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# Drama Discovery: The Effect of Dramatic Arts in Combination with Bibliotherapy on the Self-Efficacy of Students with Emotional and/or Behavioral Disabilities Regarding Their Understanding of Their Own Exceptionalities

Michele Jacobs

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DRAMA DISCOVERY: THE EFFECT OF DRAMATIC ARTS IN COMBINATION  
WITH BIBLIOTHERAPY ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF STUDENTS WITH  
EMOTIONAL AND/OR BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES REGARDING THEIR  
UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR OWN EXCEPTIONALITIES

by

Michele N. Jacobs, M.Ed.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders

Duquesne University

Pittsburgh, PA

Spring, 2005

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## Abstract

The objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of dramatic arts in combination with bibliotherapy, which is the use of literary sources to help people solve complex problems and find understanding about a topic (Sullivan & Strang, 2003). The Drama Discovery curriculum was piloted in a middle school classroom for eleven students with emotional/behavioral disabilities and one student with delinquent behaviors at a small private alternative education school in Western Pennsylvania. Students with emotional/behavioral disabilities often have low self-efficacy when it comes to explaining their own disabilities, coping with the label of having a disability, and the general issues that come from having a disability. The main factor that was examined through the qualitative assessment was whether or not the students' self-efficacy regarding their own emotional disability was affected by reading about and acting out characters that have similar issues. "Perceived self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p.3) The collection method for this qualitative study included observations, field notes, audio taped documentation, student journals, and interviews. The author wrote a Pre-conceptual Map to initiate the study. The observations that directly matched the original assumptions and the realities of the classroom that did not directly correlate were written about in separate sections and anecdotally reported according to the themes that arose. The author's prediction of this dissertation proved to be correct when there was a positive effect on the students' self-efficacy regarding their own exceptionality.

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Doctor of Education, May 2005

Duquesne University

Chair: James Henderson, Ed.D.

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## Dedication

Thank you to...

My mother and friend, Libby Jacobs, who gave me her creativity, time, and encouragement

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Central Theme

Students with emotional/behavioral disabilities often have low self-efficacy when it comes to explaining their own disabilities, coping with the label of having a disability, and the general issues that come from having a disability. There are new collections of children's literature books that explain to children through the characters what their disability is and how to cope with it. For example in Gantos' (2000) book, *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, the main character describes a day without the medications that balance his emotional stability:

“The next morning I woke up feeling like half me and half not, like when you mix baking soda and vinegar together and come up with a totally weird third thing.

Well, that's what I felt like, something not yet named”(p.153).

By exploring these characters through dramatic games and exercises, the class was a positive outlet for openly discussing the issues that come from an emotional or behavioral disability.

#### *History and Laws for Students with Disabilities*

This section highlights the history and laws that mandate that students with disabilities legally must be in the "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE). It also explains what constitutes a learning disability, ADHD, and emotional and behavioral disabilities, which are the main special education focus of this dissertation.

*IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)*

In 1975 when President Ford signed into law PL 94-142, the “Equal Educational Accessibility” (EEA) laws did more than provide that a free public education in the least restrictive environment be made available to exceptional children. PL 94-142 (which is now referred to as IDEA) explains that consultations among parents, teachers, psychologists, and physicians are required to set up an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for each child which, taking into consideration the child’s needs, potential, and disabilities, includes a statement of goals and the services to be provided to help reach those goals (Zinar, 1987).

To clarify services for children with ADHD under provisions of IDEA and Section 504, the Department of Education issued a policy clarification memorandum in 1991. The memorandum specifies that children with ADHD may be eligible for special education services under three categories defined by IDEA: (1) other health impaired, (2) specific learning disability, and (3) seriously emotionally disturbed (Davila, Williams, & MacDonald, 1991). If students with ADHD have coexisting specific learning disabilities, they may qualify for special education in the specific learning disability category. ADHD alone may cause a child to meet the criteria for this category in some cases. In defining specific learning disabilities, federal statutory language includes the term "minimal brain dysfunction," which was a past name for ADHD. Brain imaging studies underscore this category's continuing applicability and relevance for children with ADHD (Latham, & Latham, 1992).

The U. S. Supreme Court, in *Honig v. Doe* (1988), ruled that IDEA prohibits state or local authorities from excluding disabled children from the classroom for disruptive or even dangerous behavior associated with their disabilities. In this ruling, the Court supported Congress's intent "to strip schools of the authority to disclude disabled students" (Tucker & Goldstein, 1992).

*Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)*

The parents of seventeen students experiencing mental retardation sued the school district on the grounds that it was ignoring its constitutional responsibility to provide the students with free, appropriate education in the case of *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth* (1972). The decision that resulted was that all children between the ages of six and twenty-one, who were mentally retarded, were required by law to receive a free public education that appropriately resembled the general education program (Yell, 1998). There are many cases that cite the law's preference for the education of students working along side their peers through inclusion (*Honig v. Doe*, 1988; *Sacramento City Unified School District Board of Education v. Rachel H.*, 1994; *Taylor v. Board of Education*, 1986).

*\_\_ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities at work, at school, and in public accommodations, and is not limited (like Section 504) to those organizations and programs that receive federal funds (Latham, & Latham, 1992).

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*

No Child Left Behind was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act in 2001. Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (2003) noted that this law was written to include all public school children receiving special education services. It affects the special education teachers with higher standards, accountability, a need to be “highly qualified” in their teacher certification, and inclusion in statewide assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

*Learning, Attention, Emotional, and Behavioral Disabilities*

*Learning Disabilities*

Students are labeled as Learning Disabled because even though their IQs are average to above average, there is a discrepancy between their intelligence and their ability to achieve academically. Gross (1997) provided this insight into the psyche of these students: "Children with learning disabilities are vulnerable to paralyzing self-doubt, and often avoid learning in order to withdraw from further failure" (p.3).

*Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity*

*Disorder(ADHD)*

*Defining Characteristics of ADHD.* "The class clown, the space cadet, the rude or disrespectful teenager, the children described as immature, unmotivated, lazy, inconsistent, irresponsible..." (Busch, 1993), this is how students with ADHD have been described for generations. In this day and age schools are held responsible for students that display these needs in the classroom. Because it is a violation of IDEA, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in Florence County School District No. 4 v. Carter that courts

could order school districts to reimburse parents for private school tuition and related expenses if the public schools fail to provide an appropriate education. The parents of Shannon Carter, a teenager with a learning disability and ADHD, were reimbursed \$36,000 in private school expenses. School evaluations at first failed to identify either condition and misdiagnosed Shannon as "lazy, unmotivated, and a slow learner" who should "work harder." After the child's problems were finally identified and she was found to be eligible for special education services, her parents rejected the school's IEP because they felt its achievement goals were inadequate: four months' progress in reading over the course of one school year (Gregg, 1994).

ADHD is a neurobiologically based disorder characterized by inappropriate levels of three observable behaviors: inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity (Fowler, 1992; American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Weaver & Landers, 1998). Other causes include external factors such as lead poisoning, injury, complications during pregnancy and birth, illness, and prenatal drug exposure (Dykman, Ackerman, & Raney, 1993; Goldstein, & Goldstein, 1992; Barkley, 1990; Ingersoll, 1988).

ADHD is one of the most common mental disorders among children. It affects three to five percent of all children, perhaps as many as two million American children. Two to three times more boys than girls are affected. On the average, at least one child in every classroom in the United States needs help for the disorder (Neuwirth, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1994; Gregg, 1995).

U.S. Department of Education's (1994) *Attention Deficit Disorder: Adding Up the Facts* explains:

Children with ADHD are often aggressive and rejected by their peers, while children with ADD (without hyperactivity) are more withdrawn and unpopular. Both types of children with ADD commonly do not cooperate with others and are less willing to wait their turn or play by the rules. Their inability to control their own behavior may alarm themselves and other children and cause them to become isolated. As a result, their self-esteem suffers. (p. 2)

ADHD can negatively affect the person's relationships with others in addition to disrupting their daily life, consuming energy, contributing to poor social adjustment, and diminishing self-esteem (Neuwirth, 1994).

In this statement Neuwirth (1994) points to the need for creative expression by students that have ADHD:

Since people with ADHD are often bright and creative, they often report feeling frustrated that they're not living up to their potential. Many also feel restless and are easily bored. Some say they need to seek novelty and excitement to help channel the whirlwind in their minds. (p. 18)

ADHD's characteristic behaviors can be assets if channeled positively. High energy levels and ability to interact in stimulating environments can lead to successful adult careers (Hallowell & Ratey, 1994).

*Treatment of ADD with Medications.* When families and doctors begin to seek out ways to treat ADHD, many of them look towards medication as a solution. Three medications in the class of drugs known as stimulants seem to be the most effective in both children and adults. These are methylphenidate (Ritalin), dextroamphetamine

(Dexedrine or Dextrostat), and pemoline (Cylert) (Neuwirth, 1994). For many people, these medicines dramatically reduce their hyperactivity and improve their ability to focus, work, and learn. While on these medications, some children may lose weight, have less appetite, experience difficulty sleeping, and temporarily grow more slowly (Neuwirth, 1994). Children with ADHD, regardless of whether or not they are medicated, benefit most from proper instruction, accommodations, and interventions (Chesapeake Institute, 1994). This is why finding new techniques and successful programs to help these students can be considered so important.

*504 Plans.* Students who have ADHD who do not qualify for services under IDEA can receive help under an earlier law, the National Rehabilitation Act, Section 504, which defines disabilities more broadly. Qualifying for services under the National Rehabilitation Act is often referred to as "504 eligibility" (Neuwirth, 1994). Gregg (1994) states that children may qualify for services to the students with special needs:

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if their ADHD substantially limits a major life activity, such as learning. Section 504 prohibits programs that receive federal dollars from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. It requires public schools to make accommodations for eligible handicapped children, whether or not they qualify for special education services under IDEA.  
(p. 3)

Blazer (1999) explains that: "Although both 504 and IDEA legislation address students with attention, learning, and other difficulties, 504 has become the more global vehicle for accommodating children with unique needs, including ADHD or other health

impairments” (p. 1). Children with ADHD are covered by three federal statutes: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B (IDEA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

If a student with ADHD does not qualify for services under IDEA, it may be possible to qualify for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112) (Weaver & Landers, 1998). Blazer (1999) explains the differences between the Section 504 and IDEA legislation:

Although both 504 and IDEA legislation address students with attention, learning, and other difficulties, 504 has become the more global vehicle for accommodating children with unique needs, including ADHD or other health impairments. In contrast, IDEA is based on well-defined criteria that include a statistical discrepancy between aptitude and achievement, and require a Child Study Team to determine eligibility before developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) (p. 1).

### *Emotional and/or Behavioral Disabilities*

*Defining Characteristics of E/BD.* According to the U.S. Department of Education (2000) currently there are more than 460,000 students in the United States who are identified as emotionally and/or behaviorally disabled. Well over a million students have been identified as having emotional disabilities since the predecessor of IDEA became law in 1975. (Cullinan, Evans, Epstein, & Ryser, 2003). It has been written that only a fraction of those who need intervention for their emotional or behavioral disorders are actually identified and served (Kauffman, 2001; U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services, 2001). There are multiple disabilities that fall under the heading of emotional and behavior disabilities. These include but are not limited to diagnoses of: Bipolar Disorder, ADHD, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Separation Anxiety Disorder, Social Phobia, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Tourette Syndrome, Schizophrenia, Eating Disorders, Conduct Disorder, Pervasive Development Disorder, Autism, and Asberger's Disorder.

Jolivette, Stichter, Nelson, Scott, & Liaupsin, (2000) asserted that students with behavioral and emotional disabilities,

... may not be able to maintain appropriate social relationships with others; they may have academic difficulties in multiple content areas; and they may display chronic behavior problems, including noncompliance aggression, and disrespect toward authority figures (p.2).

*E/BD Intelligence and Academics.* Research has shown that students with E/BD generally earn lower grades, fail more courses, are retained in grade more often, pass minimum competency tests at lower rates, and have more difficulty in their adult lives than do students with other disabilities (Frank, Sitlington, & Carson, 1995; Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003). Students with E/BD are the least likely of the students who are labeled with disabilities to receive mostly A and B letter grades in secondary school. (Bradley, Henderson, & Monfore, 2004). Just over one quarter of students with E/BD receive mostly A's or B's, and 13.6% receive mostly D's and F's, which represents the highest proportion in all the disability categories (Wagner, Marder, et al., 2003).

*E/BD and IQ.* Duncan, Forness, & Hartsough (1995) explained that students with E/BD have IQ scores that are often lower than normal, although average or above IQ scores are also noted. Students who have emotional and behavioral disorders typically exhibit noncompliance to teacher requests along with numerous additional disruptive behaviors (DeMartini-Scully, Bray, & Kehle, 2000). The extreme behaviors that are far removed from the norm are often not well tolerated by teachers (Nelson, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2002). The teachers often seek new techniques and materials to help them work with the negative effect that students from this population can have on their classrooms.

*Self Injurious Behaviors (SIBs).* Some emotionally disabled students exhibit what it is referred to in the schools as Self Injurious Behaviors (SIBs). SIBs are characterized as any sort of self-harm that involves inflicting injury or pain on one's own body. Other than self-mutilation, examples of self-injury include: hair pulling, picking the skin, excessive or dangerous use of mind-altering substances such as alcohol, and eating disorders. (Simpson, 2001, p. 2). Favazza and Rosenthal (1993) identify pathological self-mutilation as the deliberate alteration or destruction of body tissue without conscious suicidal intent. Disconnected self-mutilation leads to a sense of "mental disintegration." The behavior serves to center the person (Levenkron, 1998, p. 48). Although the person exhibiting this behavior is often accused of seeking attention, according to Simpson (2001),

...cutting and other self-harming behavior tends to be committed in privacy. In addition, self-harming individuals will often conceal their wounds. Revealing

self-inflicted injuries will often encourage other individuals to attempt to stop the behavior. Since cutting serves to dissociate the individual from feelings, drawing attention to wounds is not typically desired (p.4).

Stanley, Gameroff, Michalsen, & Mann (2001) report that approximately 55%-85% of self-mutilators have made at least one attempt at suicide.

Everyday in the United States, 6 students under the age of 20 commit suicide (Children's Defense Fund, 2001). It is estimated that youth with learning or behavior problems tend to have higher rates of suicide than those for the general population (Forness, 1988).

*E/BD Home Environment.* Youths with emotional and behavioral disorders often face a range of compounding factors that may include poor socioeconomic status, limited education, single-parent households, dysfunctional family relationships, incest, sexual abuse, teen pregnancy, violence in the home, and unemployment (Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, 1993).

Wallach (1994) looked into reactions of students who came from abusive home environments and stated that,

To control their fears, children who live with violence may repress feelings. This defensive maneuver takes its toll in their immediate lives and can lead to further pathological development. It can interfere with their ability to relate to others in meaningful ways and to feel empathy. Individuals who cannot empathize with others' feelings are less likely to curb their own aggression, and more likely to become insensitive to brutality in general (p. 4).

*E/BD Least Restrictive Environment.* Due to the severity of the need, some students are unable to be mainstreamed into the regular school setting. Currently, approximately 77,000 students with E/BD, ages 6 to 21, are educated in exclusionary settings, such as day treatment and residential schools, which offer greater behavioral and therapeutic support than the regular public school (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b). Of the students who range in age from 6 to 21 who are served under IDEA, those with E/BD are more likely to be placed in restrictive settings than youth in any other disability classification (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

*Learned Helplessness.* Back in the 1960's, experiments on dogs in a lab brought the concept of learned helplessness to the forefront of many discussions and eventually were tied to current educational situations. In the controlled study, dogs in cages would be shocked electrically when trying to leave their cage. Once they were given the opportunity to leave without being hurt, they did not even try. Much like these poor dogs, students that have continuously found failure instead of success begin to feel this sense of learned helplessness (Arnold, 1997). Students with learning disabilities and or emotional/behavioral disabilities often feel a form of learned helplessness. Sutherland & Singh (2004) stated that, "Students with E/BD might have low perceptions of their cognition competence, which might lead to learned helplessness behavior patterns as the students lessen their achievement efforts to cushion academic failure."

#### Purpose of the Study/Project

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of a program pilot titled Drama Discovery. This curriculum utilizes bibliotherapy in combination with drama by

having the students act out stories with characters that have emotional and/or behavioral disabilities that the middle school students can relate to. The study assessed the extent to which Drama Discovery could make a positive impact on the students' self-efficacy regarding understanding and coping with their challenges.

#### Need for the Study/Project

##### *Self-Concept Needs of Students with Disabilities*

##### *Self-esteem and Self-efficacy of Students with Learning Disabilities*

It was the belief of the author of this dissertation based on practical experience in the classroom that there is a direct correlation between self-efficacy needs and emotional/behavioral disabilities. An abundance of current research suggests that children with learning disabilities are likely to exhibit signs of depression, in particular, a sense of low self-worth (Gross, 1997). Regardless of some of the findings that suggest that students with special needs have lower self-esteem than same-aged peers without disabilities, a few studies have found little evidence that the self-esteem of the two groups is significantly different (Appleton, Minchom, Ellis, Elliot, Boll, & Jones, 1994; Arnold & Chapman, 1992). According to Willoughby, King, and Polatajko (1996), "Most often, clinicians who carefully consider the child's situation and who have a good understanding of the differences between the 'self' terms, will find that they are addressing areas of self-concept (or self-efficacy), rather than self-esteem" (p. 4).

The academic issues of a student with a learning disability result in poor self-concept, rejection or isolation from peers, or other obstacles to the development of social skills (Osman, 1987; Lagreca & Stone, 1990). Mainstreaming students with learning

disabilities does not improve self-concept, but appropriate special placement and support services increase self-concept (Arnold, 1997).

*Self-efficacy Needs of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities*

Schelly (1995) explained how the student who has an emotional disability views himself or herself by stating that,

A low sense of self-worth may contribute to an inability to deal with criticism and accept constructive feedback. In addition, many youths with emotional disorders have trouble managing their anger in a confrontational situation (p.2).

When a child's sense of self is drained because they are defending themselves against outside dangers or warding off their own fears, they have difficulty learning in school (Craig, 1992). Students with emotional and behavioral disabilities (EBD) typically experience peer relation difficulties and negative social experiences (Farmer, Farmer, & Gut, 1999). Peer rejection is associated with aggressive behavior, and students who are rejected or engage in early disruptive behavior are more likely to experience delinquency and antisocial behavior later in life (e.g., Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991; Ollendick, Weist, Borden, & Greene, 1992).

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of dramatic arts in combination with bibliotherapy on students' sense of self-efficacy regarding their own emotional disability?

2. Can bibliotherapy help the student to understand his or her own disability by having the students examine text? Does it help to create self-efficacy for the student?
3. Can acting out the therapeutic books help the student understand his or her own disability? Does it help to create self-efficacy for the student?
4. Do the students have a need and/or desire to learn more about their own disability?
5. Are there specific factors in the Drama Discovery program that effectively bring about changes in the student's self-efficacy?
6. Are the changes due to the Drama Discovery program negative or positive?

#### Hypothesis (Objectives of the Project in Qualitative Dissertation)

The objective of the study is to evaluate the effect of dramatic arts in combination with bibliotherapy on the self-efficacy of students with emotional disabilities. The program would be implemented in school classrooms for students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities, and then empirical data will be gathered and analyzed. The author's prediction of this dissertation was that there would be a positive effect on the students' self-efficacy regarding their own exceptionality.

### Definition of Terms

Bibliotherapy: “Bibliotherapy is a technique that uses literary sources to help individuals resolve complex problems” (Sullivan & Strang, 2003).

Drama Discovery Curriculum: A curriculum written by Jacobs (2005), which utilizes bibliotherapy and theater games to help students gain self-efficacy regarding their own exceptionalism.

Drama in Education (DIE): Can also be referred to as drama curriculum, “is drama taught as discipline in schools, with students exploring themes and issues through discussion and role play, by learning theater styles and genres, and mounting productions” (Meath-Lang, 1997, p.102).

Drama Therapy: Also referred to as dramaturgy, “involves the development of themes and is characterized by the dramaturgy wave, which intertwines a wide variety of social, physical, creative, and reflective games” (Martin, Leberman, & Neill, 2001, p. 1)

Learning Disabilities: According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD)(1994):

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behavior, social perception, and social interactions may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability.

Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences (p. 62).

Performing Arts: Drama, dance, vocals, instrumental, puppetry, and multimedia expressions, which can be performed for an audience.

Reader's Theatre: The oral presentation of drama, prose, or poetry by two or more readers (McCaslin, 1990).

Self-concept: The cognitive appraisal one makes of the expectations, descriptions, and prescriptions that one holds about one's self (Hattie, 1992).

Self-efficacy: "Perceived self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1997, p.3).

Self-esteem: An outcome of the self-verification process that occurs within groups, maintaining both the individual and the group (Cast, 2002).

Serious Emotional Disturbance: Also referred to as an emotional disability or E/BD, it is a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics, displayed over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- (a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
- (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal

relationships with peers or teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Knoblauch, & Sorenson, 1998, p.3).

Theater Games: Activities that help actors learn to trust, improvise, understand characters, and generally improve their communication skills.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Theoretical Framework Underlying the Research Purpose

##### *Self-concepts*

Self-concept has typically been defined in terms of the cognitive appraisal one makes of the expectations, descriptions, and prescriptions that one holds about one's self (Hattie, 1992). Byrne's (1984) definition of self-concept was the self-perceptions that individuals have about their academic abilities, specifically, their "...feelings and knowledge about [these] abilities [and] skills" (p. 428). Self-concept is measured at a more general level of specificity and includes the evaluation of such competence and the feelings of self-worth associated with the behaviors in question. Self-concept judgments can be domain-specific but are not task-specific (Pajares, 1997).

Pajares and Shunk (2001) corroborated that:

The conceptual and empirical differences between self-efficacy and self-concept are not always clear to researchers or in research studies. Some authors use the terms synonymously; others describe self-concept as a generalized form of self-efficacy; still others argue that self-efficacy is simply a part, or a kind, of self-concept. (p. 244)

Because there is often a misconception about the differences between self-efficacy and self-concept, researchers have drawn a distinction between self-efficacy for performance and self-efficacy for learning (Zimmerman et al., 1992; Schunk, 1996b).

