp; Made connection between dramatic activities and the novel 4th Survey</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The nine targeted skills examined can be linked to literacy. The targeted skills also include an assessment of the teachers’ ability to implement the theater arts strategies during literacy lessons. Each of the targeted skills, assessed by teachers, is aligned with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS). These targeted skills can also now be found in the National Common Core State Standards throughout the grade levels.

**Research Questions**

The following describes the findings for the research questions posed in chapter 1:

**Research Question 1:** As training progressed, were teachers able to put the lesson plans into action more successfully? As teacher training progressed from the second to the fourth workshop, there was a small change in the amount of teachers who reported that they put the lesson plans into action more successfully in their classrooms. There were varied levels of reported success. There was only a difference of one classroom between the second and fourth workshops where the teacher reported that they put the lessons into action more successfully both Well and Extremely Well.

**Research Question 2.** How does the number of hours of training teachers receive affect students’ performance of the skills? The data from the surveys indicate that the largest percentage of change in the responses from the second to the fourth survey was in the areas of students demonstrating active listening and their ability to focus on the writing piece. In the second survey, 10 teachers (45.5%) responded that their classrooms demonstrated active listening extremely well. In the fourth survey, 14 teachers (63.6%) responded that their classrooms demonstrated active listening extremely well. There was an 18.1% change in teachers’ responses from the second to fourth workshops. 10 teachers (45.5%) in the second survey responded that their classrooms were able to focus on the writing piece extremely well. In
the fourth survey, 14 teachers responded that their classrooms were able to focus on the writing piece extremely well. There was an 18.1% increase in the percentage of teachers who responded that their classrooms focused on the writing piece extremely well from the second to fourth surveys.

**Research Question 3.** As training progressed, were students able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the core novel (*Animal Farm* by George Orwell)? As teacher training progressed, it is evident by their survey responses that there was a relatively small change in students’ ability to make a connection between dramatic activities and the core novel. From the second to the fourth survey, there was a 4.5% increase ($n = 1$) in teachers who responded that their classrooms made a connection to the core novel well and extremely well.

**Research Question 4.** Which area(s) of teachers’ responses regarding students’ demonstration of LAL skills on the lesson feedback survey showed the most change between the second and fourth workshops? As evidenced from the results of the second and fourth surveys, the most change reported by teachers was in the area of students demonstrating active listening and demonstrating the ability to focus on the writing piece. There was an increase of 18.1% ($n = 4$) in teachers who responded in the fourth survey that their classrooms demonstrated active listening extremely well and were able to focus on the writing piece.

A Paired Samples Correlations test presented that there was a positive correlation between the classroom responses in the second and fourth surveys. There was a significant correlation in classrooms being able to focus on the writing piece from the second to fourth survey at a significance level of .498. The most significant correlation was seen in teachers putting the lesson plan into action successfully from the second to fourth survey at a significance level of .942. There was also a significant correlation between the second and fourth survey with
lessons challenging students’ thinking at a significance level of .599.

Survey Question 1- Demonstrated Active Listening

Johnson (1951) defined listening as the ability to understand and effectively respond to communication. Listening is a communication skill that children in all grade levels are expected to develop and effectively utilize. Lounsbury (1991) asserted that students spend over 90% of the school day speaking and listening. Listening is one of the language arts skills that are included in curriculum and standards across the country. Educators continue to use and research strategies that aide and enhance the skill of listening. Most researchers agree that this is not a skill that we can assume comes naturally and must be taught.

Table 3 indicates that there was an 18.1% increase in the number of teachers who reported that students demonstrated active listening being extremely well. In the second survey, 4.5% of the teachers reported that it was evident that students demonstrated active listening. 50% of the teachers reported that students demonstrated active listening well in the second survey. 45.5% of the teachers reported that students demonstrated active listening extremely well.

In the fourth survey, 4.5% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students demonstrated active listening. 31.8% of the teachers responded that students demonstrated active listening well. 63.6% of the teachers responded that students demonstrated active listening extremely well in the fourth survey. There was an increase of 18.1% of teachers responding that students demonstrated active listening extremely well from the second to the fourth survey.
Table 3

*Demonstrated Active Listening*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second survey</th>
<th>Fourth survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely well</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Question 2- Asked Stimulating Questions**

Involving students in the process of questioning during lessons and discussions is an important element that can engage them in the learning as well as provoke discussion and critical thinking. Cecil (1995) stated,

> Students attain significantly higher levels of thinking when they are encouraged to develop skill in generating critical and creative questions and when they are provided opportunities for dialogue with classmates about the questions posed and conclusions derived from information they encounter (p. 36).