Self-concept researchers similarly argued that general self-concept, regardless of

how it is inferred, may not be a particularly useful construct (Marsh, 1993). Due to this, it is more appropriate to perform empirical research on the concept of self-efficacy.

### *Social Cognitive Theory*

In *Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*, Bandura identified that self-beliefs were an important component in social cognitive theory and laid the groundwork for a theory regarding self-efficacy, which has been researched for over two decades (Bandura, 1997). Bandura's social cognitive theory explains how people assess and interpret their own experiences and thoughts. Initial outcomes of behavior predicts subsequent behavior together with the beliefs that people hold about their abilities and about the outcome of their efforts (Pajares, 1996a).

### *Self-esteem*

Webster's document defines self-esteem as "a confidence and satisfaction in oneself" and self-concept as "the mental image one has of oneself." Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self (Rosenberg, 1990; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, and Rosenberg, 1995). It is one of the most commonly researched concepts in social psychology (Baumeister, 1993; Cast & Burke, 2002; Mruk, 1995). Self-esteem is associated with depression, anxiety, motivation and general satisfaction with one's life (Rosenberg, 1986). Self-esteem is the overall value that one places on oneself as a person, whereas self-concept is viewed as the body of self-knowledge that individuals possess about themselves (Rosenberg, 1986).

### *Comparison of the Concepts of Self-efficacy and Self-esteem*

The definitions of the concepts of self are often confused (i.e. the difference

between self-esteem and self-efficacy). Haycock (1998) explained:

Although self-efficacy may seem similar to self-esteem (e.g. both are components of self-referent thought), Bandura has argued that they are very different constructs. Self-efficacy pertains to an individual's judgment of how well she or he can perform certain behaviors in specific situations (p. 318).

Sternberg (1989) made the distinction between self-efficacy and self-esteem clear. He ascertained, "When the students essentially do tasks they originally thought to be too difficult they become more self-efficacious. It is a different quality than self-esteem which allows students to feel good about themselves with no basis in growth." Through this insight one can see the reason for choosing to evaluate the strength of a new program's impact on self-efficacy because it determines if the students have developed their self-perceptions in a positive way since the beginning of the research study.

Efficacy-based self-esteem is likely to result from self-attributions. When students reflect on their own behavior and observe that they have been successful at maintaining a match between situational meanings and identity standards, efficacy-based self-esteem results (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Burke & Stets, 1999). Willoughby, King, and Polatajko (1996) explained,

An important difference between self-efficacy and self-esteem is that perceptions of self-efficacy vary depending on the life event in question whereas self-esteem is a relatively stable way in which we view ourselves that is established early on in life (p. 2).

After taking this into consideration, it may be more realistic for teachers/researchers to address students' perceptions of self-efficacy than to focus on their feelings of self-esteem, which are less likely to change.

### *Self-efficacy*

Cooley (1902) used the metaphor of the self as mirror or looking-glass self, to illustrate the idea that individuals' sense of self is primarily formed as a result of their perceptions of how others perceive them. The verbal and implied assessments of others in a person's life act as mirror reflections that provide the information that individuals use to define their own sense of self. Self-efficacy beliefs are "beliefs in one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1997). Bandura further stated that, "...people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (p. 2). It is this belief regarding how the student judges his or her own ability to find success in a specific task that drives this theory. According to Pajares (2002),

The contention that self-efficacy beliefs are a critical ingredient in human functioning is consistent with the view of many theorists and philosophers who have argued that the potent affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs make them a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted (e. g., Aristotle, James, Dewey, Kant, Maslow) (p. 10).

*Self-efficacy in Educational Research.* Self-efficacy beliefs have recently received increasing attention in educational research, primarily in the area of academic motivation (Graham & Weiner, 1996; Pintrich & Schunk, 1995; Schunk, 1996a, 1996b).

Various researchers have assessed general academic self-perceptions of competence (see the meta-analysis of Multon et al., 1991). Jinks and Morgan's (1996) study reported significant relationships between elementary students' percepts of self-reported grades and self-efficacy and that this relationship held constant across suburban, urban, and rural school environments. Bandura (1997) cautioned researchers attempting to predict academic outcomes from students' self-efficacy beliefs that, to increase accuracy of prediction self-efficacy beliefs should be measured in terms of "...particularized judgments of capability that may vary across realms of activity, different levels of task demands within a given activity domain, and under different situational circumstances" (Pajares, 1997, p. 6).

*Self-Regulation.* Self-efficacy beliefs influence self-regulatory processes such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and strategy use (Zimmerman, 1990, 1994; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). If a student does not have a high sense of self-efficacy towards an activity, he or she will not spend a lot of time on it or put forth much effort.

Pajares (2001) affirmed that:

High self-efficacy helps create feelings of serenity in approaching difficult tasks and activities. Conversely, people who doubt their capabilities may believe that things are tougher than they really are, a belief that fosters stress, depression, and a narrow vision of how best to solve a problem. Not surprisingly, confidence in one's academic capability is a critical component of school success (p. 242).

Efficacy beliefs also influence individuals' thought patterns and emotional reactions (Pajares, 1996b; Pajares, 2002). Also, just because students feel that they are inefficacious in a task (e.g. statistics) does not necessarily mean that their self-esteem has to suffer, if they did not invest their self-worth in the activity (Bandura, 1997).

*Self-efficacy Through Modeling.* By observing how models (often in the form of teachers) or peers succeed or fail at tasks provides just the sort of information that helps create self-efficacy beliefs (Schunk, 1981, 1983, 1987; Schunk & Gunn, 1985; Schunk & Hanson, 1985). A main principle in educational psychology is that children learn from the actions of models. Schunk and his colleagues have demonstrated that different modeling practices can differently affect self-beliefs (Schunk, 1987, 1999; Schunk & Gunn, 1985; Schunk & Hanson, 1985; Schunk et al., 1987).

*Self-efficacy Assessment.* Studies that have individuals report generality, strength, and the level of their confidence to accomplish a task or succeed in a certain situation assess self-efficacy beliefs. In school settings, self-efficacy instruments may ask students to perform particular reading or writing tasks (Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995), or engage in certain self-regulatory strategies (Bandura, 1989). Many studies conducted by Zimmerman and his colleagues have been instrumental in tracing the relationships among self-efficacy perceptions, academic self-regulatory processes, self-efficacy for self-regulation, and academic achievement (Risemberg & Zimmerman, 1992; Zimmerman, 1990, 1994, 1995; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990).

Problems related to assessment have plagued self-efficacy research. Often, no criterial task is identified, as researchers aim to discover simply the nature of the

interplay among motivation variables in the absence of performance attainments (Zimmerman, 1996). In other studies, judgments of confidence that bear passing resemblance to self-efficacy beliefs are used instead of more appropriate specific measures (Pajares, 1997, p.18). The most general self-efficacy assessments consist of an omnibus-type instrument that attempts to measure a general sense of efficacy or "confidence." Bandura (1997) argued that such general measures create problems of predictive relevance and are obscure about just what is being assessed. Because self-efficacy assessments often lack the specificity of measurement and consistency with the criterial task that optimizes the predictive power of self-efficacy beliefs, results minimize the influence of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1996a, 1996b; Pajares & Miller, 1995; Zimmerman, 1996).

Bandura (1997) cautioned that empirical results verifying that efficacy beliefs generalize across domains should not result in the "pursuit of a psychological Grail of generality" (p. 24), which would seek to find root cause for varying self-beliefs. When creating a self-efficacy inventory, Bandura (1986) recommended arranging items in a hierarchy of difficulty (p. 25).

Multon, Brown, and Lent's (1991) meta-analysis of self-efficacy studies reported that the strongest effects were found in studies in which the researchers who compared specific efficacy judgments with basic cognitive skills measures of performance, developed highly concordant self-efficacy/performance indices, and administered them at the same time.

*Self-efficacy Through the Arts.* Trusty and Oliva (1994) reviewed 57 prior studies and cited an abundance of evidence that performance experiences and artistic creation positively enhance not only self-concept but also other non-artistic outcomes (e.g. language acquisition, cognitive development, critical thinking skills, and social skills). The authors of that study explained that more empirical studies need to be conducted to advance the philosophical debates regarding precedence and priority among various causal factors related to arts education. The development of students' self-concepts should be taken into consideration. These studies should be conducted in order to build a cohesive body of evidence regarding the connection between self-beliefs and the arts.

*A Sense of Self Through Multiple Intelligences and the Arts Education*

*Concept of Multiple Intelligences.* The arts accommodate the multiple learning styles of children. In addition, the arts encourage much needed involvement of families, build self-esteem and confidence, and make learning fun (Arts Education Partnership, 1998). In his theory of Multiple Intelligences, Gardner (1983) explained that using various approaches for teaching allows individuals to demonstrate strong ability in a specific area and to develop their weaker areas. In Mills' (2001) study of the relationship of musical intelligences based on theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in a Central Florida elementary school, it was noted:

In the time since Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* was published in 1983, educators, administrators and parents have questioned traditional assessments of intelligence in America's schools.

Standardized tests in the public schools have historically been concerned with

only two categories of aptitude: verbal and mathematical (p.2).

Instead of defining intelligence as a combination of verbal and mathematical aptitudes, the theory of Multiple Intelligences (Hatch & Gardner, 1996, p. 11) included the following:

1. Linguistic Intelligence: sensitivity to the sounds, rhythms, and meanings of words; sensitivity to the different functions of language.
2. Musical Intelligence: abilities to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch, and timbre; appreciation of the forms of musical expressiveness.
3. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: sensitivity to patterns, orderliness, and systematicity; ability to handle long chains of reasoning.
4. Spatial Intelligence: capacities to perceive the spatial world accurately, to perform transformations on one's initial perceptions, and to re-create aspects of one's visual experience.
5. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: abilities to control one's body movements and to handle objects skillfully.
6. Interpersonal Intelligence: capacities to discern and respond appropriately to the moods, temperaments, motivations, and desires of other people.
7. Intrapersonal Intelligence: access to one's own feelings; the ability to discriminate among them and draw upon them to guide behavior.
8. Naturalistic Intelligence: the capacity to draw on materials and features of the natural environment to solve problems or fashion products (Hatch, 1997).

*Multiple Intelligences Projects.* MI theory has been the main theoretical basis for

many projects, some of which were designed with arts curriculum and assessment in mind. One of these was Arts PROPEL, a project supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, 1986-1991 (Gitomer, 1989). The Arts PROPEL project involved collaboration among Harvard Project Zero, of which Gardner was co-director, the Educational Testing Service (EIS), and the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Its focus included middle and high school level imaginative writing, music, and visual arts (Winner & Simmons, 1992). The name PROPEL is an acronym including Production, Perception, Reflection, and Learning. Production, the creation of original artwork, was the central concern, with process considered as important as product (Simmons, 2001). The program has found that MI-based arts curriculums can broaden the scope of successful learning by tapping into students' backgrounds, differing strengths, and interests. By utilizing MI theory, schools can promote educational equity while encouraging individualization (Reiff, 1997).

#### Review of Relevant Empirical Studies

##### *History of Arts Education*

*A Nation At Risk* written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) alerted the public about the quality of American education as a whole. Five years later, The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) highlighted the especially poor status of arts education in the United States with *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education* (Welch, 1995). In 1994, the Improving America's School Act reinforced the importance of the arts in relation to other subjects and as vital subjects. The voluntary National Standards for Arts Education were released that same year. These were the first

standards developed in response to Goals 2000 Educate America Act (National Standards for Arts Education, 1994) and they determined what students should know and be able to do in dance, visual arts, music, and theater at various stages in their K-12 experience (Welch, 1995). The recently reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, named The No Child Left Behind Act, includes the arts as a recognized core academic subject. This policy puts the arts in the same light as reading, math, science, and other disciplines. Due to this fact, the arts are eligible for significant federal funds through the many education programs authorized in the law (Lych, 2002).

#### *Research on Arts Education*

##### *Empirical Studies on Arts Education*

Although history demonstrates that some effort has been made in arts education research, some experts still believe the arts are not examined closely enough in empirical studies. As Finley (2001) explained in a panel discussion for the American Educational Research Association (AERA), "To ask how we can improve research about K-12 arts education assumes, first, that such education takes place. When there is relatively little arts education taking place in schools, it is pretty difficult to conduct arts education research in schools."

*Arts Compendium.* Welch and his colleagues (1995) published *Schools, Communities, and the Arts: Research Compendium*, which was a comprehensive review of current research in the implementation of quality arts programs in U.S. schools, and areas that need to be explored in arts education research, with emphasis on community

priorities and initiatives. In the compendium, forty-nine quantitative and qualitative reports, articles, and dissertations were reviewed.

*Music Center of Los Angeles County.* Redfield (1990) conducted a study with the Music Center of Los Angeles County to assess the value and relative impact of an artist-in-residence program in which nine artists were working with sixteen residences at eleven schools in sixty-five classrooms. There were five different disciplines covered in the residences: drama, dance, visual arts, music, and creative writing. During the examination of the value of the artist-in-residence program for students with special needs, multiple sources of data were utilized including: school records, interviews, surveys, observations, and case studies. One of the main goals of the study was to boost self-esteem. The authors found that students learned how to express themselves better by acting out their feelings in front of others.

*Learning Through the Arts.* One of the most extensively documented new arts programs for the schools is Learning Through the Arts (LTTA), which is an arts-infused school transformation project developed by The Royal Conservatory of Music (Toronto, Canada). Through this program, 60 artists, 200 teachers and 4,000 students in Toronto approach and experience public education differently (Elster, 2001). LTTA's goal was to engage students deeply in learning, through carefully designed subject area units that incorporate performing and visual arts into the learning process. This goal is achieved through a structured program of professional teacher development, which includes the involvement of artists who work along with teachers to develop the curriculum and then implement the program over multiple years (Upitis, Smithrim, Patteson, & Meban,

2001). While reading the three articles on the same Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) program, which was implemented in two different countries, the similarities and the differences were noted by the author of this dissertation (Elster, 2001; Grauer, Irwin, de Cosson, & Wilsom, 2001; Upitis, Smithrim, Patteson, & Meban, 2001). Some parts, especially the descriptions of the program were similar, of course. They were all written in the same volume of the *International Journal of Education & the Arts*. They all featured slightly different methodologies in the qualitative realm, with the last two being the most closely matched due to the assessment technique and the surveys.

*The Arts for Students with Disabilities*

*VSA*. An affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, formerly known as Very Special Arts (and currently referred to as VSA), is an international nonprofit organization that offers educational opportunities through the arts for people with disabilities. VSA wrote a compilation of abstracts of visual and performing arts programs with people who have disabilities. Summaries of the contents of the fifty-three articles published from 1971 to 1981 were included and thirty dissertations were listed but not described (Anderson, 1992).

*Therapeutic Camp Study*. Henley (1999) analyzed over 2,000 sets of process notes that were written during the five years of a therapeutic summer camp for children who presented socialization problems related to hyperactivity, attention deficits, autism, atypical neurological involvements, and Asberger's syndrome. Henley explained,

One of the salient conclusions gleaned from this data is that aggressive or impulsive behavior related to hyperactivity and social anxiety can be channeled

and transformed into socially constructive forms of self-regulation through facilitated creative endeavor (p. 40).

By providing these children with a safe outlet for expression through the visual and performing arts, children become better equipped with coping mechanisms for the real world.

### *Drama Education*

Creative drama is essentially a form of imaginative play that can be used as a tool for instructional learning (Kelner, 1993; Schneider & Jackson, 2000). Gallagher (1998) explained how students could take risks safely through drama. Gallagher noted that, “Because of the great security of role, students and teacher can take greater risks. Because you are in safety, you can go into danger” (p.150). Drama encourages children to take on roles and work through their own defenses. It is an avenue which allows the children to express their own stories and concerns (Renfro, 1984). Personal and social issues can often be difficult to discuss in the classroom. An effective way to explore these issues is through drama (Hery, 1996).

*Imagination Project at UCLA.* Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanag (1999) enlisted the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS:88), a panel study which has followed more than 25,000 students in American secondary schools for ten years, to study the effect of the arts on low social economic status (SES) youth through the Imagination Project at UCLA. Meta-analysis research indicated that children from low socioeconomic families are far more likely to benefit from drama instruction than are students from average populations (Podlozny, 2000). Catterall and colleagues found that

involvement in theater arts (acting in plays, participating in drama clubs, and taking acting lessons) associates with a variety of developments of empathy and tolerance for others.

*Classroom Theater Project.* Wolf (1994) acted as a participant/observer/researcher in a study titled: *Learning to act/acting to learn: Children as actors, critics, and characters in classroom theater.* The participants, seventeen urban third- and fourth- grade remedial readers and their teacher, were observed in a year long program of creative dramatics called "Classroom Theater." The children in the position as actors experienced the creative and critical features of a dramatic curriculum. They shifted perspective when they were in the role of characters from self to other through voice, physical action, and connection to other characters. When the students switched roles to be critics, they began to learn to emphasize the value of rules, resources, and bases for common knowledge in dramatic interpretation.

*Reading Comprehension through Drama (RCD).* Rose, Parks, Androes, and McMahon (2000) studied the causal relationship between drama-based reading instruction and reading comprehension among fourth-grade students. They performed the study in collaboration with Whirlwind, a Chicago-based nonprofit arts education organization Reading Comprehension through Drama (RCD), a reading program that employs drama techniques consistent with the research on imagery and memory. The results suggested a direct causal link between drama-based instruction and improved reading comprehension.

*Drama and Standardized Tests.* DuPont (1992) examined the effectiveness of creative drama as an instructional strategy in a six-week creative drama program to enhance reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade remedial readers. There were three groups of seventeen fifth-graders in three different schools. According to the results of the score received on the California Achievement Test (CAT), they were all remedial readers. The study found that children who have been involved in the process of integrating creative drama with reading are not only better able to comprehend what they have acted out, but they are also better able to comprehend what they have read but do not act out, which could be transferred to the written scenarios they encounter on standardized tests. According to Lych (2002),

In an era of high-stakes testing and strong demands for accountability in school performance and student achievement, it is more important than ever to integrate the arts across the core curriculum and to teach them as distinct subjects (p. 1).

*Reader's Theater.* A technique called Reader's Theatre is often employed in classrooms in today's classrooms. Carrick (2001) described the format by noting,

Readers Theatre introduces the element of drama into literacy learning and magically transforms the classroom into a stage. During Readers Theatre time, the reader is at center stage, totally absorbed in reading. The reader is a star (p. 1).

Routman (1991) defined Readers Theatre as "creating a script from a narrative text and performing it for an audience" (p.98). As the students practice their roles, readers also reflect on the text and evaluate and revise how they interact with it (Carrick, 2000).

Acting out text provides an interactive activity in which the students are energized, and actively involved in responding to and interpreting literature (Sebesta, 1997). Reader's Theatre provides an opportunity for students of varying abilities to work as a team in a cooperative learning environment, which helps to eliminate labels for reading ability (Flood, Lapp, Flood, & Nagel, 1992; Trousdale & Harris, 1993; Wolf, 1993).

*Drama with Students Who Have Disabilities*

*Drama with Students who have Mental Disabilities.* Drama is an effective technique that is used by some educators in the education of mentally disabled children (Bayhan, 1995; Ustundag 1994). Miller, Rynders, and Schelien (1993) provided evidence that drama can serve as a mechanism to increase interaction among students with and without mental retardation. The experimental design in the study examined social interactions of students with and without mental retardation involved in a creative drama program (p. 73). The findings of the empirical study encourage the inclusion of special education students in regular education classrooms, specifically when using the dramatic arts.

Bayhan and Yukselen (2001) studied the social development skills of children that were garnered by dramatic life skills play. The seventeen children in Turkey whose developmental ages were on average 3-4 years was determined by using a pre- and post-test with Vineland Social Maturity Scale. This quantitative study demonstrated that drama is an effective method of helping the students with mental retardation to acquire social and life skills.

*Drama by People who are Disabled.* Producing plays about, by, and for persons

with disabilities is standard practice for the following founding directors and their companies: Access Theatre of Santa Barbara (Rod Lathim); CLIMB--Creative Learning Ideas for Mind and Body (Peg Wetli); National Workshop of the Handicapped (Rick Curry); National Theatre of the Deaf (David Hays and Mary Swizer); and Imagination Theatre (Warren Baumgart) (Barton, 1996).

*Japanese Noh Therapy.* Green and Reinhard (1995) explained the process of using the Japanese Noh therapy, which incorporates the use of masks and creative dramatic movement for the production of a theater presentation by adults with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. In this article, the researcher s maintained that among the benefits derived from this process are increased self-esteem, self-awareness, and awareness of body concepts, and better emotional and physical control. Public or private performances should be viewed as part of an ongoing means to promote the self-esteem and confidence of the performers. The goal of the performance is not a flawless end product but rather to serve as a vehicle that offers fresh expression and validation to the players.

#### *Drama for Students with Learning Disabilities*

Many of the past investigations of children with learning disabilities (LD) focused mainly on their cognitive and learning problems and on interventions designed to work on these problems (Toro, Weissberg, Guare, & Liebenstein, 1990). New research is beginning to look towards the student with learning disabilities and other exceptionalities from all angles, including how drama can benefit this type of child. One of the reasons behind this shift of focus is that struggling students especially seem to be motivated by

using drama in the classroom (Bidwell, 1990).

*Project Access.* Since 1996, Project Access, which is a transition program at Howard Community College in Columbia, Maryland, has taught skills to students with learning disabilities using a variety of dramatic exercises and performance activities (Schnapp & Olsen, 2003). This program has witnessed students who have grown in self-esteem and in ability to self-advocate.

*Drama for Social and Language Skills.* In a study developed by de la Cruz (1995), the question was asked, “Can a creative drama program with an art emphasis on social and oral language skills lead to increases in the social and oral language skills of children with learning difficulties?” This was the original study to concretely test the concept that linguistic and social development could be enhanced in special education through drama. To begin the study, seventy special and regular education teachers helped define the most important and problematic social skills for children with learning disabilities. The treatment group engaged in twelve weekly forty-minute creative drama activities, three of the twelve sessions aimed at each of four skill clusters. The authors found that students with learning disabilities need adaptive social skills to interact with others more effectively, to be accepted by their peers, and to work effectively within heterogeneous, mainstreamed school classrooms (p.21).