Students need to be able to formulate questions to increase understanding, make decisions, problem-solve and to stimulate thinking. Table 3 shows in the second survey, 4.8% of the teachers responded not at all in response to students asking stimulating questions. 9.5% responded somewhat. 23.8% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students were asking stimulating questions and 28.6% responded that students were utilizing this skill well. Approximately 33.3% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were asking stimulating questions extremely well.

In the fourth survey, 18.2% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students were asking stimulating questions and 45.5% responded that students were utilizing this skill
well. 36.4% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were asking stimulating questions extremely well.

There was a 5.7% decrease in the number of teachers who responded that it was evident that students were asking stimulating questions. There were increases in teachers’ responses for students asking stimulating questions well and extremely well by 16.9% and 3.1% respectively.

Table 4

*Asked Stimulating Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second survey</th>
<th>Fourth survey</th>
<th>Change P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely well</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 21/100, 22/100.1

Note. Total of n = 1 (4.5%), respondents did not respond in the second survey.

**Survey Question 3-Was Able to Work in Groups/Pairs**

Working with a group or partner is an instructional strategy that allows students to have discussion about the task(s) to be completed and have another resource, other than the teacher, to use for assistance. Students should learn to work cooperatively not only for classroom lessons and situations, but for real life experiences that prepare them for their continued education and career. When working with a partner, forms of elaborate talk are more prevalent than when working alone (and talking aloud to oneself; Krol, Janssen, Veenman & van der Linden, 2004).

In the second survey, the results from the paired samples t test indicate, 4.5% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students were able to work in groups or pairs and 13.6% of the teachers reported that students were utilizing this skill well. 81.8% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were able to work in groups/pairs extremely well.
In the fourth survey, 5% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students were able to work in groups/pairs and 15% responded that students were utilizing this skill well. 80% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were able to work in groups/pairs extremely well. There was a 5% increase in the number of teachers who reported that it was evident that students were able to work in groups/pairs. The percent of teachers that reported students worked well in groups/pairs increased by 1.4%. There was a 1.8% decrease in the number of teachers that reported that students worked extremely well in groups/pairs from the second to fourth survey.
Table 5

Was Able to Work in Groups/Pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second Survey</th>
<th>Fourth Survey</th>
<th>Change P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely well</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total of n = 2 (9%), respondents did not respond in the fourth survey.

Survey Question 4- Was Able to Focus on Writing Piece

As per the NJCCCS and the CCSS, each year students are expected to demonstrate increasing progress and sophistication in their writing. The results of the paired samples t test indicate in Table 5 that in the second survey, 4.5% of the teachers responded that students were able to focus on the writing piece somewhat and 9.1% responded that it was evident that students were utilizing this skill. 40.9% of the teachers reported that students were focusing on the writing piece well. Approximately 45.5% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were able to focus on the writing piece extremely well.

In the fourth survey, 4.5% of the teachers again responded that that students were able to focus on the writing piece somewhat and 9.1% responded that it was evident that students were utilizing this skill. 22.7 of the teachers reported that students were focusing on the writing piece well. 63.6% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were able to focus on the writing piece extremely well.

The percent of teachers reporting that students were able to focus on the writing piece somewhat remained the same from the second to fourth survey (4.5%). 9.1% of the teachers in the second and fourth surveys reported that it was evident that students were able to focus on the writing piece. There was an 18.2% decrease in teachers responding that students were able to
focus on the writing piece well from the second to fourth survey. There was an 18.1% increase in the number of teachers who responded that students completed the skill extremely well.

Table 6

*Was Able to Focus on the Writing Piece*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second survey</th>
<th>Fourth survey</th>
<th>Change P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely well</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 22 100 22 99.9

Survey Question 5-Was Able to Make a Connection With the Novel

When students can make connections to what they are reading, engagement and comprehension are greater. Simon (2012) stated, “Students are thinking when they are connecting, which makes them more engaged in the reading experience.” As per the Common Core State Standards for Reading Literature, middle school students are expected to demonstrate the ability to make connections with text in a variety of genres.