*Action Research Study on Drama for Social Studies.* Gallagher (2001) conducted an action research study, which used the vehicle of drama for the teaching of a new history curriculum in an Ontario eighth grade classroom. During the study, drama became a new source of success for three of the classroom’s most academically

challenged students. The study explained how the social order of the classroom began to change when the struggling students found the positive outlet of expression through drama (p. 2).

*Drama for Students Who Have Emotional and/or Behavioral Disabilities*

Anderson (1992) discussed that, "Adolescents labeled Behavior Disordered need to become the source of their own authentic process of making meaning. They also need to socially validate their co-created social meanings and choose behavior that is self-satisfying and self-controlled" (p. 138-139). Due to the fact that this type of child's ability to reflect on their anger is somewhat limited, children need guidance from teachers and parents in understanding and managing their feelings of anger. Bundy (2000) examined theories of aggression and suggests that drama-based programs intended to reduce violent response be implemented in the school classroom. Because the ability to regulate the expression of anger is linked to an understanding of the emotion (Zeman & Shipman, 1996), a program like Drama Discovery, which evaluates the emotions of the characters in children's literature can help students.

*Drama's Effect on Self-esteem*

Meath-Lang (1997) paints a vivid picture of how everyday life and search for self becomes drama by stating,

The quest for identity is drama played against the backdrop of community.

Contradictory scenes from real life are acted and reenacted as people assert their individuality while searching for sources of connection. There are many versions of the script... (p. 99).

By using drama in the classroom, teachers can make learning both productive and enjoyable, and oral communication skills can become the touchstone for enhancing self-esteem (Kaplan, 1997). Gilsdorf (1995), explained that the focus of dramatic activity for learning purposes should be on the art of combining games into thematic sequences, then framing, leading and debriefing adventure activities to maximize personal and social learning. Cattanaach (1996), stated that, "Drama can be an excellent way of developing self-esteem with groups of children and adults with learning disabilities both as a medium to develop creative expression and as a way of learning tasks and skills" (p. 74).

Utilizing an attitude scale created for the study of an improvisational dramatics program on attitudes and achievement, Gourgey, Bosseau, and Delgado (1985) found that participating students reported significantly improved attitudes relating to self-expression, trust, self-acceptance, acceptance of others, self-awareness, and empowerment. Rasmussen and Khachik (2000) conducted a Norwegian action research project that implemented role-playing activities as a way to support an increasing population of teenagers (16-18) who displayed behaviors such as arriving at school late, shirking, tiredness, academic achievement, indolence or disorder, and low self-esteem. Rosen and Koziol (1990) implemented a study, which found a positive correlation between creative dramatics and theater performance activities to student achievement in oral expressiveness, knowledge and comprehension of a play. The students' attitudes about theater arts and themselves improved. The curriculum-related theater arts activities were shown to contribute to the intellectual and affective growth of students.

*Reading Difficulties Combined with E/BD in the Adolescent Developmental Age*

Adolescents often struggle with issues even without adding disabilities because it is "...a phase in the life span characterized by transitions across numerous developmental domains, including challenges in biology (e.g. puberty), cognitive (e.g., issues of personal identity), and social (e.g., shift towards peers) spheres " (Windle & Mason, 2004, p.1). For young adults with serious emotional disturbance however, this period of transition from adolescence to adulthood presents additional challenges (Clark & Davis, 2000; Clark & Foster-Johnson, 1996; Davis, 2000; Davis & Vander Stoep, 1997). A study conducted by the University of Maryland (2001) found that of the students from a sample of students who were not labeled as having emotional and/or behavioral disabilities who read enthusiastically in first and second grade,

70 percent of the then eighth-grade students think reading is boring. Less than 45 percent of them performed above a basic reading level; only 7 percent could read at an advanced level required to critically analyze text or extract information from multiple sources (p. 2).

If students who can control themselves emotionally and behaviorally function at this level, the added needs certainly compound these difficulties for this age level.

According to Coleman and Vaughn (2000), teachers have explained that students with emotional and behavioral disabilities have difficulty with reading because of their emotional variability, fear of failure, and lack of trust. They also reported that there are very few research studies on reading interventions that are specific to the needs of students who have emotional/behavioral issues. Quinn, et al. (2000) reported that deficits in critical skills and strategies for reading usually result for these students. This is due to

the fact that the intensity of emotional and behavior challenges varies and that they often become frustrated in the learning environment based on a series of learning and school failures.

Some adolescents go beyond the difficulties with reading into refusing to participate in any learning environment. McShane, Walter, and Rey (2001) studied adolescent students who refuse school and explained that is not a formal psychiatric diagnosis. However, children with school refusal may suffer from significant emotional distress, especially anxiety and depression. School refusal often is associated with psychiatric disorders such as anxiety and depression (Fremont, 2003).

### Bibliotherapy

The concept of healing through books is not a new one. This type of work can be traced far back in history, from the days of the first libraries in Greece (Bibliotherapy, 1982). The first documented use of bibliotherapy as an intervention technique was recorded in 1840 (Afolayan, 1992). In 1916, the term "bibliotherapy" was used in a published article to describe the process of presenting books to medical patients who needed help understanding their problems (Crothers, 1916). The rise in popularity of bibliotherapy may be due to the societal and familial problems in the United States; there is a rise in divorce, alienation of young people, excessive peer group pressure, alcohol, and drug abuse. Educators have also begun to recognize the increasingly critical need for delivering literacy instruction to at-risk, disabled and homeless children (Ouzts, 1991).

### *Bibliotherapy Clarified*

Bibliotherapy can be defined as the use of books to help people problem solve. A

definition of bibliotherapy is a family of techniques for structuring interaction between a facilitator and a participant based on mutual sharing of literature (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1989). Tu (1999) provided the explanation that,

Through literature, children can understand that they are not alone in encountering problems. In using literature to help children cope with problems, teachers recognize that children today encounter many problems and they can then better understand and relate to children's feelings (p.2).

#### *Bibliotherapy for Understanding Disability*

Sridhar (2000) provided insight into the therapy by writing, "Bibliotherapy can be used more extensively for students with significant learning and behavior problems to enhance self-understanding, and as a tool for enhancing reading comprehension" (p. 75). Although there is documentation to support the concept that bibliotherapy can be helpful when working with students with special needs, one study was found that suggested a dissenting view. In a recent study on generating reading interest in adolescents with disabilities, Klemens (1993) found that the majority of students with exceptional needs were not even interested in reading novels with disabled characters. Most of the young people in the survey "seemed to view the term 'handicapped' in a very narrow sense and reject the word and anything to which it may be connected."

Although the students in Klemen's survey that is over decade old may not have wanted to garner this deeper comprehension, Schnapp & Olsen (2003) insisted that, "In addition to understanding their own disability, students must learn to self-advocate,

including developing the oral language skills required to articulate their needs to others as the occasion arises” (p. 211).

### *Bibliotherapy for E/BD*

Forgan (2002) examined how bibliotherapy can positively affect students with behavioral issues and explained that students with these problems are characterized as inefficient in recognizing and solving problems. He believes that these students rely on teachers to solve the problem for them because they have not learned to be independent problem solvers. Bibliotherapy can provide a way for students to talk through problems that the characters face in the book and then apply the same concepts to their own lives (McCarthy & Chalmers, 1997). Doll and Doll (1997) discuss that the students move through identification, catharsis, and resolution as they learn to problem solve and they propose that this is an important process and one in which "problem solving provided by literature will cause young people to change the ways in which they interact with or behave toward other people" (p. 8).

### *Using Bibliotherapy in the Classroom*

Depending on their developmental levels and interests, students can express themselves through activities ranging from art to dramatization, to discussing the events and characters at a deeper level (McCarty & Chalmers, 1997; Pardeck & Pardeck, 1990). Bibliotherapy has also been shown to produce a positive change in self-concept, reading readiness, and achievement (Afolyan, 1992; Bauer & Balius, 1995; Borders & Paisley, 1992; Lauren, 1995; Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000). It can be a powerful tool in enhancing

self-esteem. It can also be used in a general education setting resource room, with a single student or a group of students (Sridhar, 2000).

Bibliotherapy lessons include the following four elements according to Forman (2002): (a) pre-reading, (b) guided reading, (c) post-reading discussion, and (c) a problem-solving/reinforcement activity (p.76). Pre-reading includes the literature that has characters in it that the students can identify with. When choosing the books, it is important to take into account the recipient's age, reading level, gender, background, and interests (Cartledge & Kiarie, 2001). The next part of pre-reading engages the students' prior knowledge and background for understanding the story. During the guided reading section the story is read aloud. Post-reading includes the retelling of the plot by the students, the reflection on the situation that the character has experienced, and the asking of probing questions about the literature.

#### Methodological Evaluation of Special Education Research

##### *Research-based Special Education*

Some researchers have claimed, "The best instructional practices for students with disabilities have been well-researched and documented" (Hockenbury, Kauffman, & Hallahan, 1999-2000, p. 9). However, Walker, et al. (1998) put special education research into perspective when they stated, "Perhaps in no field is there a more glaring disconnect between the availability of proven research-based methods and their effective application by consumers than in education" (p. 9). Walker and his colleagues explained that special education teachers often ignore the findings of research and instead stick with the practices that they find comfort with when in their classrooms. Although the public is

actively seeking information about research-based practices (Billups, 1997; Gersten, & McInerney, 1997; Kornblet, 1997), it is ironic that the number of intervention research studies investigating the effectiveness of special education instructional approaches is at one of its lowest levels in thirty years (Gersten, 2000, p.1).

#### *Research on Students with Learning Disabilities*

Other issues are more specific to researching students with learning disabilities. The Research Committee of the Council for Learning Disabilities (Rosenberg et al., 1994) mentioned that available descriptions of individuals with disabilities in research reports are vague and inconsistent. Inadequate descriptions of participants make it difficult to replicate studies or to even assess research findings. These problems are even more severe with studies involving students with learning disabilities (LD) because of the complexity and variability of definitions used to determine their eligibility for special education (Gersten, 2000).

#### *Research on Students with ADD/ADHD*

In the case of ADD/ADHD, where there is, at best, emerging research data (Fiore, Becker & Nero, 1993) on teaching/ learning interventions and accommodations, educators rely on current best practice. Current best practice translates into "what seems to work" even though a research base has yet to be established (Weaver & Landers, 1998, p.4).

### Qualitative Research

#### *Qualitative Methodology*

Qualitative research invites the readers to enter into and experience the worlds of the participants (Ely et al., 1996). The qualitative methodology provides the researcher with insights that can be written and interpreted through literary explanations. This is in contrast to quantitative data, which deals with statistical analysis. It is not only in the summaries of their findings that qualitative studies are of value. Many include detailed descriptions of classroom interactions that provide models for effective instructional strategies (e.g., Gallas, 1994, 1995).

#### *Qualitative Validity and Reliability*

Scholars from various disciplines have worked to define what a good, valid, and/or trustworthy qualitative study is by examining concepts such as reliability and rigor, value and validity, and criteria and credibility to chart the history of and to categorize efforts to accomplish such a definition, and to describe and codify techniques for both ensuring and recognizing good studies (Devers, 1999; Emden & Sandelowski, 1998, 1999; Engel & Kuzel, 1992; Maxwell, 1992; Seale, 1999; Sparkes, 2001; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Standards for qualitative research have variously emphasized the literary and scientific criteria, the methodological rigor and conformity, the real world significance of the questions asked, and the practical value of the findings.

The role and the amount of direct contact that the researcher has with the subjects can affect the results (Emden & Sandelowski, 1998, 1999; Heron, 1996; Lincoln & Reason, 1996; Richardson, 2000a, 2000b; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). When the researcher judges study findings as dynamic or lifeless, coherent or confusing, or as being true or false, he or she is ultimately making a personal (Richardson, 2000a)

statement on the findings. This concerns some traditional quantitative researchers who believe that when scholars write based on feelings and emotions results can be skewed. The argument by quantitative authors is that the broad and abstract concepts of reliability and validity can be applied deductively to all research because the goal of finding plausible and credible outcome explanations is central to all research (Kuzel & Engel, 2001; Yin, 1994). Many believe that the answer to the conundrum lies in adopting new criteria for determining reliability and validity, in qualitative inquiry (Leininger, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). When evaluating criteria of this methodology, many look to the basic hallmarks of credible, trustworthy practice set out by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and have called for rigor in its use (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Bogdan & Lutfiyya, 1992; Ferguson, Ferguson, & Taylor, 1992; Keogh, 1999; Reid, Robinson, & Bunsen, 1995).

### *Qualitative Research in Special Education*

Special Education can be researched through qualitative research. Pugach (2001) found:

Broadening the view of qualitative research that governs its practice within special education has the potential to strengthen the stories we choose to tell about individuals with disabilities, about the practice of special education, and about individuals within the special education system who may not actually have disabilities (p.440).

Trent, Artiles, and Englert (1998) examined contemporary trends in special education and they advocated the use of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to provide research that supports educators as they move from a preoccupation

with deficits to programs that take into account student strengths. Anzul, Evans, King, and Tellier-Robinson (2001) explained that:

Qualitative research characteristically yields multifaceted findings, and these are often beyond the original focus of a study. Participants may reveal unexpected abilities, strengths, and coping strategies when their performances are viewed in natural settings and authentic situations (p. 238).

Bogdan and Lutfiyya (1992) noted that special education professionals in general, and researchers in particular, were still not familiar with qualitative research and had not conducted studies based in this paradigm.

#### Curriculum for Students Who Have Emotional/Behavioral Issues

##### *Known Challenges of Students who are E/BD*

Research has demonstrated (Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2000; Wagner, 1995) that academic outcomes for youth with E/BD are often negative. Edwards and Chard stated that (2000), “Teachers who work with students with E/BD are well aware of the challenges associated with attempts to engage these students in academic work” (p.262). To this date, there has unfortunately not been extensive research regarding the academic components and instructional approaches that are most effective with students who have emotional and behavioral disabilities (e.g., Coleman & Vaughn, 2000; Epstein, Foley, Cullinan, 1992; Grosenick, George, & George, 1990).

##### *Curriculum Modification for Students who are E/BD*

However, there are some empirical studies that have looked at curricular modification for these students (Kern, Childs, Dunlap, Clarke, & Falk, 1994; Dunlap, Kern-Dunlap, Clarke, & Robbins, 1991). These studies involved a sample size of one student. Dunlap, et al. (1993) observed five students enrolled in classrooms for students with severe emotional disturbance and examined the functional relationship of several curricular modifications to on-task and disruptive behaviors. Blake and colleagues (2000) researched peer tutoring of social skills of seventh and eighth grade boys with E/B. The appropriate play behavior between the peers as the students played informal games increased positive behaviors. Kern, et al. (2001) described analyses of assessment-based curricular modifications designed to improve the classroom behavior of elementary school students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Gunter, Denny, and Venn (2000) stated the fact that, “Students with disabilities have often been identified as such due to their lack of progress in the general education curriculum, which is often dictated by state and local educational systems” (p. 1). Therefore, a curriculum for a student with E/BD, should reflect the needs of this student. Edwards and Chard (2000) examined the importance of high-quality academic instruction and high academic expectations for students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD). For their study a sample language arts/history curriculum based on state curriculum standards was created and implemented in a classroom with students who ranged in age from 11-16 at a residential treatment program. The results were improvements in both summary writing skills and academic engagement.

Gagnon and McLaughlin's (2004) national random sample study determined school-level curricular, assessment, and accountability policies and practices in private and public day treatment and residential schools for elementary-age children with emotional or behavioral disorders. They found that two-thirds of the schools administered state and district assessments with their state's accommodation guidelines. Because today's schools often focus on educational accountability as the emphasis on assessing student performance (Linn, 2000; Olson, Jones, & Bond, 2001; Thurlow, Nelson, Teelucksingh, & Ysseldyke, 2000), it is important to create curriculum that meets the standards defined by the state and present it in a format that students find interesting enough to engage in the learning process. This is particularly true when looking at writing curriculum for students who have emotional and behavioral disabilities because they often have issues with school refusal, attention, and frustration with the classroom setting. The unique perspectives of students with E/BD need to be validated in the curriculum in order to effectively to teach these students (Coleman & Vaughn, 2000).

Another reason for focusing on the state standards in a curriculum for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities specifically if they are in a restrictive setting, is that some of these students do transition to a less restrictive setting within traditional schools (Gagnon & Leone, 2003). For the transition to a regular education setting to be successful the students must have continuous access to curriculum and instruction that is based on general education standards (Gagnon & McLaughlin, 2004).

## Conclusion

This literature review analyzed both empirical and theoretical research to determine a strategy to help solve the initial issue of a majority of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities who have low self-efficacy regarding their own exceptionality. The evidence found through the literature supports the need for a study to test the initial questions, which were stated in Chapter One of this dissertation. Although connections have been made between some of the variables in this dissertation (e.g. drama and students with emotional disabilities), the author of this dissertation found that until this study the effect of dramatic arts in combination with bibliotherapy on the self-efficacy of middle school students with emotional and behavioral disabilities had yet to be concretely measured through empirical data. It was the belief of the author of this study that helping students with emotional disabilities to utilize drama to understand the written text about their own disability would potentially open the doors to new self-understanding. By helping a student to find a positive sense of self, one opens up a world of possibility for a child.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Population and Sample or Participants

The study was conducted at a small alternative education private school in Western PA. This campus for 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade serves students with emotional and behavioral disabilities from forty-two school districts in Pennsylvania. It is located on 325 acres and offers a variety of unique features such as horticulture courses, horse therapy, and a statewide recognized outdoor education program.

The population sample included twelve students from a middle school classroom. The students who participated in the pilot study are all in an alternative school for students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities. Some of the students have multiple special education labels such as learning disabilities and attention deficit with hyperactivity disorder. The genders and ethnic groups were based strictly on the composition of the class, which were established prior to the study. It was a convenience sampling because the students were chosen to reflect a particular grade/age level. The students were chosen from the classroom's population of students with emotional disabilities who are available to participate (Bellini & Rumrill, 1999) and the parents gave prior consent.

#### Design/Strategies and Activities

Students with emotional/behavioral disabilities often have low self-efficacy when it comes to explaining their own disabilities, coping with the label of having a disability, and the general issues that come from having a disability. There are new collections of

children's literature that explain to children through the characters what their disability is and how to cope with it. By exploring these characters through dramatic games and exercises, the curriculum provided a positive outlet for openly discussing the issues that come from an emotional or behavioral disability.

The original thought of the author was that simple case studies would be the most appropriate qualitative method for this study. This was due to the fact that many other studies in the arts (Mills, 2001; Redfield, 1990), special education, (Reis, Neu, & McGuire, 1997), and the combination of both the arts and special education (Benjet, 1993; Carrigan, 1993; Graham, 1994; and Kraft, 2001), utilized this method. Action Research combining case studies was also another qualitative option, which was appropriately used in Gallagher's (2001) study of arts for students with exceptional needs.

The author piloted a curricular theory that she wrote, which involves students acting out characters in children's literature that have story lines about the type of disability that the students could personally relate to. This combination of dramatic arts and bibliotherapy is a unique one. It was based on the author's personal experience as a teacher and is grounded in data and a solid literature review. The author observed and interviewed students at a variety of age levels at an alternative school for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities who participated in the pilot study.

#### Instrumentation

This qualitative study evolved through the collection of the students' responses to the Drama Discovery program by examining the students' writing samples, author

created pre- and post-interviews, listening to the audio tapes and reading the logs from the observations. These qualitative instruments were supported by the literature review as valid for this type of study.

### Procedures

Pugach (2001) explained that the three fundamental data collection methods in qualitative research are: (a) interview, (b) participant observation, and (c) document analysis, which provide multiple data sources for the telling of what has been termed “disciplined stories.” Disciplined stories contrast with simple storytelling because they are products of systematic planning and careful hours and months in the field. Researchers who tell disciplined stories well follow the tenets of good research in order to produce credible, trustworthy findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This study evolved into disciplined stories by following Levine’s (1985) five main principles for researchers to follow in the management of qualitative research:

1. Formatting: Include consistent information in the field notes (i.e., name of the researcher, the site, the participants, the date).
2. Abstracting: Summaries of lengthy materials will not neglect a clear link back to the field notes.
3. Locators: Identification markers will be used for specific materials in the field notes.
4. Cross-referral: Information should be referenced in more than one file to permit ease of data retrieval.

5. Coding: The coding system can either be pre-structured or evolve during the study.

For the purpose of this study the identification and categorization of the data occurred naturally throughout the collection process (p. 169-186).

### Data Analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data involves multiple tasks throughout including data collection (e.g. observation logs, audiotapes of lessons, student journals, and notes from the teacher/student interviews), analysis, and writing the findings (Creswell, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Following the collection the analysis of the data was written based on the categorized themes. It was categorized based upon the Pre-conceptual Map, which examined how the author of both the dissertation and the curriculum that is being analyzed believed the results of the study would be after the literature review and yet prior to the data collection. This information was presented in the results section and conclusions were drawn for the study to inform the greater body of knowledge. The information presented provided evidence of the effects on self-efficacy of students with emotional disabilities regarding their own challenges as witnessed through a qualitative study of the Drama Discovery program using the dramatic arts in combination with bibliotherapy.

#### *Pre-conceptual Map for the Drama Discovery Study*

*Pre-conceptual Map Defined.* The Pre-conceptual Map was created in order to establish the basis of the Drama Discovery Curriculum and the rationale behind the study, which investigated the effect of the curriculum on the self-efficacy of students with

emotional disabilities related to their own exceptionality. It served as a reference point for reflection as I categorized the data that was written under two main sections. The first category in my qualitative recording included those points that are direct matches for what I believed would happen based on my research and my own experience as a past special education teacher of students with emotional disabilities, a teacher of students from kindergarten to graduate level both here in America and abroad, and my current work at an administrative level at a school for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. The other category will explain the surprises that surfaced as the study took place that I would not have conceptualized prior to the collection of field notes from observations, student journals, audio taped documentation, and interviews.

*Reason for the Pre-conceptual Map.* The conscious choice to create this form of qualitative reporting instead of using a widely used method of coding my findings (i.e., Naturalistic Inquiry which was created by Lincoln and Guba in 1986) derived from a need to establish in a declarative statement who I am as the creator of the curriculum and my credentials to be the investigator of the product's affect on the students' self-efficacy. I also aimed to lay out my potential biases and assumptions regarding this study prior to comparing it to what will come from the observations and interviews. I veered from the traditional style of coding because this framework best suits my study and as my dissertation committee member, Shank (1995) explained,

...qualitative research and qualitative researchers are most likely on the edge of a divergent explosion into inquiry, covering artistic, investigative, clinical, and

many other directions. More than any other mode of inquiry, qualitative research by its nature demands diversity (p. 4).

*Pre-conceptual Map Personal Background: Teacher.* After eighteen years of working with people who have special needs, I have seen countless examples of students who could reach their full potential if they could tap into their individual interests and learn to express themselves through the arts. My favorite personal example of using the child's gifts to overcome the burdens of a disability can be seen in one of my past students, Tracey. When she came to my K-5th grade students with specific learning disabilities class in the fourth grade, she was reading on primer level. No one had reached this child by recognizing her talents. Tracey had a wonderful gift for music and theater. She loved to write her own songs and perform them. That year, I tapped into her creative outlet by teaching her phonics and how to read by using music lyrics. She began to blossom. By the year's end, Tracey was reading at the third grade level. That summer I helped Tracey receive a scholarship to the Orlando Youth Theater Academy. Having the chance to shine in front of an audience and use her new reading skills by applying them to reading scripts strengthened her abilities. Tracey was experiencing a phenomenon that was commented on in the book *Strong Arts, Strong Schools*, in which Fowler (1996) stated:

For people with disabilities who are viewed (and may view themselves) as helpless, dependent, and worthless, the arts are often empowering. Few, if any, physical or mental challenges can limit the human potential to create and to feel better because of it (p. 92).

Tracey did so well the next year that before she went on to the middle school I was able to write an IEP for a class that would help her to become completely mainstreamed in the middle school. Tracey tested out of the class in a few months. To my surprise and delight, I received a phone call from her during her adolescence. She explained to me in an excited preteen voice that she was rated at first place in her middle school academically.

*Pre-conceptual Map Personal Background: Researcher and Advocate.* Since that moment and after countless other experiences witnessing kids discovering coping mechanisms for their special needs issues by using the arts, I have been an advocate for utilizing the visual and performing arts that would help students like Tracey find their gifts. Knowing that “quite a bit can be learned from an N of 1” (Merriam, 1995), as researcher, I realized that there is a bounty of self-efficacy and talent that can be found by learning how to tap into this precious resource. I understand that expanding beyond the example of one student can reap positive results for multiple students.

*Pre-conceptual Map Personal Background: Administrator.* In my position as the Dean of Instruction at a small private alternative education school in Western Pennsylvania, I now use what I learned in the everyday reality of teaching students with emotional disabilities in a public school self-contained classroom and in my master’s degree that focused on curriculum development. As an administrator, I supervise teachers and guide the curriculum and instruction of over 200 students with emotional and behavioral disabilities that come from 42 different school districts. On a daily basis, I observe teachers in their classroom striving to provide their students with a strong

foundation for academics while struggling with the inner chaos daily bubbling beneath the surface of the students in the form of their disability. These children have such a difficult time with the daily classroom routine that the behaviors are often addressed in one swift motion through consequences without the deeper understanding of where the behavior is stemming from and often the students deny that they have any problem at all. The question that lingers in the school setting is what form of therapy can help the students address this issue?

*Pre-conceptual Map: Bibliotherapy.* Bibliotherapy is the use of literature to teach about the issues that one personally faces through identifying with a character in the book. Pardeck and Pardeck (1994) examined the area of use that is of interest to this study when they explained that:

... literature has developed in recent years which is concerned with the pedagogical and curricular issues raised, for example, in connection with the "urban school", minority ethnic groups, disadvantaged and handicapped groups, and children who live apart from their families (p. ix).

There is a growing body of children's literature that focuses on the needs of students that are similar to the students who have emotional and behavior disabilities at the school in which I am an administrator.

*Pre-conceptual Map: Theater.* I have been involved in the theater since the age of five due to the fact that my mother ran a theater during my childhood. This interest has continued into my adult life as I frequently perform in local theater productions. I have always used drama to bring my classroom and stories to life for my students. As the

past Music Coordinator for the City of Orlando, FL, I encouraged the students to use performing as a creative outlet and as a learning tool. I am currently the Director of Education at the Gemini Theater in Pittsburgh, PA and I strive to instill a love for the stage as well as the educational benefits of the experience into the curriculum for the courses.

*Pre-conceptual Map: Creation of Drama Discovery.* After reviewing the literature that is available on both drama therapy and bibliotherapy, I realized that a combination of the two techniques would provide the emotionally troubled students unique ways to examine his or her disability through a new lens. When the students read the books that have characters with similar issues, they will be able to act out the characters and use dramatic games to investigate parts of themselves and potentially raise their self-efficacy regarding their own exceptionality. It was based on this critical assumption that I wrote the Drama Discovery Curriculum.

*Pre-conceptual Map: General Assumptions Regarding the Drama Discovery Curriculum*

1. Initially, the students will pull away from learning about their own disabilities because they will not want to face the issues. This may resurface throughout the program for some students. I think that it will be a particular issue for students that function relatively well academically and do not feel that they have a “disability.”
2. Some of the class days will be extremely emotionally charged due to the disability and the nature of the program. I will witness dramatic highs and lows, acting out, and refusal from some of the students.
3. Due to the transient nature of the school and placements into the program, there will

be some changes in the classroom's makeup during the period of time in which the study takes place.

4. Students will enjoy the dramatic games and exercises included in the curriculum, but some will experience shyness, anger, and frustration with the exposure to seeing themselves in this new light.
5. The students will see elements of themselves in the characters in the book and with time they will be able to tell stories from their personal life that will parallel the characters' lives and issues.

The main concept and assumption is that there will be a positive effect on the students' self-efficacy regarding their own exceptionality due to the Drama Discovery curriculum.

## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

## Organization of Results

The results of data analysis were organized according to the Pre-conceptual Map and common themes that arose through the data collection during the research study which included observing emotionally and behaviorally disabled students in an alternative placement as they used the Drama Discovery curriculum in their classroom. The student's aliases were chosen from a baby names book (Stafford, 2004, p.85) from the list of the most popular names of the 1990's since this is the decade in which the students were born. When the narrative becomes scripted, the italic information denotes the author is speaking. Each assumption from the Pre-conceptual Map that is listed is followed first by a quote from the Jack Gantos' children's literature piece *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* to demonstrate to the reader the text that the students read for the bibliotherapy component of the curriculum.

## Data that Directly Correlated to the Pre-conceptual Map

Table 1  
*Pre-conceptual Map Confirmed*

Title	Assumptions	Finding
1. <i>Disability Awareness</i>	Initially, the students will pull away from learning about their own disabilities because they will not want to face the issues. This may resurface throughout the program for some students. I think that it will be a particular issue for students that function relatively well academically and do not feel that they have a "disability."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Special Education Character Connection</i></li> <li>• <i>Special Education: Emotional and Behavioral Needs</i></li> <li>• <i>Special Education: Learning Issues</i></li> <li>• <i>Special Education: Other Exceptionalities</i></li> <li>• <i>Alternative Placement</i></li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Medication</i></li> </ul>
2. <i>Roller Coaster Kids: Emotional Highs and Lows</i>	Some of the class days will be extremely emotionally charged due to the disability and the nature of the program. I will witness dramatic highs and lows, acting out, and refusal from some of the students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Therapist-in-a-Box</i></li> <li>• <i>New Trust</i></li> <li>• <i>Emotional Needs</i></li> <li>• <i>Behavioral Needs</i></li> <li>• <i>Internal Pain Becomes External</i></li> <li>• <i>Self-Goals</i></li> </ul>
3. <i>Unforeseen Changes for the Classroom</i>	Due to the transient nature of the school and placements into the program, there will be some changes in the classroom's makeup during the period of time in which the study takes place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Student Changes</i></li> <li>• <i>Staff Changes</i></li> <li>• <i>Unexpected Hurricane</i></li> <li>• <i>Bus Accident</i></li> </ul>
4. <i>Exposure Through Acting</i>	Students will enjoy the dramatic games and exercises included in the curriculum, but some will experience shyness, anger, and frustration with the exposure to seeing themselves in this new light.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Self-Discovery Through Drama</i></li> </ul>
5. <i>Character Connections</i>	The students will see elements of themselves in the characters in the book and with time they will be able to tell stories from their personal lives that will parallel the characters' lives and issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bibliotherapy: Relating to the Characters in the Literature</i></li> <li>• <i>Family Connections</i></li> <li>• <i>Drugs and Alcohol</i></li> <li>• <i>Teacher Modeling</i></li> <li>• <i>Enhanced Reading Skills</i></li> </ul>

Drama Discovery is a curriculum that is threefold. It deals with actual reading: looking at a book, sentence structure, comprehension, fluency, and prompted writing. It also has a creative and artistic section, which serves as enrichment. This includes projects, acting and performing arts. This population doesn't usually get this form of deep enrichment. It is unbelievable! The third is an emotional therapeutic session. It is amazing when all these three things are

combined and they are able to learn about and from themselves to make changes for the better (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

The preceding quote was stated by the para-educator who was in the classroom during the implementation of the pilot study of Drama Discovery.

### The Results Based on The Researcher's Assumptions Regarding the Drama Discovery Curriculum

#### *Disability Awareness*

1. Initially, the students will pull away from learning about their own disabilities because they will not want to face the issues. This may resurface throughout the program for some students. I think that it will be a particular issue for students that function relatively well academically and do not feel that they have a "disability."

**Over the summer, there was a big meeting about me at school. Mom came home very serious and sent me to my room while she read my file. After she read it she opened my door and sat down on the edge of my bed. She said I should have been held back and given some extra help, but no teacher wanted to risk getting me two years in a row. (Gantos, 1998, p. 17).**

*Special Education Character Connection.* The story line that the students read led them through the life of the character Joey Pigza. The parallel common threads in the text and the students' lives began with learning about Joey's challenges with learning, ADHD, and his behavior issues. The story follows him through the process from his move into a separate classroom for students with exceptionalities, to the alternative

placement in a special education school, and finally his triumphant return to the public schools when he earns his way back.

*Special Education: Emotional and Behavioral Needs.* Four main strategies that are used in the Drama Discovery Curriculum are: reading about situations that the students relate to, discussions, acting out situations, and writing based on prompts. After reading about a scenario in the book in which Joey got into trouble for acting up in class and gets sent to the principal's office, the students' discussion led to the first hint that we had about perceptions of authority figures.

The teacher rephrased a question to help the students to visualize by saying, "If Miss Shellie was the principal of a public school and a student came out of Miss Shellie's office and you saw this student coming down the hall, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?" "They got the razor strap," stated Josh. The class giggled. Jessica hit on something when she explained that, "For me, I would judge it by the way that you, like, act. If you acted very polite then I would think that you were going there for permission for a project." Then she said that if the student "talked like he was kind of ghetto, then I would think differently." The special education teacher grinned as she noted that body language and the way that a person talks can give clues. The students can see if the Daniels is buttering up the principal or if she comes out looking like she has been crying, it's more likely that she was just told that she is suspended for ten days. The teacher then tied it into how the body language and vocal expression both play a part in acting. During our meeting time later in the day, the teacher recalled this moment with Jessica and exuberantly said, "I was so excited when she was talking about the principal's office

and she really got the idea of body language. It was then that I thought wooo hooo! She's on board!"

The next day the students acted out the roles of the principal and Joey, the misbehaving student, so that they could look at the situation through both lenses. The scenes played out as follows.

Matthew: Why were you bouncing the bouncy ball everywhere?

Josh: Because I can.

Matthew: You will be suspended. What are you going to do now?

Josh: I like bouncy balls. Can I go back to my seat?

*This was great because he allowed himself to say something silly like Joey with the bouncy balls.*

Matthew: No, you are going to sit in my office.

*The next set of students came to the front of the room.*

Christopher: Why are you spinning in the hallway?

Andrew: I felt like it.

Andrew: I wonder what this light socket does ... ahahhhh!

Andrew: Smell this.

Christopher: Don't write on the board. Give me the marker. I will take away the distractions. I am giving you nine days of suspension.

Andrew: What? I am calling my lawyer.

*The teacher asked Jessica and E to act together even though their personalities tend to clash. Ashley noted that, "There is conflict there." The teacher said, "Solve it*

with acting. What better way is there?" *This was a powerful moment because the teacher was able to see that they had a better understanding of the concept of "conflict."* *They were using the topic that was introduced last week in context. Also the students were introduced to the idea that through acting one can work on their conflict.* *Ashley felt that she couldn't do the acting exercise with a girl. She got very awkward and shuffled her feet as she was trying to figure it out. The two girls then walked themselves to the front of the room.*

Ashley: What are you doing?

Jessica: I am biting my nails and spiting it at the ceiling.

Ashley: Alright. You aren't supposed to do that.

Jessica: I do what want. When I want. How I want. You can't do anything.

Ashley: My child would never be like that.

*The students in the classroom reminded her that she wasn't dealing with her own child, but rather a student in the school in which she was the principal.*

*Jessica threw a pen at her.*

Ashley: Do you think that that was safe? Are you on meds?

Jessica: No, I don't want them. It's like crack.

Ashley: I was a crack baby so stop it.

Jessica: I think we need to shove something. I think we should burn the school down.

The teacher commended them by saying, "Joey could have become defensive like that."

*Jessica explained that that was the way she was feeling that day. The teacher said, "Yes, you can become defensive or go the other way."*

Michael: Bring it on, old man. I said that to my dad before.

Daniel: I would call his social worker.

The teacher said, "Become an adult and tell him what it's about." *Teacher and Nick tried their hands at the acting exercise. This provided the students with a nice modeling of how to do the activities.*

Teacher: Get into my office. Sit down. Sit still.

Nick: My mom knows I am nervous. My teacher's mean. I can't sit still. It's school.

Teacher: I'll take that.

Nick: That's my Superball. I bought that with my own money. I can't sit still.

Teacher: You need to call your doctor.

Nick: You need to call my mom about it.

Matthew and Josh took a turn.

Matthew: Why were you spinning in the hall?

Josh: Because I can. Why are you a principal?

Matthew: Because I can. Why were you playing with your bouncy ball?

The teacher said, "You know what you just proved to me? You are Joey. You related to him didn't you?" Josh said, "Yes. I was there. I was stuck in a corner." *He was recalling a time that he had been sent to the principal's office when he was in the public schools.*

*Ashley and Jessica took their turn.*

Jessica: Maybe she doesn't like you. Maybe she wants to suffocate you with a bag. You have detention for a month. Saturdays and Sundays, church, I don't care.

*Jessica got a little carried away with what she said in the scene. She really got into the moment and showed the emotion that the role required.* “Jessica did an awesome job.

What a little actress she is becoming!” stated the teacher.

*Michael and Daniel walked to the front of the room.*

Michael: Shut up. *(He hit his own head with the palm of his hand.)* Why were you disobeying your teacher? You have detention so you die.

Daniel: Why do I care?

*They began to discuss restrains.*

Michael: I am going to tie you up from your neck to a pole or a tree.

The teacher explained that that is a threat. Andrew said, “Yeah, that’s a terroristic threat.”

Michael: I am going to pull your underwear over your head.

During Michael’s turn to try and be the principal all that had registered from the last scene was the idea of putting the student in the corner. He grabbed the student by the collar of the shirt and tried to pull him out of the chair and into the corner. This could have been a potentially dangerous situation because the student’s neck became a bit choked for the few seconds that he was being tugged on. The teacher stopped the scene and asked for criticism. Ashley said the scene was over dramatized.

The teacher reminded them to not get too silly. The teacher explained to the students that:

The teacher can lose control because she is with those students all day long. The principal is in charge of the whole school. He can’t risk going to an extreme and

he isn't in with the students all day. He's going give an ultimatum, like suspension. When you are acting these roles, you need to remember that you are not a kid. You are a principal or often some other adult.

The next pair tried their own scene.

Matthew: Joey did you take your meds again?

Christopher: I want eggs eggs eggs.

Matthew: Where is your bouncy ball? Do you like coming to the principal's office?

Christopher: What are you looking at?

Matthew: All legs on the floor, Joe. You are missing all the fun stuff in class. Don't you want to go back to class? Do we need to call your mom?

*Sarah refused to participate. She did not want to be in the front of the room with all of the students staring at her. They set it up so that Sarah could sit in her seat and the audience just turned around in their seats. It was this simple accommodation that made it possible for Sarah to perform. The teacher set up the scene again.*

Ashley: Why are you here again? Why were you bouncing the balls in the hallway?

Sarah: I want to.

Ashley: But you-

Sarah: Sherbert, Sherbert, Sherbert.

Ashley: Do you want to focus on school?

Sarah: No.

Ashley: Are you listening to me? I am so disappointed I don't know what to say.

*Sarah kept clicking the pen. Since Sarah was finally acting, they had her try the principal role.*

*Emily chose to act like she was asleep.*

Sarah: What are you doing back in the principal's office? Hey, you what are you doing back in here. Hello? Miss Jane, I hate you. Yo. Why were you bouncing your ball in the hall?

Emily: I don't. *(She said in a groggy way as if she was coming off of being wired from medication).*

Sarah: Yeah you were. You hit my window.

Emily: No I didn't.

Sarah: Then how did you end up in here?

Emily: I was sleepwalking.

The teacher exuberantly stated, "You did it! He was coming down off the meds and was sleepy." The teacher continued speaking and told the class, "I was impressed today. Some of you really came out of your shells. Some of you liked the boss part but it's easier for most of you to be the bad kid. That was excellent." Jessica explained, "It is easier to sit than stand for most people. It was the best for me to be the boss."

The teacher mentioned to Daniel, "You had some trouble when you were the principal. There was a comfort zone more with a kid." Daniel explained that this was because he was in the principal's office more often. One of the students said, "If we did more of this kind of acting I would do it."

The writing journal prompt was based on the same scenario that they read, discussed, and acted out. The journal prompt was to write a behavior management plan for Joey Pigza. The students looked at examples of behavior management plans from Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The teacher provided the students with a template on which to base what they wrote.

They decided as a class that the behavior of concern was the throwing of the pencil and that the goal should be not throwing the pencil.

Teacher: What should Joey work on?"

Christopher: Bouncing a ball.

Christopher: Screaming at the teacher.

Nick: "Can I get back to you on that?"

Teacher: What percent of the time should Joey reach the goal?

Christopher: 80%.

Jessica: 95%.

Teacher: How can we check that?

Emily: Watch him all day.

Student: F: Talk to him about it.

Ashley: I have ADD.

Teacher: What is the antecedent? This means what happens right before Joey bounces the ball.

Christopher: Puts his hands in his pocket to get the bouncy ball.

Teacher: Yes, that is the antecedent. Yes! What is the behavior of concern?

Christopher: Bounces the ball

Christopher: It's really that he is impulsive.

Nick: Talking out in class.

Ashley: My stomach really hurts.

Teacher: What is the consequence?

Ashley: If I was the teacher I would give him two chances. If he brought the ball back it would be a problem.

Nick: Have him raise his hand.

Teacher: Ok. We are in the perceived function of the behavior concern section. That means, why is Joey doing this?

Jessica: Attention.

Teacher: Ok. Let's break this down. When he bounces the ball. The student will be sent to the principal's office. The ball will be taken away.

It was obvious that the students had some familiarity with this type of paperwork from their IEP meetings, yet the actual creation of it was a bit difficult for the students to comprehend. They were able to grasp the basic concepts of the forms. This discussion in combination with the writing exercise helped to guide the students towards a deeper understanding of their own behavior needs, goals and what the teacher does in preparation for the IEP meetings.

*Special Education: Learning Issues.* In the beginning of the Drama Discovery program the students wrote how they are viewed, who they are, and how they want to be viewed. The teacher added to the lesson that on the back of the paper they should write

down one thing that they would like to change about themselves. Christopher's paper stated, "I would like to become a better learner." The teacher was thrilled that Christopher had put this thought into writing. She exclaimed in front of the class, "He knows that. He wrote 'I would like to become a better learner.' By stating that you just won half of the battle!"

After school the teacher stated the following regarding this, "For Christopher to put down that he wanted to be a better learner. I wanted to hug him. He will be successful. He got me all excited. I have goose bumps thinking about it."

This was the first public acknowledgement of the learning difficulties that these students struggle with daily. Much of the data showed that even if they were in the alternative school only due to their behavioral and emotional needs, the students did not perform on level in comparison to the students' regular education peers. Yet, it was at this moment that the students began to verbalize their own understanding of this deficit in their learning abilities.

The students in this classroom had a large discrepancy between the ability levels for learning in the classroom. Many struggled with severe learning disabilities on top of their emotional and behavioral needs. Most of them have short attention spans. For example, when he was asked to describe what Drama Discovery is and does for students during the post-interview, Michael stated,

Acting, reading Joey Pigza, and learning about him in the Drama Discovery program. I have been going to the library but I lost my wallet when we went to get a spotlight to hunt deers and I lost it at WalMart. My brother he let me borrow a lucky rabbit

foot. It must have slid off. It could be in my daddy's truck or in my room. I have to clean it. The end (personal communication, October 29, 2004)

It was this very student whose mother was so excited about the positive effects that the program had on her son's enthusiasm for reading and learning. As she stood in front of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the campus in which the school is located, she told the audience of over 250 people about the spectacular changes that she had seen in Michael that she attributed to the Drama Discovery program. She explained that her adopted son, who has so many issues from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, ADHD, and severe Learning Disabilities, now begs her to take him to the library and talks about the character Joey Pigza quite often. He now embraces reading as opposed to refusing to read as he had done in past. This parent truly believes that Drama Discovery was the catalyst for her son learning to love reading even with all of the emotional, behavioral, and learning obstacles that were in his way.

*Special Education: Other Exceptionalities.* The teacher stated, "They instantly made fun of the disabled kids. It was so typical. Then they got into the story and seemed more empathetic." From the book Matthew read about a student who wore a helmet and he would hit his head. As Matthew read he said, "He's a retarded kid." Jessica said, "Oh my god this is scary."

Joey in the book was concerned about a physical disability being contagious when he sat next to a boy who had fingers sticking out of his shoulders. The students discussed different deformities. They discussed how people react to disabilities.