Table 6 indicates in the second survey, 9.5% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students were able to make connections with the novel and 23.8% responded that students were utilizing this skill well in the lesson. 66.7% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were able to make connections with the novel extremely well. 4.5% of the teachers did not respond to this question.

In the fourth survey, 4.5% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students were able to make connections with the novel and 27.3% responded that students were utilizing this
skill well in the lesson. 68.2% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were able to make connections with the novel extremely well.

There was a 5% decrease in the number of teachers who responded that it was evident that students were able to make connections with the novel. There was a 3.5% increase in the number of classes who responded that students used this skill well. There was a 1.5% increase in the number of teachers who responded that students made connections to the novel extremely well.

Table 7

*Was Able to Make a Connection With the Novel*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second survey</th>
<th>Fourth survey</th>
<th>Change P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely well</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total | 21 | 100 | 22  | 100 |

*Note.* Total of $n = 1$ (4.5%), respondents did not respond in the second survey.

**Survey Question 6- Put the Lesson Plan Into Action Successfully**

Teachers are able to successfully implement lesson plans when they are prepared for lessons. Lesson delivery can be successful when the teacher is confident in the content they are teaching and have meaningful learning activities that engage students at different levels. There is a body of research that has proven that teachers’ lesson plan implementation can be successful through their involvement in sustained and effective professional development in a subject or content area. In their 2-year study of teachers engaged in ongoing professional development that supported their science program implementation, Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi and Gallagher (2004) found that “the data showed, total hours of professional development provided by partners also mattered in whether teachers used the GLOBE protocols with students” (p. 921).
In the second survey, 4.5% of the teachers responded that it was evident they were able to put the lesson plan into action successfully, and 18.2% responded they were able to do this well. 77.3% of the teachers surveyed responded that they were able to put the lesson plan into action successfully extremely well, as indicated in Table 7.

In the fourth survey, 31.8% of the teachers responded well in regards to being able to put the lesson plan into action successfully and 68.2% responded they were able to do this extremely well. There was a 13.6% increase in the number of teachers who responded well in regards to being able to put the lesson plan into action successfully. There was a 9.1% increase in the number of teachers who responded extremely well in regards to putting the lesson plan into action successfully.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second Survey</th>
<th>Fourth Survey</th>
<th>Change P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Well</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Question 7- Challenged Students’ Critical Thinking Skills

Educators have agreed that critical thinking skills at all grade levels should be developed and utilized. These fundamental skills are necessary in order for a student to be academically successful. The ability to think critically in different content areas is important. Wilen and Phillips (1995) contend that critical thinking skills include “those associated with acquiring, interpreting, organizing, and communicating information; processing data in order to investigate questions, solving problems and making decisions; and interacting with others” (p. 135). These skills will be necessary for students to demonstrate proficiency throughout their educational
paths and working career. There is an emerging body of evidence that student engagement with the arts *in and of itself* develops important critical thinking and intellectual skills that are transferrable to other disciplines (Newman 2000; Upitis & Smithrim 2003).

In the second survey, 9.1% of the teachers responded that it was evident that the lesson challenged students’ critical thinking skills. Approximately 36.4% of the teachers responded that lesson challenged students’ critical thinking skills and 54.5% responded that these skills were challenged extremely well.

In the fourth survey, 4.5% of the teachers responded that it was evident that the lesson challenged students’ critical thinking skills. 40.9% of the teachers responded that the lesson challenged students’ critical thinking skills and 54.5% responded that these skills were challenged extremely well.

There was a 4.6% decrease in the number of teachers who responded well in regards to students’ critical thinking skills being challenged. There was a 4.5% increase in the number of teachers who responded that their students’ critical thinking skills were being challenged well. The percent of teachers who responded that students’ critical thinking skills were being challenged extremely well remained the same as the second survey with 54.5%.

Table 9

*Challenged Students’ Critical Thinking Skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second survey</th>
<th></th>
<th>Fourth survey</th>
<th></th>
<th>Change P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>-4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>+4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely well</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Question 8- Was Able to Modify Lessons

Teachers modify lessons to enable students to receive the same learning but by using a strategy or lesson format to best meet their needs. The presentation of content can be varied in difficulty aligned with students’ level of ability as well as their learning style.

In the second survey, 13.6% of the teachers responded well in regards to being able to modify lessons and 86.4% responded that they were able to modify lessons extremely well.

In the fourth survey, 13.6% of the teachers again responded well in regards to being able to modify lessons and 86.4% responded that they were able to modify lessons extremely well.