The students talked about their own personal interactions with people in their own lives who have physical disabilities. Jessica, said, “I had a foster brother that is mental and could walk in on me in the bathroom.” Daniel said that he, “saw a baby that his nose conjoined with its lips.” Ashley said that it was a cleft palate. Jessica brought up her close friend in the school that had a cleft palate. They all compared stories regarding this young man. They talked about the hole that he had in his lip. According to the students he used to make them laugh by putting peas or milk through the hole. They found humor in that scenario based on the student’s silliness in the cafeteria that involved his physical difference. Christopher said, “My brother had a colostomy bag cause he is physically wrong.”

The teacher said, “You should all be thankful that you don’t have a disability like that.” Christopher said, “We all do. It’s called attention span.”

The teacher said, “Some people get very upset and depressed when they have a disability. Particularly if they are normal and then the disability comes later in life.” Jessica responded to this comment with, “I was normal to begin with then I found out that I have ADHD then I wanted to commit suicide and banged my head off of the walls and stuff. I didn’t have it when I was younger.” This statement provided evidence that this student saw her ADHD as a disability and it provided insight into how she dealt with the diagnosis. It also implies that she believed that because she was not labeled she did not have the disability.

The students participated in a class called Disability Discovery wherein they went outside to the playground and had the opportunity to temporarily experience the

sensations of having a specific disability. The teacher had a basket filled with small plastic bags with an explanation of the disability (i.e. physically disabled). In some bags there was an object (i.e. a piece of rope), and what the student was to do (i.e. tie your knees together with the rope and walk). The teacher gave them specific instructions regarding where they were to go on the playground.

During the post-interview the students provided responses to this exercise. Christopher stated, “The disability thing was cool. It would stink to be blind. We got frustrated.” (personal communication, October 29, 2004) Sarah explained, “I hated the disability thing because I want to keep all of my abilities and senses. It made me nervous. But it’s a good experience for kids to go through. The activities were fun” (personal communication, October 29, 2004). Josh said that when it comes to disabilities, “I always thought ‘retarded’. I always laughed about it. Then I actually learned about people that have disabilities now. I have a friend that has three fingers and I always teased him. Then he laughed with me. I shouldn’t have laughed” (personal communication, October 29, 2004)

When she was asked what she learned about herself through Drama Discovery Sarah replied, “I would say I learned that you don’t have to be shy about who you are and what your disabilities are” (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

In the pre-interview the teacher was asked if she believed that her students think of themselves as having an “emotional and/or behavioral disability.” The teacher stated, “No. It’s in the way that they act. They don’t think they really have a problem. They know that they are different and they think that the teachers in public school picked on

them and singled them out. Most of them will say that” (personal communication, August 30, 2004).

After the study was complete, the teacher was asked if her students could explain and define an emotional and/or behavioral disability. She replied, “I think that they can now. I think that the activity that we did with the disabilities helped. The activity that we did made it more pronounced about what the disabilities are. I am not 100% convinced that they think emotional problems should be a disability. But some of them now realize that they have a disability.” The para-educator answered the same question in the post-interview with this statement,

They have a definite deeper understanding of it. They come in with words like ADHD. This helped them to gain a greater understanding of what can be controlled and what can’t be. They now understand that their disability may not be visible but it is still inside them and they have to deal with it like a person who has a physical disability (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

*Alternative Placement.* While discussing the concept of alternative school, Christopher said, “I was in one of those once.” The teacher in a jokingly exasperated way said, “You are in one now!” \_

The teacher and I talked about the writing assignment in which the students had to face what they had done to get sent to an alternative school. She stated, “I knew that this was going to be a tough one because a lot of them don’t want to think about it.”

The stories started to unfold verbally as they were reading about the character Joey’s move to the alternative school due to behavior in the book. “What did your

classmates think?” the teacher asked Josh regarding the scenes that he had prior to coming to an alternative placement. “They thought I was cool,” said Josh. “Didn’t some of them get scared of you?” asked the teacher. “Yes,” admitted Josh. “Honestly now I wish I wouldn’t have done that.” “Why?” the teacher asked Josh. “Because I would have been a better kid,” said Josh. Later in the day he asked, “I am being a good kid, right?”

The students created maps that demonstrated where they started in their lives, what they experienced to bring them to where they are now, and it then ended with them in the school in which the study was conducted. The teacher provided this insight, “The maps were a personal issue. Most of them don’t want to remember. They know that you have to do something serious. They read that Joey cut off a nose. They thought that their situation wasn’t that bad. They have to think back. It is a hard time for them. They don’t want to relive that. That’s why Sarah was so defiant.”

The teacher asked the students, “How did you feel when you found out that you were coming to this school?” Christopher said, “Oh my god I am going to die.” Sarah explained, “I didn’t know. All of a sudden I just showed up here.” “Stuff,” said Daniel and he was asked to expand more, “I felt like s\*i\*. I thought that everyone was going to be kids that stabbed people.”

Emily explained, “That’s what happened to me in Texas. I was told that I was coming to PA. I asked why I was going to another treatment center.” Emily continued sarcastically when the teacher said that she had potential for going back to public school, “Yeah, I am looking forward to the end of the day. I will be talking to a cop. The lighter situation put the getting out of here on hold.” She was caught with a lighter that she had

snuck past the metal detector that day, which would slow down the process of mainstreaming her back to the public school.

Emily's journal entry on why she is in an alternative program read:

Because I have a hard time focusing on my schoolwork. I focus on other stuff instead. I didn't follow instructions from higher authorities. I got misled by my friends to do negative things. I wouldn't listen or whatever. I'd talk to others and I wouldn't turn in my homework and I wouldn't behave. I also had a lot of issues too. I'd swear, fight, and disobey people, etc. (personal journal, September 30, 2004).

Daniel told the experience of coming to the alternative school in this colorful way, "I thought that I was going to hell because of what I did. I felt like I was going to see some mentally retarded kids that don't know what they are doing." When asked about why he is in an alternative placement, his journal entry said: "Because I wanted to. It helps me here. I made the decision" (personal journal, September 30, 2004).

Christopher explained, "They first said that I was going to have to stay here permanently. Living here. They said I couldn't skateboard here and my heart dropped. I liked the Dean of Day Programming when she did my tour. I thought that Nick was going to kill me. Then I found out that he skateboards like me." He explained in his journal entry why he was at this school: "Because I brought a knife to school. And I threatened somebody that called me a mother f\*c\*k\*n a\*s\*o\*e who f\*c\*e\* my mom. So I got in a fight with him and brought my knife" (personal journal, September 30, 2004).

Jessica said that she thought, “What the...? I want to go to Holy Family. I would like to take you to Holy Family with me and Miss Shellie.”

“Miss Jane, I just threw a desk across the room and they sent me here. The sped [special education] teacher called me retarded so I told her I was going to kill her family and stuff. There was a time that people liked me.” Josh then got out of his chair and started to act walk of way that the special education teacher from his past whom he threatened. His journal entry reflected his self-esteem in this statement: “Because people don’t like me. Finally none of the teachers think I’m a good boy” (personal journal, September 30, 2004).

Emily said, “Even if I was discharged in November I would still be going to this school. I don’t understand why.” The teacher explained that they might decide that she is making more gains here with a small class size.

Christopher said that it would be scary to go back to the public school. Josh agreed. Matthew wisely assessed that, “All the kids that you picked on when you went to public school are now bigger.” They talked about how Matthew physically assaulted a kid who has grown taller. A few days later, Matthew said, “I want to go back to public school. I need to stop picking on the kids and get my grades up.”

*Medication.* The teacher walked around the room reading the students’ responses. When she got to Andrew’s paper she told him how good it was. She then asked him how old he was and teased him that she thought that he must be thirty-one instead of thirteen and that they had just mixed the numbers up because he was so adult and “like a little old man”. I agree the he has extremely adult-like mannerisms and responses. She asked him

what he was doing at an alternative placement. He replied that he had gotten low grades at his other school. Of course, this is not why students come to this school. They come from 42 school districts due to their high level of emotional or behavioral needs. He then explained that back then he was not on medication and he couldn't concentrate. The teacher and the behavior support shared a moment when they looked at each other and tried to evaluate if they needed to try to work towards getting him back into the public school setting as soon as possible.

The interesting thing was that through the teacher changing up the Drama Discovery activity just a little bit, it provided even more insight into Andrew's issues. She asked them to flip the paper over and see if there was anything that they would want to change about themselves. Andrew wrote that he wanted to get off of probation. They hadn't realized up until that point that he had had any trouble with breaking laws.

The first chapter of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* talks about medications for hyperactivity. The subject matter allowed the teacher a foray into talking to Andrew about his medications. "You refused to go to the nurse for yours." Andrew told the teacher, "I don't need it. I am not wired." The teacher agreed that he was "not jumpy at all." Andrew went on to explain that before his medication, he was wired but now he isn't and he doesn't want to take the pills anymore. The teacher reminded him to talk to his doctor about this.

During the pre-interview, Nick was asked to describe a person with behavior issues. He said, "Me. Because my medicine is for depression so I get really hyper. So when the teacher yells at me I get really mad" (personal communication, August 30,

2004). I reviewed my interview notes with the teacher on Nick. It helped us to see the meds issue. During the pre-interview he explained that his medications are for depression and they make him too “up” and then he gets yelled at when he gets wired from them. “He came after the interview to talk to me about what was going on with it. That’s the most open he has been.”

The students were able to relate to Joey, the character in the book, because all but one student in the class were on medications. For example, when the parent in the book gave Joey another pill, Josh said, “Geez. She is giving him too many.” Christopher said, “Is this kid going to overdose like that? He must be taking same meds as me. I have to take a lot, too.”

The para-educator asked Nick, “Can you control yourself better with your medication?” “I don’t take my medicine. My grandmother gives it to me and I stick it under my tongue and then I spit it out later. I hate meds. God this place is making me crazy,” Nick said as he put his head down on the desk.

This comment led to a discussion about the individual amount of responsibility that the students had regarding taking their medications prior to school. Josh’s mom puts them on the counter. Jessica said, “I walk into the kitchen say hi to my mom and dad. I go into the cabinet. I pull out the bottle. I pour them all into my hand, pick out two and then spill the rest back into the bottle. I get some water and I take my pills.” Emily’s parents lay them out in a cup. Andrew takes his meds on his own. Jessica said jokingly, “No wonder you are so calm. You may be overdosing!”

Josh told a personal story about medication. “Do you know the reason I am on this medication? In fifth grade I took a baseball bat and I started hitting everything. I hit a stop sign screaming, ‘Satan is in me’. I took Adderall before that. I take Wellbutrin now. My grandmother and brother were ganging up on me and calling me retarded so I told her off and went crazy with the bat. I did some major damage.”

One of his peers said that it was “retarded” that he did that with a bat. With a very serious face Josh retorted, “I am not retarded. I am just mentally inclined.” Josh then told the rest of the story about the sign he hit with the bat. “It sped around. I broke apart a whole fence. I started blacking out. I was screaming.” The teacher jokingly commented, “The Pigza book may be a story about you. They just changed the name to protect the innocent.”

The students discussed the negative side of taking medications. Nick said, “I go on the medicine and it makes me dizzy but I am ok.” Sarah said, “I used to take this med that would make me twitch and I shook. I was on one that made me I lose my hair when I was littler.” Jessica referred to the only time that she was so out of control that she needed to be physically restrained this year in this statement, “When I get that mad I think my meds will never work. Like with that one incident. I don’t think they can work in those times. I could take so many that I would get high before they would actually help during those times.”

In response to the journal prompt regarding key events that led the students to where they are in life, Daniel wrote, “My parents put me on new pills so I am quiet, nice,

giving, and caring. My psychiatrist recommended my pills. I remember to take them” (personal journal, October 20, 2004).

In order to help Christopher learn to recognize the fact that he is being disruptive to the class, the teacher had to redirect and scold him often. The teacher explained, “I took him out in the hallway and he named all the meds he has been on and said nothing works.” The teacher told Christopher, “That’s why I am always getting on you because if you are out of control everyone else gets out of control.” Christopher responded, “So you are going to be like my meds.” It was endearing in class that every time after the scene in the hallway when the teacher helped him to refocus, he said, “Thank you, meds.”

*Roller Coaster Kids: Emotional Highs and Lows*

2. Some of the class days will be extremely emotionally charged due to the disability and the nature of the program. I will witness dramatic highs and lows, acting out, and refusal from some of the students.

**“I felt like a big bottle of warm Coke when you drop it in the grocery store and it begins to fizz out the top like a bomb about to blow.” (Gantos, 1998, p. 38).**

*Therapist-in-a-Box.* The teacher spread out multiple materials. The students were intrigued by the assortment of resources for the project like cotton balls, whipped cream containers, envelopes, boxes, ribbon, yarn, popsicle sticks, colorful foam, and pieces of material. The students recalled that Joey had a patch that delivered his medication. The teacher discussed this recent invention. She then told them that they

needed to decide on a problem and solve it with an invention that they created with the things on the table.

Ashley was having a hard time figuring out what to do. I asked her what the problem was. She took this question in the literal sense. She said that it was her anger usually. I told her to work with that and create something that would help. She explained that if she invented something to keep her brother busy it would help her. Later she said again, "I don't think I want to do this."

She then took an envelope and brought it back to me and said, "Hey, I could take the sharp part off of this envelope (referring to the clasp) 'cause I have a cutting problem. This way people can't cut with it." A few minutes later she said, "I will make a patch for cutting!" We talked about the cutting. She said that she doesn't talk to her therapist about it. I encouraged her to talk to her about it but she explained that she didn't want anyone to know. I asked what invention would help that. She said that it would help if the person had cotton balls on her fingernails to stop it. I asked if what she uses and she said anything she could get that's sharp, "like bobby pins, hair clips, plastic knives, and paper clips." A few minutes later she went to the teacher and said she didn't know what to do. I asked her why she didn't talk to her therapist about these things and told her she should invent something to help this problem.

The week prior to this class period in which Ashley admitted her cutting issues, she approached me in the hallway. She said that she needed to talk in my office. She said that she wanted to be moved out of Miss Jane's room because too many people flip out. She said that it was making her ulcer get worse and it was too painful. She

explained that she wanted to be in the younger class. We talked about the fact the young class would probably make her more frustrated because she would have to deal with the whining and immature behavior.

After we talked about the improvements that she was making and she said that she liked the reading program, I switched the topic to something more serious. I told her that I knew she was aware that I read the journals at the end of every week. I brought up the following journal entry in which she wrote a letter to herself:

Dear old Ashley,

Is me. I have ben (been) raped. O is me. I have ben (been) hert (hurt). O is me. I have ben a burdet (burden) Ashley, help, help me please. Dear old Ashley it's ok. Plecosh (please) pec (please) don't cry. (personal journal, October 14, 2004).

I told her that had I read about rape the past weekend in her journal and it concerned me. I asked her if this was something that she was experiencing recently in her life. She said that she had been raped four times. I asked if she talks about this during therapy and she said that she goes but that she doesn't talk about the rapes. We discussed the importance of talking with a therapist about this situation because it can be difficult to hold that type of experience in her head. I told her that I was glad that she trusted me enough to write about it and then talk about it with me in my office. She agreed that she would talk about it during the next session.

After learning that Ashley was struggling with both of the issues of cutting and the trauma of a past rape experience, I was pleased that for her invention to solve a problem she decided to make a "Therapist-in-a-Box." She told the class during the

presentation time that the Therapist-in-a-Box is private and you can talk to her at anytime. Her sister chimed in and added that it was portable as well.

I felt that this was a great invention for Ashley to arrive at since she has been having a hard time talking about the rapes and the cutting with her therapist. She obviously has an understanding that it is important to talk to a therapist about these issues and yet she needed to feel safe in expressing these things and have it be there when she needed to talk. She was thrilled when the teacher said in front of her peers, “I think that is an excellent idea. That could be marketed!”

Later the teacher expressed to me that she really liked Ashley’s idea for the Therapist-in-a-Box. The teacher said, “Ashley’s Therapist-in-a-Box made me really chuckle. What a clever idea. When you are sitting at home and you need someone to talk, to you can just whip it out and get help.”

*New Trust.* During the first week of the pilot program, the behavior support worked one on one with Jessica who was infamous in the school for her behaviors. She created a section of a chart that explained how she felt she was viewed by others. She wrote: bad, good, cute, ugly, smart, lazy, tall, short, nice, adorable, and bullheaded. This was interesting because she does project multiple types of personality traits to people at different times. Throughout the study Jessica demonstrated a newfound sense of trust in her peers and began to hone an ability to behave more appropriately compared to the following years.

Jessica's internal monologue continued to demonstrate some self-loathing. Jessica wrote a letter to herself based on a journal prompt, which read, "Dear Jessica, I hate you. You are a b\*t\*h" (personal journal, September 28, 2004).

The teacher told Jessica that she ran into her old teacher. The past teacher had expressed her concerns about Jessica's behaviors. The teacher explained to her past teacher that, "Jessica is now a mature fun lady." Jessica tried to explain why she treated that teacher the way that she did,

It's because I didn't like my old teacher. A friend used to come back and brag about your class. Last year I used to have daydreams where I was killing the old teacher and we were all beating her up and there was only a bloody mess left. The teachers were all sitting around eating popcorn. Then this stupid zit faced kid in my class ate her.

Beyond the gory daydream that she shared with the class verbally, Jessica learned to open up in class regarding her past through writing. Jessica opened up during in her journal about her past prior to her adoption:

My barth (birth) mom was a pot smoking b\*t\*h who kept her a\*s out at all hours of the night and then my grandma died and my step-dad roped (raped) me and I was in a foster home. We now live here and now I have bad behaviors (personal journal, September 20, 2004).

Jessica had the teacher make of photocopy of that journal entry so that she could take it home to her mother. Her adopted mother called the teacher and inquired about whether or not Jessica had started to open up about her birth mom in class. She explained to the teacher that she was glad that Jessica was comfortable enough to share her past in class. The mother stated that Jessica does not even share these intimate details with her own therapist. The mother felt that it was healthy for Jessica to open up about her painful past. The teacher verbally explained that:

I was totally amazed when I read Jessica's journal entry. I was totally shocked that she would open up that much. She can be reserved about personal information. She likes to tell you certain things; she goes to the door, knocks, but doesn't completely go all the way through. It was a breakthrough. I got teary eyed when she put that trust in us especially so early.

Jessica grew through the Drama Discovery program and said in her post-interview that she learned that "I am a good actor. I don't always talk too much. I can give good advice. I can have fun doing good things. I didn't think that I could have fun doing good

things until I did the Drama Discovery program which is the best thing ever in school!”

(personal communication, October 29, 2004)

*Emotional Needs.* Christopher asked, “Miss Jane, I am bipolar. What’s so bad about bipolar?” The teacher responded, “Mood swings that go up and down, up and down.” Christopher said, “Yeah, I can be happy one minute and sad the next. That’s why people get mad at me sometimes.”

Emily surprised us when she came in very wound up one day. Typically she led the class towards the high road but that day seemed different. That day she said unprompted, “I am going to grow up and there’s going to be warning signs, wanted signs, and caution signs about me all over town. They will say Emily last seen here escaped from the psych ward.” She wrote in her journal:

I was very spunky when I first turned a teen-ager. I have ever since been very hyperactive and outgoing. Part of the reason why I’m not so spunky anymore is cause I have been losing my energy, weight and appetite. It’s very suspicious to others, but I don’t even know it’s been happening. (personal journal, September 20, 2004).

In Emily’s letter to herself in class, which is a lesson from the Drama Discovery curriculum, she wrote:

Dear Emily,

How are you? I am fine. These days people have really short tempers. Also, people are really annoying. Not all of them. Just some. I am in a new school. It’s called \_\_\_\_\_. I was scared at first and nervous. Now I am

actually happy to be at school. I am at this placement called \_\_\_\_\_. That's why I like school better. At that place you get dogged for nothing. Anyways, gotsa go! Later!

Love,

Emily (personal journal, September 28, 2004).

The letters to themselves proved to be eye opening about their current life situations. Tyler wrote the following letter:

Dear Tyler,

I don't know what to write now. Mad, sad, or happy. I just broke up with my girlfriend I have been going out with for a year and a half and I might be getting locked up for helping a friend out. I left school to do it and my mom called my P.O. [probation officer]. I might be put in lock up for three years. That's because I have a lot of responsibilities to deal with and that's why I am not feeling too good (personal journal, September 28, 2004).

The day after that letter was written, Tyler was placed into a juvenile delinquent lock up facility for two weeks. Matthew said, "Miss Shellie, where do you think Tyler is?" I said that I couldn't answer that. Matthew explained to me that he thinks that he is "in lock up." The "responsibility" that he wrote about in his letter is his daughter who he had when he was twelve years old. They don't publicly acknowledge that he is the father of the baby officially so that charges can't be pressed because the mother was of age whereas he was only twelve year old. Yet, he does take care of the baby at times. He discussed changing diapers and other father types of activities.

The teacher explained earlier in the study that “He gets locked up at the (juvenile jail) for a sexual incident every weekend. He has an illness. He told me with his own mouth that is why he doesn’t get to go to football games. He is sexual addicted. I don’t see he him being like that. I can’t picture it.”

Even with all of the issues that Tyler has going on in his life, with being pulled from his transition into public school, father duties, and being jailed for a period of the study, the Drama Discovery program reached him. When he reentered the classroom and realized that the Drama Discovery pilot had come to an end, his first question was, “What happened to Joey Pigza?”

Daniel explained how the emotional disposition of his classmates changed due to the program, “Drama discovery for me is like when we read books, go into them, have group discussions. Not just reading the words and not listening. My class became more happy. It helped everybody to not be as grouchy and work together and put effort into it!”

*Behavioral Needs.* Josh said, “You should have seen what happened yesterday. It was cool.” He was referring to the episode that he had in the afternoon. Josh often uses the words cool or awesome when he thinks about something that is inappropriate. He threw a chair and got very escalated when Sarah said, “May not be a bad idea.” He began to scream, “I am not f\*c\*i\* bad. I hate this f\*c\*i\*’ s\*i\*t.” His misinterpretation of the conversation was probably manifested by his home situation. It took many of the deans coming down the hallway to get the student to calm down and see the situation for what it was, a misunderstanding.