There was no change in teachers’ responses between the second and fourth surveys’ responses for being able to modify lessons.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second survey</th>
<th>Fourth survey</th>
<th>Change P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Well</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Question 9- Made Connection Between Dramatic Activities and the Novel

Studies have shown that students who are involved in dramatic activities related to what they are reading can increase comprehension. Dupont’s (1992) study found the following about fifth-grade remedial readers:

when children have been involved in the process of integrating creative drama with reading they are not only able to better comprehend what they’ve read and acted out, but they are also able to comprehend what they have read but do not act out, such as the written scenarios they encounter on standardized tests. (pp. 41-52)
In the second survey, 9.1% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students were able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the novel and 18.2% responded that students were utilizing this skill well in the lesson. Approximately 68.2% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the novel extremely well; 4.5% of the teachers did not respond to this question.

In the fourth survey, 4.5% of the teachers responded that it was evident that students were able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the novel and 22.7% responded that students were utilizing this skill well in the lesson. 72.7% of the teachers surveyed responded that students were able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the novel extremely well.

There was a 4.6% decrease in the number of teachers who responded that it was evident that students were able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the novel. There was a 4.5% increase in the number of teachers who responded well and a 4.5% increase in teachers’ responses indicating students made a connection between dramatic activities and the novel.

Table 11 *Made a Connection Between Dramatic Activities and the Novel*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Second Survey</th>
<th></th>
<th>Fourth Survey</th>
<th></th>
<th>Change P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>+4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Well</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>+4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Total of n = 1 (4.5%), respondents did not respond in the second survey.
Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Correlations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated Active Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Survey &amp; Demonstrated Active Listening 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked Stimulating Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Survey &amp; Asked Stimulating Questions 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was able to work in groups/pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Survey &amp; Was able to work in groups/pairs 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was able to focus on writing piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Survey &amp; Was able to focus on writing piece 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was able to make a connection with the novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Survey &amp; Was able to make a connection with the novel 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put the lesson plan into action successfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Survey &amp; Put the lesson plan into action successfully 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenged students' critical thinking skills 2nd Survey &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenged students' critical thinking skills 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was able to modify lessons 2nd Survey &amp; Was able to modify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lessons 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made connection between dramatic activities and the novel 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey &amp; Made connection between dramatic activities and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>novel 4th Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
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<td>Pair 3</td>
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<td>Pair 4</td>
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<td>Pair 5</td>
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<td>Pair 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pair 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pair 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

In summary, as per teachers’ responses to the survey, there was a significant increase in students demonstrating active listening and their ability to focus on the writing piece between the second and fourth workshops where teachers received training. The results indicate that teachers felt there was an increase in the demonstration of each of the targeted skills from the second to the fourth workshop. It is noted that the evaluation of students’ ability to demonstrate the skills were reported by the classroom teachers, who infused the skills in their curriculum with the assistance of a teaching artist.

Some of the findings from the study demonstrate areas of teachers’ responses that were more pronounced on the Likert style survey under the ratings of ‘well’ and ‘extremely well.’ Twenty-one out of the 22 teachers surveyed responded that their students demonstrated active listening well to extremely well. There was an increase of five teachers that responded that their students asked stimulating questions. Nineteen out of the 22 teachers surveyed responded that their students were able to focus on the writing piece on both surveys. Finally, all twenty-two of the teachers responded that they were able to modify lessons either well or extremely well on both the second and fourth surveys.

The larger study also indicates that the literacy results on state standardized tests were higher than students who were not exposed to the program. The positive results in literacy achievement in both the 2005 and 2008 studies support that theatre arts strategies infused with the literacy curriculum affect students’ achievement in literacy.

Finally, it will be interesting to further examine how well students demonstrate these two skills in other literacy assessments.
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

This study was part of a larger study conducted by Elaine Walker, Ph. D. and Martin Finkelstein, Ph. D. from Seton Hall University that examined students’ performance of literacy skills on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) in Grades 4, 5, 6, and 7 after being involved in the Integrated Theater Arts and Strategies (ITAS) program. The researchers concluded from the results of their study that ITAS students outperformed their peers who were not exposed to the program on the NJASK.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the ITAS program on teachers’ integration of theater arts strategies in targeted literacy skills and its impact on students’ demonstration of the skills as teacher training progressed. A total of 540 sixth- and seventh-grade students and teachers from eight middle schools in Jersey City, New Jersey, were a part of the ITAS program from 2008-2011. 480 students were a part of the control group. The program provided training for teachers on integrating theater arts strategies with their literacy curriculum. The targeted eight schools had NJASK scores in Language Arts Literacy that were among the lowest in the district. One of the predicted outcomes for the program includes improved literacy skills in targeted areas using theater arts strategies in lesson implementation within the context of the literacy curriculum and standards. This study sought to answer the following Research Questions:

1. How does the number of hours of training teachers receive affect students’ performance of the skills?

2. As teacher training progressed, were students able to make a connection between dramatic activities and the core novel (Animal Farm by George Orwell)?
3. Which area(s) of teachers’ responses regarding students’ demonstration of Language Arts Literacy skills on the lesson feedback survey showed the most change between the second and fourth workshops?

In order to answer these questions, the researcher employed a quantitative methodology with the results of 22 teachers’ responses to nine questions in a Likert-style survey. Teachers completed the survey after each of the four workshops. The researcher examined the survey results from the second and fourth workshops. Teachers worked with a teaching artist in their own classroom with their students to integrate theater arts strategies with their literacy curriculum. Teachers were also surveyed regarding their use of drama strategies by the number of training hours they had. 69.5% of the teachers with three hours of training and classroom demonstrations responded that they used drama strategies in their classroom. While approximately, 87.3% of the teachers with six hours of training and student classroom demonstrations responded that they used drama strategies in their classroom. Approximately 17.8% more of the teachers who were trained for six hours subsequently used drama strategies in their classroom compared to teachers who were trained for three hours. These responses suggest that the more amount of time that teachers had in training, the more likely they were to use the drama strategies in their classroom. The results of teacher surveys also answer Research Question Number 1 (How does the number of hours of training teachers receive affect students’ performance of the skills?) It was also evident that as teacher training increased, there was more evidence of students’ ability to perform the targeted literacy skills.

Conclusions

As per teachers’ responses to the survey, there was a significant increase in students demonstrating active listening and their ability to focus on the writing piece between the second
and fourth workshops where teachers received training. These two targeted literacy skills showed the most change with an increase in demonstration from the second to fourth teacher workshops. There was no change from the second to fourth workshops in regards to teachers’ ability to modify lessons. Approximately 13.6% of the teachers (n = 3) responded that they were able to modify the lesson in both the second and fourth surveys. In both surveys 86.4% of the teachers (n = 19) were able to modify the lesson extremely well. This is the only area that showed no change as training progressed.

There was an increase in teachers’ report of students demonstrating the targeted literacy skills from the second to fourth workshop. The data from this study suggest that as teacher training progressed, so did evidence of students demonstrating the literacy skills. These results support Yoon et al.’s 2007 study findings which concluded that the more time that was dedicated to professional development for teachers, the better the results were for student achievement.

In 2009, researchers Walker and Finkelstein found that there was a significant difference in the literacy performance on the NJASK of the sixth- and seventh-grade students who were exposed to the theater arts strategies and their peers who were not. Sixth- and seventh-grade students in the ITAS program outperformed their peers in the control group’s passing rate by approximately 14% in literacy on the NJASK (Treatment Group- 56% passed; Control Group- 43% passed). Walker, Tabone and Weltsek (2011) support that “it becomes imperative that investments be made in full, complete, and rigorous investigations into and support for those approaches to literacy learning that show statistical and scientifically based promise. An infused arts curriculum is such an approach” (p. 372).

Studies of arts integration not only with literacy, but other core content areas, such as math, science and social studies, have proven to contribute to student achievement and
engagement. “There is an emerging body of evidence that student engagement with the arts in and of itself develops important critical thinking skills that are transferable to other disciplines.” (Newman, 2000; Upitis & Smithrim, 2003) In particular, studies of arts integration in school districts with disadvantaged and/or at-risk students have been promising. Pogrow’s Higher Order Thinking Skills Program (HOTS) demonstrated the ability, through an integration of technology with dramatic and Socratic thinking techniques, to accelerate the achievement of disadvantaged students after third grade. With this encouraging and valuable evidence, it is worthwhile for school leaders, schools and districts to examine ways to integrate the arts and arts programs with the curriculum to meet the needs of varied learners and promote critical, higher order thinking across the disciplines. School leaders should advocate for arts integration after examining how it will best fit the needs of their school.