When she was asked to describe a person with behavior issues, Ashley said with a tone that sounded like she was bragging about her escapade:

Myself. Like yesterday I got in a fight in the bus. I took a pen from a girl and she got mad. I gave her back her pen. The bus monitor sent me to the back of the bus. She pushed me and I pushed her back. She hit me in the head. I got like four good hits on her face. I didn’t break her nose or a black eye or anything. I didn’t even hit my hardest. I did chip my knuckle on her face (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

Josh responded to a question that required him to describe someone with behavior problems by naming his brother first. He then verbally pointed his finger back at himself when he conceded that he, too, had major behavior issues. Josh made this clear, “I got kicked out because I threw a desk at a teacher. It was awesome though. I had everyone laughing so hard. I was swearing and the teachers called the other teachers in. I was like

mother f\*c\* this stuff. Now I feel ashamed of myself for doing it.”(personal communication, October 29, 2004).

Here is an example of a typical class period with Nick, which revolves around his trying to “push everyone’s buttons” and he often ends up out in the hall. Earlier in English, Nick refused to do any work and sat in the hall. He stayed out in the hall even when he was asked to come back. When he came back in, he made noises while Emily read. Emily just read over him a bit louder. After a short while, the teacher stopped to correct Nick because he was disrupting the class. She gave him a choice to rejoin or go into the hall and stop disrupting. He went into the hall. As Emily continued to read, Nick threw a small bead in the hall. The teacher went out to talk to him. I talked to his teacher who explained that he was trying to get expelled. She describes Nick as an “angry, angry boy.”

It is so commonplace that Nick has behavioral issues that when the Dean of Day Behavior came into the room and Emily said to him, “Can you be our behavior support? Then our class wouldn’t dare to act up. Only problem would be that Nick wouldn’t have any place to go!”

Some of the students have behavior issues that fluctuate. Jessica takes advice in this way. “Sometime I will say f\*c\* you when I am in a bad mood. If I am in a good mood I will say thank you.” Nick said that she says f\*c\* you when she is in a good mood. Jessica agreed that she cusses no matter her mood but mostly when she is in a bad mood.

*Internal Pain Becomes External.* During the first day of school, the special education teacher exclaimed in the middle of the activity, “I think that this is too hard an activity for the first day of school. Their brains are fried.” One student proclaimed, “I don’t know how to do this” and another said, “I am going to hit my head.” Even this simple type of concentration game that involved a simple bodily kinesthetic activity caused the students to feel frustrated in the beginning of the program.\_

There are reasons for a few students to make this type of threat to hurt either themselves or someone else. The number one reason is, of course, that these students have emotional and behavioral needs. Many of them find themselves giving up often in various areas of life. Some vocalize how they want to hurt themselves so often that they may no longer realize that they say it as a defense mechanism when an activity takes them out of their comfort zone.

Nick said to himself, “Shut up, Nick.” Nick told himself to shut up and then he punched himself in the face. He seemed pretty wound up by the family tree assignment and the small amount of commotion in the room. His home life is in no way ideal as he struggles with a custody battle between his mother and grandmother. He stated during class one day, “My dad keeps me up all night. I have to sleep in a bed at home. He is up eating all night and watching cartoons.” One of the students said, “Maybe he has the munchies.” Nick continued by saying, “Yeah, he does smoke crack. Soon I will be moving to a new house with my mom.”

Michael asked the teacher at random times during the nine week study, “Can I whack myself in the head?” or other similar questions. When Michael was told no, he

did not pursue hurting himself. It seemed that he needs the reaffirmation that it is not all right to hurt oneself.

The students each wrote “I Need” poems. Each line began with the two words I need. Tyler’s last line was disconcerting:

Tyler:

I need light to see.

I need air to breathe.

I need money to spend.

I need a close friend.

Sometimes I need my life to end (personal journal, September 22, 2004).

*Self-Goals.* The class participated in a mirroring activity in which the students stood facing each other and mimicked each other’s movements. The journaling prompt that day was, “When you look in the mirror what do you see?” Matthew stated, “I see a Pro Fisherman. I will be in my bass boat on TV”(personal journal, August 30, 2004). He sees he sees a goal in the mirror instead of just a tired student as most of them reported. The teacher said, “ I can see that. I turn on the TV and I see him in his hip boots fly-fishing.” Matthew said that he’s not allowed to do that because his mom says he will drown. The teacher joked with him by saying, “Does she realize the boots won’t go up over your mouth?” Everyone laughed. Matthew explained, “Yeah, she doesn’t want me to get washed away.”

The teacher said that his seeing his career goal in the mirror is a great thing because “Some day he wants to go off to work and be happy to go off to work.” Later

the teacher expressed that the other students focused on seeing a tired kid in the mirror whereas the student went further with his imagination. She said, “It went really well. I was a little disappointed with the journal. Nathan blew me away because he projected the goal.”

*Unforeseen Changes for the Classroom*

3. Due to the transient nature of the school and placements into the program, there will be some changes in the classroom’s makeup during the period of time in which the study takes place.

**Sometimes waiting for a question to finish is like watching someone draw an elephant starting with the tail first. As soon as you see the tail your mind wanders all over the place and you think of a million other animals that also have tails until you don’t care about the elephant because it’s only one thing when you’ve been thinking about a million others. (Gantos, 1998, p. 35).**

*Student Changes.* Christopher asked if they were going to get to act again. Then his peer realized, “When we move to the bigger room there will be more space!” The students were referring to the fact that they would soon need to move down the hall to a larger room. This transpired because they had moved from the original group of five students that was projected at the end of last year to a group of seven. The third middle school teacher resigned, so the students were farmed out to the remaining classrooms, which brought the class to the full house in their current room at nine. The remaining

two classes had vast spans of levels of abilities, so the middle school day team met and decided that the teacher would go to twelve students.

*Staff Changes.* While the class grew, there were changes in the level of behavioral support for the teacher. For the first three days after Labor Day Weekend, the special education teacher was without a para-educator in the room full time due to the need to have her trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI). This program teaches the staff how to deal with crisis in the classroom. Instruction includes restraints and how to get out of difficult situations (i.e. hair pulling, choking, and biting by students). Then the last two weeks of the program were run without any behavior support due to the lack of staff in the school after the para-educator left to obtain a Head Start teaching position.

*Unexpected Hurricane.* An unanticipated situation for the class was brought to the study by Mother Nature as a hurricane passed through some of the local towns. Multiple students and staff in the school lost their homes and pets. The general topic of conversation for a few days in many classes was how people and their families fared in the storm.

*Bus Accident.* Unfortunately the school also was impacted by a bus accident. Four students were sent to the emergency room the night of the accident. The next day, Ashley was taken in an ambulance to the hospital. She was in the part of the bus that received the most impact. After the accident she had decided to not go to the hospital. She had a bump on her head and said that she had been throwing up. The nurse recognized the signs of a concussion and had the ambulance come to make sure that she was all right.

*Exposure Through Acting*

4. Students will enjoy the dramatic games and exercises included in the curriculum, but some will experience shyness, anger, and frustration with the exposure to seeing themselves in this new light.

**“You’re not stupid, and you’re not messed up,” Mom said. “Don’t think that.”  
“Everybody else does,” I said, not looking at her face. “Or they call me Retard.  
So really, messed up is nicer than Retard, or Brain-damaged, or Zippy the  
Pinhead” (Gantos, 1998, p. 82).**

*Self-Discovery Through Drama.* Sarah poignantly stated, “I would say that Drama Discovery is a drama class that will help people to understand who they are and what they can be. You don’t have to be the hard a\*s or the preppy kid. You can be you. Drama Discovery is a great program for kids that have low self-images. Especially if they need help with therapy and depression. You get out all your emotions in drama.”

It was the first time we had tried improvisation and many of them were saying the acting was “gay” and “stupid” prior to the exercises. The teacher had to keep reinforcing that it was not that hard and that it would be fun.

The first two students were chosen and they proved that they could improvise a short scene based on a peer pressure prompt and yet Josh needed a lot of clues to help the scene move along. The teacher fed him ideas like “What can smoking do to you?” Also, “What would happen if he drank and drove?” This helped him, but the scene was not very fluid due to the stops and starts for verbal coaxing.

The scene followed this format:

Matthew: Hey, man, you want a beer?

Josh: Dude, it's all cool. You don't got to worry. Dude come on.

Matthew: I never did that stuff and I never will.

*Teens drinking and smoking was the basic theme of the first improvisation and it led to a discussion on what the students would do if they were offered these temptations if they were put back into the public school setting.*

Jessica was told that it was her turn to perform and she started saying, "No, no, I don't want to. I don't want to." *The teacher talked her into it. The scene was set as two ladies at a baby shower. The girls did not know what a baby shower was. The teacher explained that the guests play games and eat food to celebrate the upcoming birth of a child. Jessica was obviously extremely uncomfortable with acting that day. She said she wasn't going to act. They did an extremely short dialogue because of her irritation and nervousness.*

Ashley: Here's your present.

Jessica: Ok. Thank you. It's ugly.

*Jessica began refusing after her first try. She was told that it would affect her grade. Later at our review of the day meeting the teacher explained, "Jessica was off kilter because her parents are going to be away and the aunt in charge. Anything that upsets the normal routine plays a major role for these kids."*

*These scenes during the first day of acting were very short and not very well developed.*

*Nick and Michael were at the beach.*

Nick : Wow. It's hot out here.

Michael: Let's get in the water and going swimming.

*Josh and another student tried to do a scene at an amusement park. The scene never got off of the ground because Josh believed that he couldn't act.*

The teacher stated, "You were all great at the beginning of the week. You are slacking now."

*The next pair decided that they were at skydiving lessons. There was a long hesitation at first. Then Nick walked up to him and adjusted his backpack.*

One of the students said, "I have a suggestion. He could be riding a bike or a scooter." The teacher explained that it needed to be less obvious and that the point of the exercise was to make them really think.

*Daniel came up with a great scene prompt when he said, "You are at a funeral." Michael played dead and Emily's line brought laughter and clapping. She was pointing at the dead person. She said, "Oh, my god. That dead person's eyes are moving!" The classroom erupted into laughter. This was a great moment because the good prompt led to a very funny line. They could see that they could be entertaining by using their creativity and thinking.*

After the day was done, the teacher commented, "Today's theater game woke Daniel up. My goodness, the creative ideas that boy had." Ashley stated, "I think we should do a play one day."

When initially asked how the Drama Discovery curriculum will help the students in the classroom in which she is a para-educator, she stated, “I think that it will give them a safe place to discuss how they feel and act things out. They like to act out. They like attention so it gives them a way to be in the spotlight in a positive way. Instead of finding themselves in a police spotlight down the road!” After the program was implemented, she explained that the positive results of Drama Discovery were made clear through “seeing the students want to participate. They are genuinely interested in reading the book and participating in the acting. They have all made connections with themselves and the characters. It became a very safe place to say, ‘that happened to me,’ share their experiences, and find solutions.”

*The next scene did not go very smoothly. Josh had huge self-efficacy issues with performing in front of a crowd.*

Daniel: Take this frickin’ bag.

Josh: You want to go to Hot Topic [a local store at the mall].

“I can’t do this. I am no good at it,” Josh mumbled and ended the scene. The teacher stated, “We saw two major issues here. They were embarrassed. I could see you feeling this if we were in the auditorium in front of the whole school but you know the people in here.”

Josh said, “I just can’t be silly. Everyone is looking at me.” Emily had an interesting suggestion when she said, “Maybe you should write down when you are silly. Then you will realize that you can be silly.”

*The teacher discussed with Josh that there are people who make a lot of money in Hollywood acting. She asked if those people were just being silly.* Josh said, “If I was making a couple million it would be different. Anyways, they have real lines.”

The teacher realized, “Oh, so that’s why you felt more comfortable the other day. It’s because you knew what was expected. Well, some people are good at improv and some are good at reading from lines. How can you improve that? By practicing every chance we get.”

“We should have done a Broadway show,” said Emily. Jessica asked, “What is that?” Emily explained, “It’s a street in New York that has shows.” Christopher inquired, “Is that like when they do [he stood up and pantomimed a kick line]?” Some of the students giggled. The students went on to explain that they use music with the acting. Josh said, “Well, I don’t like fake life.”

At the review of the day meeting, the teacher stated, “Josh surprised me because he is really struggling.”

A few weeks later as the Drama Discovery program progressed, Josh began to find more comfort being in front of his peers acting things out from the book. The students presented their understanding of the Amish culture through acting scenes. The teacher gave the students five minutes to get with a person to come up with an idea for a scene based on the field trip chapter in the *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*, classroom discussions, and their graphic organizer on the Amish. She explained that they needed to, “improv, ad-lib, and use their imagination.”

Josh became very involved in the costume part of the acting out of the Amish scene. He even said, "I feel pretty, Miss Jane." Everyone giggled as the girls helped him to style the material into a dress for his scene. He said that he would have brought his grandmother's dress but it would have been too big. "Josh never wanted to act before. Look at him. He is so into this!" said the teacher when she pulled me aside to have me read the positive remarks that he wrote about the Drama Discovery program.

Jessica said, "This is like totally awesome. This program is cool."

*Andrew scrambled to write lines down for his group. The other teams discussed what they were going to do.*

Josh: I am the last old woman. What do you want to know?

Emily: Why don't you have electricity?

Josh: We want to live like our ancestors. I am not reading the script. I am just making it up.

Emily: Why don't we get to marry who ever we want?

Josh: Because unless we know how we want your lives to be. We make it simple for you.

Andrew: Thank god I am not in Hollywood. I would be killed for writing this script.

*That last statement, of course, garnered Andrew snickers from the crowd due to his exasperated tone and serious nature.*

Josh had made a tremendous turnaround in his ability to perform in front of an audience. This upward progression in his performing abilities continued for a few weeks and then he wrote the following in response to the journal prompt, "As a writer you have 'poetic license' to be who ever you want to be in your writing. Write about a 'new you.'"

What do you like, do and believe?” Josh wrote, “First of all I would turn out to be a fashion model. Next for me it would be kind of odd. Also Miss Jane would say ‘What a gay little boy!’ Then I would probably cry. Finally Miss Jane would laugh” (personal journal, October 5, 2004).

The day after he wrote that journal entry he refused to act in front of the class again saying, “I am not that kind of person. I feel gay when I do that. It’s for sissy girls.” Josh continued on saying, “What’s that guy that was in Titanic? Leonardo de Fabulo. He’s gay, dude.”

The teacher said, “What about when you watch movies? What about Denzel Washington or Arnold Schwarzenegger?” He responded the same way he did the first time we went through this conversation, “They get \$40,000,000 dollars a movie. I don’t get that.” She said that he could get an A out it. Luckily, this was after Josh had wrapped himself in material and proclaimed himself the wise old Amish woman and acted well. The students mentioned how well he did that day with acting. He had already demonstrated to his peers that not only could he perform, but he could also do it well. I think that this goes back to the fears that he discussed in his journal entry regarding whom he would be if he could be anyone.

Josh explained during the post-interview, “I felt embarrassed at the beginning. I like to be different than everybody. With the Amish lady I felt better. I had fun with it” (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

More than one student expressed in the post-interview that they were initially uncomfortable with speaking in front of a group and acting and they had experienced a

turnaround in this thinking. During her post-interview, Sarah discussed that the theater games “were fun. I don’t get nervous really much but in some acting it was so dramatic that you did get a little shy. We weren’t as silly towards the end” (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

Daniel stated, “Sometimes I just got in front of people and I froze. Other times I was into it and I enjoyed it and I had fun with it. After a while I didn’t even pay attention to the other people there.” Christopher expressed that through the Drama Discovery program he learned to “open up more. I wasn’t embarrassed about acting. I used to feel embarrassed. I thought everyone was laughing at me, not what I was doing. It made me feel better about acting.”

When asked the question, “Have you learned new ways to cope with feeling sad or angry?” Matthew enthusiastically exclaimed, “Yes. Act it out!”

### *Character Connections*

5. The students will see elements of themselves in the characters in the book and with time they will be able to tell stories from their personal lives that will parallel the characters’ lives and issues.

**I ran over to the kitchen cabinet and got the jug bottle of Amaretto with the red \$23.99 price sticker right on the paper label. Mom had been calling it her medicine ever since I got my medicine. I think in the beginning she called it that so I would not feel bad about having to take something to make me feel better.**

**Like we had something in common, because, as she said, her medicine makes her feel better too (Gantos, 1998, p. 27).**

*Bibliotherapy: Relating to the Characters in the Literature.* The teacher began the book by saying, “The title is *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*. We will find out why. The first chapter is called Off the Wall, does that sound like anyone you know?” The students laughed and some of them pointed to their peers. The first few sentences drew the students into the reading because they could immediately identify with the concept. She read from the text on page 3, “At school they say I’m wired bad, or wired mad, or wired sad, or wired glad, depending on my mood and what teacher has ended up with me. But there is no doubt about it, I’m wired.” The students watched attentively as they listened to the teacher. The students seemed to recognize themselves in the story already in the first few words. The laughter proved to be a valuable gauge for recognition.

The teacher asked the class, “What do you think your classmates think when you get wired like Joey?” Jessica said that she didn’t care. Nick recognized that his peers see those moments as immature.

The teacher noted, “You, Daniel, aren’t like that. You are the opposite of wired. Sometimes I have to make sure that you are awake.”

The teacher said to her most reluctant reader from last year, “Josh you will really relate to Joey I think. We will call you Josh Joey.” Josh grinned and said, “Nope, I am Josh Pigza.”

The teacher inquired if Joey was a student that they would want in their classroom.

Jessica: No. I already had it.

Matthew: Nope.

Christopher: We do (and pointed to Nick).

Andrew: I would kill him first.

Michael: I would get a bazooka.

Josh: Nope.

Sarah stated, "Last year Josh was a Joey Pigza." The teacher nodded in agreement when Sarah made this reference.

The teacher asked, "Do you think Joey could have controlled that?"

Emily: He could have controlled all of it.

Jessica: He could have not bounced the ball.

The teacher then posed the question, "If you were a hyperactive child how would you act?" Sarah said that she I was hyperactive. Josh related to his peers and the character in the book when he said, "I am. You feel antsy." Christopher used terminology from the book, "You feel wired."

Jessica admitted aloud, "I swear at myself in my head. Which I am doing right now." Jessica does not always act aware of the fact that she also swears at herself verbally. Throughout the study I often overheard her cussing at herself quietly under her breath.

Students expressed their connection to the character multiple times during each reading lesson. Some of the comments included, "That's me, Miss Jane! Miss, this is like friggin' dejavu." He then went on to say, "Like Joey, they said to me that I was

special and smart. I was special but I chose not to be to be in special education. Then I got kicked out because I threw a desk and it stuck in the wall. I was back in fifth grade. “

Matthew said that he related to the character a little bit. He explained that he “acted weird at my old school district. I was suspended. I got expelled. I got here. Now I am here.” His personal story is similar to the character Joey in the story. He was expelled and sent to an alternative school for students with special needs.

During the study there were often oral exchanges between the students in which they would attempt to have the classroom acknowledge that they, in fact, were the most like the character Joey and had experienced similar situations. When it came to the part about threatening to bring a knife to school and beat someone up, two students exuberantly spoke out. “That’s like me!” said Christopher. “It’s like me!” said Jessica. In a different classroom session, the teacher said, “Could you picture the light bulb incident?” Josh said, “I did. It’s me.” Jessica retorted, “No, it’s more like me.” In similar dialogue between students, Sarah said, “I am sorry I had to laugh when he lost his pants, Miss Jane. But I did lose my pants!” She giggled through the rest of the passage because she related so well to the situation of being forgetful and distracted enough to lose something. Later in the chapter Sarah got excited because she, too, has bunny slippers like Joey. The teacher said, “This must be the Sarah chapter.” Jessica attested that it was about her, too, because she was just like Joey as well. Jessica was adamant about expressing that in-real life she was even more like Joey from the book.

Jessica really blossomed with her reading orally. At the beginning of the program she would refuse every time that it was her turn. After a few weeks we began to see a

change towards reading to learn more about the characters that she felt a connection with in the story. She giggled about the funny concepts in the book. She said that she did want to read some more. She read the words, “He just goes around asking for trouble.” She stopped and said “Hhmmmm... sounds just like me!” She read about the sarcasm and said that it sounded like her mom. Then she continued to make comparisons to herself. Christopher said, “Everything sounds like her.” She said that it sounds so much like her and her brother. “My mom says that her landlord is a drunk and a snake but he can be nice.” This was based on relating to the description of Joey’s father in the book. On that day and many following until the end of the pilot she made multiple references to the similarities between her own and Joey’s life today in class.

When the teacher and I spoke after a class she mentioned, “I was tickled today. I thought that I would get a lot of response when I was silly and reading. They were so enthusiastic. Nick yelled ‘Me!’ when we asked who Joey reminded them of.”

They talked about how Joey feels that, “He is sitting on a giant spring. He’s antsy. Ever been in that position?” Jessica said, “I feel that right now!”

The teacher explained her initial concerns about how well the student would relate to the characters by expressing her own pre-conceived notions. She explained her assumption, “In the summer when I started reading the book I thought that kids aren’t really going to like this because they don’t want to see themselves. It’s turned it all around. It’s like, oh my god, they know me. This is me. He [referring to Jack Gantos] really has these kids pegged. He uses the best adjectives to describe these kids.”

The teacher explained the student’s connection to the characters in the book:

Absolutely they could identify with the main character Joey. They have all been through exact similar situations. They would chuckle when they read a part and say that it reminded them of themselves. They saw themselves in just about everything that Joey did from being hyper to taking meds to feeling unwanted. Even to the point about being special ed. Look how many questions they asked about being special ed.

When the para-educator was asked about whether the students could relate to the characters in the book, she said,

Oh, good lord, yes. I can't think of anyone who didn't say that they could relate to Joey. With his mom, his good points, I think throughout the book different students identified with the situations and the character. It was so unanimous that it is hard to pinpoint just one. I myself even identified with Maria. It was funny because Joey Pigza became the theme of that question. I was referencing the class outside of the class. I said to the teacher that I felt like I was Maria, the snitch, and they wanted to cut my nose off. They thought it was wild that it happened near Pittsburgh. They related to Children's Hospital. Josh even said that he thought the story took place in his specific town where he lives because it is near Pittsburgh (personal communication, Oct, 16, 2004).

*Family Connections.* The teacher explained the connections that were made throughout the class in regard to families. Many of the students had similar home lives. At least four of the students were from adopted families. Many had been in the foster

care system at some point in their lives, lived with a single parent, or lived with a grandparent. The teacher said,

No one ever wants to be labeled special and different but when they saw that there was a book about ADHD it was like, oh my gosh, somebody understands me.

They even related to the nasty grandma. Someone in their life reminds them of her. When people don't understand a disability, they react incorrectly. They also understood the mom wanting to drink, crying, and being crazy. They know that even though they might not like their parents they love them, and parents have sensitive feelings also about the issue.

Some of the families seem to be structured in a supportive way. Student C said, "I feel like a jerk because I don't help out" around his family's dairy farm. The special education teacher asked what he could do to help that feeling and they discussed that he did have a lot of chores that he could go home and do after school. They discussed that his father tried to get him to do chores and that he did them. When he completes them, his dad gives him free space. The teacher asked what word that brought to mind and the students responded with the word, "Respect." There was further discussion about how the father respects him and he respects the father. They discussed that although this was often true, the father didn't like the skateboarding pastime. But even though his dad didn't like the skateboarding, he still helped his son buy the skateboard and the clothing to go with it. Matthew said, "He doesn't get in my face about it." The teacher ascertained that the dad was "a pretty cool guy that cared" about him. Matthew shook his head yes with a bit of a smile on his face.

Another student was struggling with issues with a parent. The teacher talked him through the idea that he can change his mom but he has to know what to do to affect her attitude. The teacher accurately said, "Tell me there aren't times that you push her buttons just to see her blow up." He nodded his head vigorously. The teacher made the point that, "If you change your behaviors. it will most likely affect the way that your mom deals with you."

Unfortunately, towards the end of the study this family's issues came into clearer focus. The teacher and I spoke about Christopher's caseworker calling. On Monday, Christopher's mom said that either she or her son had to leave. If she left, she was either going to the hospital or she was going to commit suicide. She has been in the hospital twice before. He said, "Mom is not right." This caught the grandparents completely off guard. They had a vacation planned, he needed to go along and he missed a few days of school. The caseworker described to the teacher a different take on Christopher's family than we had believed when she said that he gets no positive praise at home. The caseworker had derived that the family makes him the scapegoat. The caseworker asked that the teacher load positive praise on him daily whenever she has the chance.

Other students experience the exact opposite type of home life. "Nick blew up right at the end. He's like that spring, like with Joey. He can't make it a full day. He was surprised that his grandmother actually called back. The grandmother said, 'I can't believe that you got him to do that. I have no control over him.'" Nick explained why he always falls asleep in class by saying, "You have no clue how late I have to stay up with my dad and grandma fighting." Josh started in with him. Nick explained, "My mom

doesn't even have a place to stay. If I had no place to stay, our friend that is twenty-two will let me stay at his apartment and he lets me drink." Most of the people in Nick's life have given up on him and people that could be a positive influence on his life are pushed away from him at school.

"When you are alone, do you ever worry that your parents won't come back to get you?" The teacher asked, "No. Shame on them if they don't," said Matthew.

"My grandmother calls the cops when I walk out." The teacher reminded Josh, "That's because you ran away twice." He stated, "Oh, yeah."

The class discussed family trees in preparation for filling out the family tree sheet included in the Drama Discovery curriculum. The teacher explained that many people trace family trees using the Internet. The teacher talked about her friend who is connected to her family through history. Using pictures, she could trace her family back to her great-great- great uncle who was a photographer.

The teacher reminded them that Joey told them about the family tree that was wired. The history of the family went back from generation after generation of people who had these behavioral issues on his dad's side. She asked, "What would your conclusion be if Joey had a kid?" Andrew responded with a matter of fact tone, "He'd be wired, too." Nick realized, "My mom is wired. That makes sense."

They discussed writing their family trees. It came to light that there were multiple ways of looking at the concept of family. Jessica stated, "What family? I have two."

“The one that you feel most comfortable with or the one you identify with the most. If you need to do two, I will run you off another one.” Jessica said, “I need two.” Someone commented, “Christopher has more family members than there are lines here.”

The students were distracted by the lawnmower outside. The teacher reminded them that they needed to use the rules of English (capitalization and punctuation), and reined them back into focus by saying, “If you are adopted or have step mom and dad, I can get you another extra tree.”

Ashley: If you start at the top of the tree, should it be your parents and then work your way down?

Andrew: No, it starts from the youngest down because a tree grows up from the roots.

Josh: That sucks, can I get a new piece of paper?

Christopher: You have to do your whole family.

Ashley: Immediate means the people that live in your house.

Jessica: Can I do my birth family too?

Teacher asked, “What does a family mean to you?”

Jessica: Do I have to answer that?

Jessica: It makes me all teary eyed though. I don’t want to talk about it in school.

Christopher: This is pretty cool actually.

*The students began to color the tree.*

Josh: You don’t fit on my tree, Miss Jane. Because I have so many other people on it.

*Christopher made a profound statement when he said, “That tree is fully bloomed.”*

Nick discussed his mother when he said, "I have to live there until my mom gets a place but I don't like them. I wish he would go away cause he smokes too much crack. You said the people that live with us right? But I want to put my mom on there even though she doesn't live with me now." The teacher led him through the process of filling out the family tree.

The teacher assured them that it was ok to include something a little emotionally based. Christopher said, "This sounds corny but..." and handed the paper to the teacher to read silently. The teacher said, "He wrote the same thing." The teacher further explained, "Nick wrote love." Christopher stated, "I put love and sharing." They both looked at each other a little funny, waited for a few awkward seconds and Nick acted tough by saying that "I just said that to answer the question for class."

The teacher inquired, "Will your family tree continue to grow?" She then said, "Hopefully years from now your grandkids will be doing Drama Discovery, not here, god forbid, but at a public school and they will make a tree like this and it will have grown."

The teacher said, "I want to ask you a touchy question. If you have a problem, can your parents help?" Christopher explained, "Yes. My parents help." Sarah talks to her friends instead. Daniel, "No I don't like my parents to help. It seems like my parents never had a childhood. Then they look down on me. My grandparents told me a different story though. My parents say that they are getting old and don't remember ever getting into trouble."

Ashley said, "My mom doesn't talk to me any more. My dad still talks to me. These are my adopted parents. I didn't ask her why she don't talk to me." The teacher

mentioned that it seems to bother her. She nodded yes and said that it did hurt. The teacher asked how she could find out why this is happening. She said that she could ask her dad what is wrong with her.

Josh said, "My parents are cool but they got me mad at me. I turned the stop signs all the way around so that people would have car accidents."

Matthew told the class, "My dad's cool. I don't like my mom." Christopher said, "I hear you swear at your mom." Matthew nodded and said, "I have always liked my dad more." The teacher asked, "Who lays down the law?" Matthew said without hesitation, "Dad. I swore at my dad on the phone by accident. Luckily it was on the phone or he would have hit me." The teacher asked him, "What would your dad do if he was there and you called your mom a f'n' b?" He said, "I wouldn't want to find out. I did that once or twice but my dad wasn't there."

Daniel told us that, "My mom said, 'I don't want you to sneak around behind my back.' I am supposed to smoke out on the porch with her. My dad will kill us if he finds out." Sarah explained her parents in this way, "I know right from wrong and they know that. They are just there. They aren't there to talk to." Daniel told us, "I don't really know about my real dad. He would let me do anything if I lived with him." The teacher asked if that was a desire of his and he said no. Jessica explained, "My dad will say all this trash then it gets into a screaming match. Then my mom says shut up, you two kids. I run up my room. I run up and shut the door and swear at him." When asked about his parents Andrew told us, "I don't know. I am always sleeping. My parents are ok. Cheese." Andrew used the word "cheese" a few times per class period randomly. Jessica

then changed the tone about her mom, “My mom can be totally cool about me. She and I can talk to me about boys I think are cute.”

There was an interesting change in the classroom culture when Ashley’s sister, Emily, joined the class two weeks into the program. Ashley has had difficulty with this type of placement before due to the nature of their relationship. They were both adopted and there is a sibling rivalry there. Most of the time, though, the older sister simply tries to look out for Ashley.

As Ashley was reading one day, her sister turned around in her seat. You could tell that she really wanted to help her with the words that she had difficulty with, yet she held back and let Ashley read on her own. One time she did help her with one word. When Ashley was done Emily whispered, “Good job.”

Emily’s autobiographical paragraph stated:

I was born on 1/20/90, in Germany. My mother didn’t take care of me my father did. I was adopted when I was five years old. When they adopted me we went to Oak Harbor, Washington. My mom and my dad wanted to move to New Castle, PA to be closer to my grandparents. Then at the age of eleven we adopted Ashley, ten, and my brother, six so we couldn’t be lonely anymore. Then me and Ashley started not getting along. Then in 2003 me and Ashley went to Fort Davis, TX to High Frontier for a year and six months. Then after we went back to PA and we went to Butler to a place called (named placement). So here we are. (personal journal, October 20, 2004).

Sarah said as she slammed her book down on the desk, “Miss Jane, I don’t want to read anything that has a case worker in it.” Christopher inquired, “What’s wrong with a caseworker?” Sarah said with a frustrated tone, “I got taken away by a case worker!” Christopher apologized, “My bad, Sarah. Sorry.” When the book talked about the caseworker’s name being Special Ed, the teacher asked if the students would feel comfortable calling a person that. Sarah repeated her stand on caseworkers by saying, “I don’t like caseworkers so I wouldn’t call him anything.”

One day when she finally felt safe to talk about it, Sarah opened up about the caseworker’s impact on her home life:

I was at the other school. My parents kept fighting. I love all four of my parents. It got me really messed up,” said Sarah. “My little brother and sister and my so called caseworker came by and told me to look at the bigger picture. That got me p\*s\*e\* off. They told me they were going to take us out and spilt us up. I was then pulled out this summer. I had to choose. It was either me or my brother. I had to be pulled out. I thought it was best to be the one who left but then my brother said that he was upset about it. Because of the nosy neighbors, the caseworkers basically kidnapped me.

The teacher explained to the class that you might think that your family is bad but it could be worse. Sarah stated, “My family is still conflicting. My family makes up sometimes but the house is just a disaster.”

Sarah wrote a statement in her journal in response to the question, “What key events led you to where you are in your life?”

Key events are when I had bad times when I was little. Going through pain and abuse helped me not to trust people the way I did. My brother helped me to get along with my step mom and real dad. He showed me how to defend (defend) myself. He helped me to be confident and to help others. (personal journal, October 20, 2004).

A few days later, I received more insight into this situation that had finally come out of Sarah. She had wanted on some level to not discuss it but the mention of caseworkers in the book reminded her of her personal story and it flowed out of her.

Her teacher and I were discussing Sarah's reluctance to talk about her home situation. The teacher explained that this past summer Sarah's brother finished serving time for being a sexual perpetrator. He came home and they thought that they would be able to put it behind them. A neighbor got wind of his situation and went around the neighborhood posting signs about him and what he had done in the past. She approached Sarah and the person she was with and told them that they needed to watch out for this man. The neighbor did not know that it was Sarah's brother that she was talking about. Soon after this happened a caseworker came and removed Sarah from her home.

Jessica said, "If somebody told me that the problem is at my home, I would smack her face. My story is kind of like hers. I got snatched out of my home. They didn't even tell my mom." Jessica further explained later, "I had an experience just like that. My aunt who is a preacher said that I should lie about staying with my mom. They took me away because of that. They said if I wouldn't have lied I wouldn't have been taken away." Jessica further explained the desperation she felt when with her addicted mother,

“I said to my mom when I was that tall,” Jessica gestured to show her short stature at the time, “Stop doing drugs and maybe you can get me back!”

Jessica often reacts quickly out of frustration based on strong emotion from the trauma of her youth prior to her adoption. She talked about these feelings in relation to the story line from Joey Pigza. Jessica explained, “My mind reacts inappropriately before the right thing comes. I would have taken my hand and hit and kicked her and punched her. I put myself in Joey’s place. I could see how he felt. I felt...” The para-educator offered, “Hurt?” Jessica said, “No, upset and angry.”

Jessica poured out her story into her journal:

My barth (birth) mom was a pot smoking b\*t\*h who kept her a\*s out at all hours of the night and then my grandma died and my aunt asked me to lie and step-dad roped (raped) me and I was in a foster home. We now live here and then had bad behaviors. (personal journal, October 20, 2004).

The teacher was in constant contact with the parents throughout the study. Jessica asked the teacher to make photocopy of the journal entry for her adopted mother. Her mother and the teacher discussed the fact that Jessica was truly starting to open up and write about issues that she couldn’t even talk to her therapist about.

Josh asked, “Jessica, does it suck being adopted?” Jessica said, “It makes you feel like you are special. It’s like...” Matthew finished her sentence, “You are wanted?” Jessica said, “Yes. You are spoiled.” Ashley interrupted and said, “No you aren’t!” Jessica explained, “I was the first kid that my parents had. They bought me a Barbie bed

set, a radio, a pool for the back deck, and they bought me clothes.” Matthew said, “They have to buy your clothes.”

The teacher asked if buying things proved that they love her. Jessica said, “No.” Then she went on saying, “They buy me all these purses.” The teacher asked, “Ashley can you buy love?” Ashley said, “That’s a song!” The boys joked about hookers and one night stands. Ashley said that she had “been jumped twice.” The teacher inquired about why Ashley feels different about her adoption than Jessica. Ashley said, “My parents make the difference.”

Nick said that it could have been their age and the reason for the feelings about the adoption. Nick explained, “My dad was put in jail for seven years because he knocked me out from beating me over the head. I was just laying there.” Josh, “That’s cool.” The teacher had Josh think about how he would feel in that situation. Josh always responded with, “That’s cool” or “awesome” when faced with uncomfortable topics. When forced to examine how he would feel he said, “I would cry like a sissy girl who skinned her knee on the playground.” Then he reconsidered when he thought about how the other students would think of him and stated, “I don’t really cry.” Christopher said, “I cried yesterday when you kicked me in the balls.”

Jessica said, “I would never tell anybody else. Ever since they got me they promised me a big party when the adoption was final. I got a bunch of presents. They spent about a thousand dollars on a huge cake and my aunt got me a real necklace that had a cross on it.”

*Drugs and Alcohol.* The students expressed their views about the use of drugs and alcohol when they read about Joey Pizga's mother's alcohol problem in the book. Some of the drama activities and writing prompts dealt with the concept of peer pressure and illegal substances. The teacher reminded them that most of the students in the room take medication. She asked, "What if you mix beer and your meds and you are dead? Don't let your friends influence you. That's what these acting exercises are all about."

Jessica stated that she has been peer pressured to drink. She realized, though, that it was the wrong thing to do because she had watched her mom deal with alcohol. According to Jessica, "It made her insane. It made her think twice about coming to get me. Heck, she is in her thirties and she looks like an old grandma." After this commentary on drinking, a student asked, "Can we do another one of those acting things?"

After the next acting exercise, they talked again about the mother in the story having a drink. Josh said, "Mr. [a behavior support in the school] said that a beer after mowing the lawn is the best." The teacher explained that one beer, as an adult, was ok. The class became abuzz with comments like, "I won't ever drink," "I smoke pot," and "I love beer."

They discussed people who changed when they drink. Ashley stated, "My dad turns into somebody bad when then he drinks." Matthew said, "My mom gets depressed." Another student stated, "It turns a person into a jack a\*s." The teacher explained that she had an aunt that was in an abusive relationship where the aunt would get beat by her husband with a cane. Emily got enraged when her peers jokingly said,

“That’s cool.” She said loudly, “You don’t know what it’s like. Shut your mouths. You haven’t been there!”

“My boyfriend when he drinks, he won’t hit a girl, he would never hit a girl. But he verbally hurts me. He says things like ‘f\*c\* off,’” said Ashley.

Josh’s brother took pills and started drinking and he almost died. “They had to shock him on the table.” The teacher mentioned that it was ok to tell us how he was feeling about that.

Is drinking a drug? This was a question that a student posed. Christopher said, “It’s the worst. Hey, my uncle did Oxycontin. He almost died from it.”

Jessica said, “The more you drink the more you get riled up and then you go psycho. My step dad is a drunk. I would know. I have three dads.”

Do your problems go away when you do drugs? Emily said, “No. Well yes, for the night.” Jessica explained, “You will want more and get a headache.” The teacher inquired, “When you drink or take drugs, does the problem go away?” They responded with a “No.” Then she asked what people should do instead of drinking. Jessica said, “Face the problems and solve them.” Sarah exclaimed, “Face your fears.” Josh said with a smile, “Suck it up, Miss Jane!”

Emily explained her feelings about alcohol further in her journal writing:

I think it’s idiotic, because it’s bad for your immune system. It also gets you in trouble and limits you from doing a lot of things. If you drink a lot. But when people feel depressed or mad or low about something. When people drink alcohol, they think it numbs them and takes the pain away. When they get out of

control then they start hurting themselves or others in tons of ways! (personal journal, October 7, 2004).

*Teacher Modeling.* The teacher explained to the classroom that even she gets a little stage fright some times. The students said to the teacher “But you are funny” and “You are awesome.” The teacher further explained her fears, “I get up everyday and I talk to you guys every day for six hours. You wouldn’t think I am good at it when it is Ladies Day on Sunday at church. My knees are knocking and I am sweating. What do you think is the difference?” The students said, “Fewer crowds here,” “You are more afraid that you will say the wrong thing,” “People that you don’t know,” and “You can’t talk to them the way you talk to us.” Jessica stated, “You talk kind of gansterish to us but you have to be all respectful.” Everyone laughed at her statement. The teacher said, “Think about the people in a congregation. They are all looking at you and all quiet.” She explained that that had something to do with it but there was more. “What is the big difference?” The students arrived at the fact that members of the congregation are all adults. She explained that it was also the age difference. “Some of them are my peers and some are my elders.” She explained that Jessica and Josh were having a hard time speaking in front of the classroom because they were in front of their peers.

“Wow. You mean you teach us all week and then you go teach at church? Is teaching your life?” She definitively said, “Yes.”

*Enhanced Reading Skills.* When she was asked if the Drama Discovery curriculum helped her students to practice their reading skills, the teacher stated:

Absolutely. It turned non-readers into excited readers. I can verify that from having Josh the previous year and the tremendous growth to his ability. We had students that didn't want to read on a certain day then say 'I want a turn'. We had ones that put up a fuss that didn't want to stop reading and kids that read ahead and finished the book before the class did because they couldn't wait. It definitely turns kids on to reading.

The para-educator reiterated the teacher's statement by saying, "You could see slow readers who were very self-conscious about their reading skills wanting to read aloud. That's just huge to see them willingly want to read."

"I'm not a bad kid I thought. Then I went over to the bookshelf and picked out a book, and since no one was in the Big Quiet Chair I climbed up and sat down and began to read." (Gantos, 1998, p. 153). The Drama Discovery program opens students' minds to reading because they can relate so well to the characters. The program enhances verbal reading through practice so that the students gain fluency and strengthen vocabulary skills. Teachers must hook students who have attention needs into the storyline so that they can focus long enough to gain the comprehension. The teacher commented that "comprehension was obvious since we didn't read every day. They all fought to be able to be the one to tell about the story. Seeing concepts visually acted out enhanced the comprehension." When Jessica was asked how the Drama Discovery program helped her to read better, she replied, "It's fun and it helps me to get out my hyper activeness so that I can sit and read."

Andrew verbally stated in the post-interview that:

Drama Discovery is a different way to make reading fun and enjoyable. It's not just a book that you just sit down and read. You now have a way to express your feelings through the book. One of the things that made it more fun you looked at the page or heard the scene you just imagined what you were studying and reading. It made it a lot more fun (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

Andrew further explained that he has learned to pronounce certain words. He expressed that he felt it helped socially so that he can talk about what is bothering him and what he doesn't like.

Josh declared, "It got me into reading because I like the book. I didn't like reading before because of the teachers that I had. It was an awesome book. Reading the chapters spread out helped. The program made it easier on me." (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

Initially the chapters were spread out over the weekdays to allow for maximum exposure to the acting activities, writing and projects. It turned out that this technique does seem to provide a tool for the teacher to identify true comprehension.

The book that was chosen for the pilot program was key to the success of the program. Ashley explained, "I would say that it helped me to read better because I had something to look forward to because at the end of the chapter you always wanted to know what would happen next." The Joey Pigza series by Jack Gantos truly has a captivating plot with engaging characters to which the students can relate. Christopher explained that his nervousness subsided over time because, "It was fun book and I

actually understood it.” Josh implied that the book itself was one of the highlights of the program. He stated simply, “It was a good book and I liked reading it.”

Jessica excitedly declared the following about the Drama Discovery program:

It’s a fun cool experience with reading and acting class. If I were somebody that could make it stay and go to all the schools I would do it. It’s the best program on earth. All kids are kind of like that sometimes. Teachers will love it too. They can look at their class and say some of you act like that but you are all right.

#### New Discoveries that Were Not Foreseen in the Pre-conceptual Map

1. The Researcher’s Role and How it Impacted the Study
2. The Self-Efficacy Understanding from Bibliotherapy Extended to the Staff
3. Drama Discovery May Not Be as Effective For Regular Education Students as E/BD Students
4. Changes to Curriculum
5. Emotional Breakthroughs

#### *The Researcher’s Role and How it Impacted the Study*

To begin the first class, I introduced myself. Four students recognized me from the year prior from my role as an administrator. My position is Dean of Day Instruction wherein I am responsible for supervision of the teachers, para-educators and behavior support. I also aid in the creation of curriculum and monitoring instruction.

I asked the students what they thought my job was in the school. Students felt that what I do for the school is that I “walk around,” “take teachers’ chairs,” and I “write

a lot” in their classrooms. I talked about how I am in the classrooms to see what is taking place and to help the teachers find more ideas and resources so that the school can improve. One student commented that I am very sneaky when I enter the room and that I surprise them when they turn around and see me writing. I explained the Drama Discovery program and how the students will be doing some acting exercises and theater games to go along with the story.

There was a day that the Dean of Day Behavior was sick and I had to assume his role. On this day, I found Nick confronting the classroom teacher. After he threatened to go AWOL [run away from the school], I heard from the teacher that Nick had punched Christopher in the throat so hard that Christopher was spitting up and gagging in the bathroom. It was my responsibility to suspend Nick and explain the consequences for his behavior. He looked me dead in the eyes and said that he didn't “f\*c\*i\*g care.” The teacher said that the suspension would not be a true punishment for this student because he didn't care about going to school and that he was trying to get himself expelled.