**Implications**

The findings in this study imply that the infusion of theater arts strategies had an effect on students’ literacy skills in the targeted areas. The increase reported in students demonstrating active listening from the second to fourth survey, as evidenced by teachers’ responses, suggests that there was an increase in student engagement in the lessons.

With sustained and effective professional development, the integration of theater arts strategies with the literacy curriculum can have an impact on teacher practice. Teachers can present engaging lessons that require critical thinking and include higher order thinking questions that challenge students and provoke thought. Professional development models where teachers co-teach with a teaching artist have had a significant impact on teacher practice. Part of Werner and Freeman’s 2001 study examined the impact of teachers co-teaching in an arts-infused program on their teaching practices. Not only were the majority of the teachers willing to
continue to make changes to their teaching practices, it was also found that the climate in the classrooms became more student-centered through the learning activities. Ultimately, the shift in a teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered classroom will require changes in teacher practice.

While the change in teacher survey responses regarding the lessons challenging students’ critical thinking skills was not statistically significant from the second to fourth survey, the majority of the teachers found that the lessons did challenge their critical thinking skills. With the increased rigor and requirements of the CCSS, critical thinking will continue to be a skill that students need to demonstrate in order to achieve academic success.

The results of a study done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2007 found that African American and Hispanic students and students who were on free and reduced-price lunch had the lowest level of performance in literacy assessments when compared to all other racial/ethnic groups. The Jersey City Public School District, where the ITAS program was implemented and funded through grants in 2005 and 2008, has a multiracial and multiethnic student population. Students’ literacy scores were among the lowest in language arts on New Jersey standardized tests at all grade levels. Walker, Tabone and Weltsek (2011) indicated that “thirty-nine percent of the students are Latino, 36% of African descent, 14% Asian American, 10% Caucasian, and 1% Native American. The free and reduced rates for the students in the participating schools ranged from 77% to 88%” (p. 366).

**Recommendations**

The ITAS program has shown positive results for improving Language Arts Literacy Skills for students in both the 2005 (fourth and fifth grade) and 2008 (sixth and seventh grade) 3-year programs. These improvements have been demonstrated through significant improvement in
Language Arts Literacy on the NJASK as well as teachers’ assessment of students’ demonstration of targeted literacy skills. Further teacher training and increased student involvement in the ITAS program may be beneficial for the Jersey City Public Schools to pursue as a strategy to increase students’ literacy proficiency on both standardized and non-standardized assessments.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), now adopted by 45 states and Washington, DC, also include standards for Visual and Performing Arts in the areas of dance, music, theater and visual art. The state of New Jersey adopted the CCSS for Mathematics and Literacy in 2010. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has developed five units in a Model Curriculum to assist educators in implementing these standards. To date, CCSS have been developed for the content areas of mathematics and English language arts (ELA). The ELA standards include many skills that overlap with and can be integrated with Theater Arts. Some states have developed an outline of the alignment to assist educators with this alignment.

In the spring of 2010, New Jersey also became a part of the Partnership for Assessment and Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Since 2005, the state has been actively engaged in the American Diploma Project Network, aligning its standards to the expectations of postsecondary education and employers. Through the PARCC, twenty-four states have joined together to create K-12 assessments, aligned to the CCSS.

It is recommended that future researchers consider the ITAS program’s alignment to the new standards for continued success with the implementation, student achievement in English Language Arts and preparedness for the new assessments. Teacher training in the CCSS and New Jersey Model Curriculum will be a crucial part of teacher training in order for students to meet the requirements of the new standards, which still lend support to the theater strategies.
infused in the ITAS program. The targeted literacy skills infused with theater arts in the ITAS program can support the CCSS for English Language Arts providing teachers with differentiated strategies that meet the needs of a wide range of learners and learning styles. When students do not demonstrate the ability to achieve these literacy skills, they will inevitably encounter challenges in the area of ELA with the CCSS. The CCSS have been designed to be rigorous requiring a deeper understanding of the content. The goal is for students to be college and career ready in the area of literacy by the time they graduate from high school. The Standards are:

- the culmination of an extended, broad-based effort to fulfill the charge issued by the states to create the next generation of K–12 standards in order to help ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy no later than the end of high school.

(Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012)

The College Board for the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) published an extensive report in December 2012 titled *The Arts and the Common Core: A Review of Connections Between the Common Core State Standards and the National Core Arts Standards Conceptual Framework*. While an arts-focused branch of the CCSS does not currently exist, the NCCAS seized the opportunity to “…highlight the overlap between the Common Core’s objectives and the practices of arts-based initiatives nationwide” (p. 4) Research on the arts and the effects of its integration with other disciplines to increase student achievement continues. To date, there is a growing body of evidence that the integration of the arts in the curriculum, when effectively implemented, can have positive results on student learning outcomes in both elementary and secondary schools. Educational leaders seeking to differentiate and change teacher practices and strategies should consider arts infusion in their school or district’s curriculum. After becoming familiar with programs that have proven to be successful,
educational leaders should examine how their school’s population, demographics and academic programs could benefit from arts integration. Once it is decided to utilize theater arts strategies in a classroom or school, it is imperative that effective training for teachers be planned over a period of time. Research has proven that not only did consistent training over time yield positive results for teacher implementation of theater arts strategies, but also the partnering of classroom teachers with teaching artists where the training was also job-embedded. Training in theater arts strategies and its implementation can have an effect on teacher practice. Educational leaders should determine the logistics of the professional development needed and identify the classes, grade levels and/or schools to start the implementation with.

Teachers infusing theater arts in their curriculum should be trained and align lessons with the national arts standards and CCSS. Due to the success of the model used by the ITAS program (classroom teacher working with a teaching artist) it is recommended that teachers have job embedded professional development with a teaching artist when integrating the arts with the core curriculum. Also, as evidenced in this study, the amount of time and frequency of teacher training produced a positive outcome with students’ achievement of the targeted literacy skills.

It is further recommended that an examination of teachers’ ability to modify the lessons in the ITAS program be conducted. Most of the teachers reported that they were able modify the lessons however there was no change between the second and fourth workshops for teachers demonstrating this ability (second and fourth Workshops- Well 13.6% n = 3; Extremely Well 86.4% n = 19). It is important that teachers modify lessons as needed to meet the needs of their different learners and their learning styles. Tomlinson (1997) said, “To challenge the full range of learners appropriately requires that a teacher modify or “differentiate” instruction in response to the varying needs of varying students in a given classroom.” Professional development on
modifying and differentiating lessons will still benefit teachers’ effective planning of these lessons.

**Further Recommendations**

Future studies of the ITAS program should focus on the following:

- Continue to disaggregate students who were exposed to the ITAS program in a previous grade’s test scores to see if there is any correlation or significance to LAL grades and test scores. The results from Walker, Tabone and Weltsek’s 2005-2008 study with fourth- and fifth-grade students revealed that 17% of the fifth graders who were exposed to the ITAS program in the fourth grade were Advanced Proficient on the NJASK5. Two percent of the fifth-grade students who were in the control classrooms in fourth grade were Advanced Proficient on the NJASK5. Further quantitative studies should be done to find out why there has been a benefit to participating students’ literacy skills and proficiency. Additionally, Walker et al. found in the 2008-2011 study that 78% of eighth graders who were part of the ITAS program as seventh graders were proficient on the eighth-grade literacy assessment. Comparatively, 69% of the eighth-grade students who not exposed to the program in seventh grade were proficient.

- Surprisingly despite the training hours and materials provided through the ITAS program, teachers’ responses to being able to modify the lessons did not change from the second to fourth survey. Three out of 22 teachers were able to modify lessons well and nineteen out of the 22 teachers responded that they were able to modify lessons extremely well. Further qualitative studies should be done on teachers’ ability to modify lessons using theater arts strategies.
• Create an evaluation instrument for students’ performance of the targeted skills and teachers’ implementation that is not self-reported by teachers to eliminate bias.

• The results of the teachers’ survey responses present that students’ demonstration of active listening increased as teacher training progressed. Future research could examine what caused this increase and if it was sustained.

• Future research should be conducted on the use of dramatic techniques and literacy with the use of computer software, similar to Pogrow’s Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) program. The infusion of technology would be relevant to twenty-first century learners.

• Future research should focus on teachers’ professional development experiences in the arts and the link to classroom practice.

• Future studies on the results of varied literacy assessments before, during and after students are exposed to theater arts strategies should be conducted.

• Future research should be done on the subgroups and the effect of the ITAS program on their progress in literacy (Gender, Race, Grade, English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities).

• Future research on teachers’ use of the theater arts strategies with the literacy curriculum.
References