I called his grandmother and the school district that Nick attended. His grandmother's frustration with the situation was apparent. Later that day, I was called into the classroom and Christopher said to me, “Please don't suspend Nick.” It was a bit awkward since these students need to be able to trust me during this research time. However, I knew that my role as an administrator superseded my role as a researcher. I explained to him that Nick had violated the student handbook rules by hitting him and that the school district had already been called. As I walked out of the classroom I wondered if this would negatively affect my relationship with the students in the class.

Fortunately, I found that the students respected my position and saw me as the principal who needed to make these decisions. These students truly need the boundaries that we set up to protect them and guide their behaviors.

The students began to see administrators in a new light as they became comfortable with having me in the class daily. Jessica said, “When I first saw Miss Shellie last year, I was afraid of her. She looked like she would beat me up.” We talked about how she never liked administrators in the past. Two weeks later when the class was discussing how they have changed since the beginning of the program, Jessica said, “I know one thing that’s different. I used to be afraid of you but now I am not.”

It was amusing to me that once the students learned more about my personality and saw my enthusiasm for helping them to better understand themselves, their comments went beyond my role as an administrator to my personality. When Jessica was asked, “When you discussed the issue that the character had in the book, how did this help you?” during the post-interview she stated:

It helped me know that there are books that are like me. They don’t just focus on the normal kids. They are about hyper kids too. Like, Miss Shellie. She focuses on the hyperactive kids. She gets hyper too. It’s fun to see that adults aren’t always serious. They can be hyperactive too, which is fun (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

Throughout the study the students and I bonded through my role as an administrator, researcher, and as a person in their lives who truly cares for them. I was

deeply touched by the trust that they put in me when they shared their personal secrets and as I watched them grow with the program.

*The Self-Efficacy Understanding from Bibliotherapy Extended to the Staff*

Jessica stated, “I picture the para-educator as the snitch from the story like as if she was in sixth grade. Miss Shellie is Miss Maxie and you are the teacher.” The students all said that I could never get mad and yell at a kid. They felt that I was always smiling and happy. Those statements were what I personally took away from this conversation that the students had. They saw me as always positive yet they did recognize that I was in a position of authority.

It wasn't until my supervisory individual meeting with the para-educator that I saw the profound gap in my Pre-conceptual Map regarding the bibliotherapy component of Drama Discovery. I looked across my desk at this young aspiring teacher who a mere month ago was full of zest and excitement about teaching. She now sat there and with tears welling up in her eyes and said, “They see me as the snitch. I am the goody-goody-two-shoes that they hate. I am the snotty girl with the clip board who writes down what they are doing bad and tells on them.”

I had hoped - and at some level, I assumed - that the students would be able to see themselves in the characters. Yet, I didn't foresee that the adults would analyze the students based on the characters and that this staff member would see this as a reflection of how she was being viewed. She explained that the students saw her more as a student who is a bit older. She felt that this wouldn't happen if she were working with the younger population that she was trained to teach. She was very frustrated and she said

that it wasn't until Jessica made the comments about the character in the book that she saw how they truly viewed her position in the classroom.

A week later, the para-educator sat me down in my office and explained that it was time for her to teach in her niche. She accepted a position as a Head Start Teacher for 3-5 year olds. She seemed truly relieved and at peace with her decision.

The teacher knew that the students had viewed the para-educator in this light and felt that they should know her on a deeper level. "They saw her as the snobby rich girl with the perfect life." The teacher encouraged her to share her own life story on the last day. The teacher felt that it would open the students' eyes to their own pre-conceived perceptions. The para-educator explained the tragedies that she personally endured in her own life including her father's suicide.

A week after the pilot study, sitting in the para-educator's old desk, Christopher stated how bad he felt about her leaving. He expressed that at the time he had no idea that she had gone through so much. The class agreed that they would have treated her differently if they had known what she had been through. It was an eye opening experience and lesson that the students learned from this young future teacher.

*Drama Discovery May Not Be as Effective For Regular Education Students as E/BD  
Students*

It is very interesting from a research standpoint that only one student was not obviously touched by the program. Nick was very emotionally removed from the class for many of the sessions. Some of this was based on poor attendance. Nick is the only regular education student who does not have an IEP in the entire class. He has fewer

mental health issues and more strictly juvenile delinquent tendencies than the rest of the students.

### *Changes to Curriculum*

I had conceived originally that the curriculum document was almost completed and yet it needed a significant overhaul. With the progression of this curriculum the teachers and the behavior support completed Reflective Feedback Sheets on the lessons at the end of every week of the study. Involving the teachers in the curriculum and editorial end of the writing, from the standpoint of the educator who sees the curriculum in action, strengthened the overall program. The Drama Discovery Curriculum included in the Appendices of this dissertation reflects the changes that were made during the implementation of the curriculum.

### *Emotional Breakthroughs*

The Thursday after the Drama Discovery pilot was completed the preverbal “flood gates opened” and the trust and emotion spilled out of the students during class. They truly opened up to their peers and shared their issues in an unabashed way. Both the teacher and I attributed this breakthrough to the Drama Discovery program’s communication, bibliotherapy, and learning about their emotional and behavioral needs. The evening after the discussion, phone calls were made to each parent, and letters explaining what had transpired were sent. The students’ parents were encouraged to have their children share in their next therapy session with a professional what was said in class.

The on-campus therapist was also consulted to assure the administration that the situation was handled appropriately. If issues were to resurface, the therapist would be able to discuss the topics with the students. The therapist agreed with the teacher that the students had aired their pasts and that it was safe to move forward with the class without rehashing the situation multiple times. The teacher did discuss with the class the need for confidentiality regarding what their peers had said and stressed that there were resources that they could utilize if they needed further counseling on the subjects that arose during the powerful conversation. This section details the highlights of what the students felt comfortable sharing that day with their classroom, which had obviously blossomed into a community.

After a meeting with Christopher's caseworker, the Christopher asked if he could talk with the class about "laying off" so that he could try to "straight up". He stated that he would appreciate their help in not picking on him. That's what he was originally going to talk about. When he started he got part way, stood up and got a Kleenex, and then broke down about his friend's death in a sledding accident that happened in front of him. He described in detail watching his friend convulsing before passing away on the snowy hill. He had recently received word that another friend from the public school had cancer. He said that it was not fair that these young people have to die. He sat in the back of the class sobbing and the teacher put her arms around him and hugged him. The teacher later said, "The rest of the class was sitting still like frozen statues. I never saw a class so quiet." The teacher apologized to him for what he had been through and said that she understood because she had been there when her grandmother passed away during a

seizure. Christopher was still left with the timeless question, “But why did he have to die?”

Sarah was obviously touched by what Christopher had said because at the end of the class she passed him the following note:

Christopher,

I’m sorry that you lost your friend but now he is where he can always see you. I mite (might) not ack (act) nice to you but you are ok. I understand how I feel being taken out of your home. I lost people too. But I have to deal with it. I’m sorry. (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

Tyler turned around in his seat and in his deep voice mentioned, “Man, I know your pain because I watched my uncle get beat up. He crawled into the house and died on the couch.” He repeated the statement, “He died on the couch” four times. His uncle was twenty-four when he died.

Jessica explained that she managed a household for twelve people in one of her multiple foster care families. She was expected to do all of the cooking and cleaning including all of the laundry. The teacher whispered to me, “She was being used as a slave.”

Jessica needed to talk about the deep issues in her traumatic life. She said that she had never told this to anybody but that she was raped by her cousins and step-dad daily. She told her birth mother. Her mother was so desperately addicted to drugs that she didn’t do anything. While Jessica was crying about this, the rest of the class sat still in their seats.

With tears in her eyes the teacher later stated to me, “It explains all of her lashing out. When the staff restrains her can you imagine what that must remind her of? Being forced...” This disturbing thought referred to the physical therapeutic restraints that the students needed to be put into when they were an extreme potential danger to themselves or others.

Ashley went over and put her arm around Jessica. These two girls had many conflicts throughout the nine weeks. She sat next to her with her head down. When she got the courage to lift her head up she looked right at the class and said, “I was raped in the bathroom by my boyfriend at school.” Later Emily wrote in her journal:

1. My boyfriend that raped me in the bathroom.
2. My uncle got shot in my living room.
3. My dad had costed (accosted) and raped me.
4. My dad hitting me over the head with a poul [pole]
5. [Named a girl's name] hitting me and sexauly adusing [sexually abusing] me
6. My mom prostruding [prostituting] me out (personal journal, November 4, 2004).

Emily's protective older sister instincts kicked in and she addressed the class. She told the boys that that's why the girls get so upset when they throw the words around about rape and sexual things. Josh got uncomfortable and had to leave the room for a minute because he hadn't realized that it was hurting their feelings.

Christopher started to talk about how he didn't want to be pulled out of his home and that he wanted to go back. The adoptive and foster kids all talked about what it is like to be pulled out. They all wanted to talk at once.

Michael started talking about foster homes. He explained that he was tortured. He was covered in bugs and spiders and that is now a phobia. They made him stand in scalding hot water in a tub. His foster father made him take a shower with him and put his penis against his. He explained that he could have taken the man to court but he decided not to. Now he wishes that he had. Fortunately the students were surprisingly understanding about this and did not engage in their typical teasing.

During the phone call the night of the breakthroughs, Michael's mother continued her traditionally extremely positive way of listening and comprehending what we are doing for the students through the Drama Discovery program. She had not heard about the hot water and was glad that he was finding the classroom to be such a safe place to share such information. She was definitely pleased with what was going on in the classroom and stated that she felt that more classrooms for these types of students should have this curriculum.

Emily began to write about her own experiences at this point. She felt more comfortable telling her story through the written word:

When I was young. I was about one-years old to three or four. I was physically abused and basically ignored and laid in a crib. When my mother gave me a bottle of chocolate milk and put me in a crib. That's how I was when I was adopted at five years old. I had a whole mouth full of black cavities. Also when I

was still in my mother, she was an alcoholic. That affected me and I was born with Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE). To this day I hate talking about my past youth life. (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

Sarah started to cry with one single tear going down her face. She started asking why her parents can't get along. They started to talk about how all parents fight. Sarah said that her real mom and real dad get along better now that they are not married. The teacher explained that the pressures of marriage can be hard. Sarah talked about being pulled out over her brother's incident. She said, "It is not fun. It is scary to be pulled out and go to a new place to live with strangers."

Sarah elaborated on her personal situation in writing:

Iv [I've] lost so much I don't know where to start. The pain Iv [I've] been through is still kicking my a\*s. Iv [I've] never had good times without something bad going to happen. Iv [I've] been taken from my mom. Iv [I've] been raped by my step-brother. It can go on four about four years before the girl gets to tell. I didn't want them to leave my step-mom. Iv [I've] been abused by my step dad. He throw me and my sister through a wooden and metal door. I was raped by hem [him] He attacked my real mom and I tryed [tried] to stop him but he put a gun to my head. I was so scared. And now my step-mom and real dad are fighting with my real mom and step-dad. I don't know what to do. Hearing other ppl [people] talk about their past scares me. (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

It was so difficult at first for Sarah to talk about her complex family situation that having her open up in writing was a true breakthrough.

The teacher elaborated,

It was unreal. They were all just sitting there. Andrew had his head down. He said he was sleeping but I knew he was taking it all in. When he came over and said something about how his black cat died in a fire. I asked if he had something to do with the fire. He paused for minute and looked at me uncomfortably. He said that he didn't screw the light bulb in right. (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

Andrew's mother was so relieved that he opened up about the fire incident. She was amazed that he had finally said something about his guilt. She explained that although the fire was started by a light bulb, it was not her son's fault. This will help provide a source of comfort for Andrew when he finds this out. Without his opening up about his thoughts in class the mother wouldn't have known that he was carrying around that burden.

The whole time that this is going on Andrew sat in his seat with a stony look on his face, not saying a word. He then stood up and walked to the hallway. The teacher said he could cry. He said, "Not yet." He actually accepted a hug from the teacher. He stood as straight as a board. He was able to pat her back once or twice, which is a huge step for him towards physically showing caring. (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

The teacher handed me the following paper and said that Andrew had told her that I could read it:

You can read this out loud if you want. Now I know most of the things that went on in your lives. I know that I don't normally cry or show emotions but that is because I have in everything for the past eight years. Now that I have heard all that I will try to be a little more emotional and help out and not argue as much with everyone but I cannot deal with this much pain. (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

Josh was acting silly and goofy, his usual reaction to an uncomfortable situation. He was concerned about his classmates but not as concerned as he was about seeing his teacher crying. He did admit that he was affected by the day's sharing of information:

First of all when my mom was a little girl she had gotten abused by Pop her dad. Well every time I think about that I want to go to church. But when we just talked about our lives I almost cried [cried] Finally I don't like to cry. And I especially never like to see Miss Jane or Miss Shellie cry." (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

The teacher mentioned to me that everyone shared something whether it was verbal or written.

Matthew wrote about the experience of hearing the tragedies that his classmates lived through. "It made me feel good. I have had nothing happen to me. I have never been abused" (personal journal, November 4, 2004). Christopher said, "Not to be rude to you, Matthew, but I can't believe that you talk to your mother that way and she doesn't

hurt you.” He then realized that in his mind, life at home is bad but after hearing everybody else’s confessions he knows that it could certainly be worse.

When Matthew’s mom received a phone call from the teacher that night and heard that her son’s class was involved in telling stories from their lives, some of them disturbing, the mother sounded very concerned. When she heard what he had written, she cried tears of joy. She said that she assumed that he had said something bad about her because he often sees her in a negative light. On the contrary, though, he had finally seen that he lives in a world without this type of scarring pain, a world that would be considered a luxury to his peers.

During a discussion, the teacher stated her frustration at knowing what these students have been through:

It makes me sick to think that there are people out there that do this crap. It is absolutely a good thing that they got this off their chests. I can’t imagine carrying these painful memories, some of them since they were three years old. Daniel hasn’t cried or shown emotion in eight years. If he doesn’t release it, those are the kind of kids that crack and do the Columbine stuff. It’s a family now. The trust is so deep. They had been so rude and crude up until that point. They all found common ground. They all thought that it was that they were big and bad and tough. They didn’t realize that they all came from similar situations (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

Nick wasn't there that day. The teacher perceptively commented that, "It never would have happened with him there. They wouldn't have trusted him with that information."

The teacher pondered the following questions aloud as we talked after school the day of the breakthroughs. "It all fit. It's so hard to hear what they have inside them, but it's good that they got it out. I don't know how they did that. It blows my mind. How do you not trust a therapist? Why did they trust you and I?" The teacher further explained, "You know how every few days as a teacher you see a light bulb go off about a math concept or a 'so that's what my other teacher meant?' That day everyone's light bulbs were shining like they had on their high power generators. The whole breakthrough happened in an hour. It is more powerful than we ever realized. It's incredible."

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Review of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess if the implementation of a program called Drama Discovery, which utilized bibliotherapy in combination with drama by acting out stories with characters that have emotional and/or behavioral disabilities that the students can relate to, could make a positive impact on the students' self-efficacy regarding their challenges. This chapter reviews the purpose, interprets the results in relation to the research questions, examines how the results can be generalized to other populations, reviews the limitations of the study, makes recommendations for future research, and ends with the conclusions of the study.

#### Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

1. What is the effect of dramatic arts in combination with bibliotherapy on students' sense of self-efficacy regarding their own emotional disability?
2. Can bibliotherapy help the student to understand his or her own disability by having the student examine the text? Does it help to create self-efficacy for the student?
3. Can acting out the therapeutic books help the student understand his or her own disability? Does it help to create self-efficacy for the student?

The above three research questions are answered in the following section. The effect of merging two strategies together: bibliotherapy (which is a technique wherein the students read literature with characters that the students can relate to personally) and dramatic arts activities (including improvisation, warm-up acting games, and

reading scenes), was extremely positive for the students in this study. The students were able to share commonalities with the storybook characters and their peers. They not only gained confidence in themselves but also found the ability to trust their classmates due to this unique combination of strategies for their reading classroom.

The students' self-efficacy regarding their own exceptionalities became clear while evaluating the differences between the pre and post interviews. The students clearly had newfound understanding of what their emotional and behavioral needs were. They had also established some new coping mechanisms for dealing with their issues. By relating to the character in the story that had a similar disability, they were able to discuss the situations that the character found himself in and the feeling that he experienced. They analyzed characters and in the process they honed their communication skills in reading, writing, and acting out scenarios. By evaluating what they were able to portray through these various mediums, it became very apparent that there was a positive growth in their self-efficacy regarding their special needs as students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

4. Do the students have a need and/or desire to learn more about their own disability?

At the beginning of the study it appeared that the students were not interested in learning about their own exceptionalities. There is an understandable fear to opening the door to comprehending one's own disability. Once individuals have faced their own needs, they realize that they must find ways to cope with those issues that are exposed and it is emotionally easier for them to stay ignorant to their special needs. This was most likely a factor in Klemens' (1993) research which found that the

majority of students that he studied were not interested in reading novels with disabled characters.

The Drama Discovery curriculum takes bibliotherapy a step further than simply reading about characters that the students can relate to. There are strategically planned lessons to guide the students' understanding of their own exceptionalities. For example, following an activity in which they experienced for a brief time some of the feelings of having various disabilities, their eyes were opened to accommodations that need to be made for a variety of types of disabilities. Many of the students noted that the activity had a large impact on their thinking about disabilities.

As the class progressed and the students began to relate to the characters in the literature, their own views about disabilities began to change and they slowly became more open minded about discussing the issues. They began to learn from the experiences of their peers. The students shared ideas on how to cope with the day-to-day life of living as a middle school student who has an emotional and/or behavioral disability. They shared the best ways to remember to take their medications and how to calm down when they felt that they were getting "out of control," and they began to help each other calm down when episodes began in class.

A teacher or therapist can give multiple ways that they learned in a textbook or in a classroom for the students to cope with their needs. Yet, something special happens when a middle school student reads about a character that had their same needs, and also hears from peers that they, too, are experiencing the same difficulties. They

could relate and the desire to understand their own needs became clearer, a bit less frightening, and they eagerly read the text.

5. Are there specific factors in the Drama Discovery program that effectively bring about changes in the student's self-efficacy?

The fundamental factor that contributed to the Drama Discovery program connecting with the self-efficacy of students with emotional and behavioral needs was the curriculum that was based on a unique combination of bibliotherapy and dramatic activities. This underlying principle set the guidelines for the curriculum guide, which can be found in the appendices of this dissertation. The Drama Discovery curriculum includes objectives, contents, activities, strategies, and assessments. It also includes lesson plans, graphic organizers, resources, and adaptations for remediation/extension. The goals and objectives of the curriculum are met through participating in oral reading, improvisational theater games, problem solving through acting out situations similar to those that the characters experience, and guided discussions.

The workshop for teachers was a necessary part of the progression prior to implementing the curriculum. The study included a Drama Discovery workshop that was taught by a local theater director. He taught the teachers how to use theater games from the curriculum in their classes to help students to open up and communicate freely. This training provided an avenue for the teachers to practice their skills prior to modeling the games for the class.

One of the components that proved to be vital in allowing the students to begin to open up during the acting exercises and discussions was to have the teacher model the activities. Schunk and his colleagues (1999) demonstrated that different modeling practices by teachers could affect self-efficacy beliefs. The Reading Specialist stated the following regarding the need for positive modeling of the Drama Discovery Curriculum during the post-interview:

The biggest thing is that every single activity needs to be modeled by the staff. Most of them were but when they weren't they were not as willing to take a risk. It's important even when its things are on paper, for example the Wish Kite, the Super Star sheet, or the Anger Escalator. It shows not only how to do it. It also makes the teacher more real to the students. It shows that they too get angry and have emotions (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

Teacher input was essential to the curriculum writing process. Throughout the study the teacher, para-educator, and the reading specialist completed Reflective Feedback Sheets to help assess changes that needed to be made. There were also multiple discussions after the school days between the teacher and the researcher that provided insights. Involving the teachers in the rewrites of the curriculum provided insight on how to best build self-efficacy in this population of students.

6. Are the changes due to the Drama Discovery program negative or positive?

The Reading Specialist stated the following about the positive effects of the Drama Discovery Curriculum during the post-interview:

The Drama Discovery program takes ideas from reading, acting, therapeutic background to make all three effective in a classroom setting. What it does for students is that it definitely gets them more excited about reading. It allows them to be more empathetic with their classmates. Through the activities and theater games it builds more of a team or community in the classroom instead of just twelve students in the classroom. It definitely helps with their self-esteem on an academic and a personal level (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

A parent of one of the students wrote this letter that will further explain the positive impact of the Drama Discovery program:

Dear Miss Shellie,

I would like to thank you for the wonderful program that you have put together for my son's class. Michael is so excited about the Drama Discovery Program. His teacher told me that Michael has been reading ahead because he is curious to find out what going to happen next. When he comes home from school, he tells me what is going on with the program. He had fun making up the word search and drawing pictures of the book cover. We need a lot more of these programs that actually connect with the students. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,

Michael's mother's name (personal communication, October 29, 2004).

### Generalizations

The findings in this study provide insights into how teachers can help students who are E/BD to find an understanding of their own challenges and begin to develop

coping mechanisms. Bibliotherapy can be used in combination with dramatic activities and games in the classroom to provide a positive outlet for expression of emotion and thought. The Drama Discovery curriculum employs these techniques in a systematic way to establish a program for teachers to follow and can be utilized in school setting for students with emotional and behavioral needs.

### Limitations

It is vital to note that this dissertation is not an exhaustive examination. All of the students in the study were at a day school for students with emotional and behavioral needs. The sample that was used from the student body included eleven students who were classified as having E/BD with Individualized Education Plans and one student who was a regular education student with delinquent tendencies.

Almost all of the students in the class had dealt with extremely traumatic episodes in their young lives. During the day of the emotional breakthroughs, the students all opened up and began to share very personal details. Due to the emotional instability of the students, there is a small possibility that some of the admissions of sexual abuse and other traumatic events could have been false in an attempt to fit in with the class. Separating the truth is a difficulty with research in this type of group setting with middle school students who have emotional needs and who struggle with social issues.

The teacher who taught the classes had thirty years of teaching experience and a newer teacher may not be able to provide the same insight to add to the program.

The writer of the Drama Discovery Curriculum conducted the research study. This could cause bias to the program. Due to this fact the unique system of a Pre-

conceptual Map was utilized as a qualitative method to demonstrate potential assumptions prior to conducting the study. Obviously, this would not be necessary for a study that was not written by the author of the curriculum.

#### Implications for Future Research

This study can be considered the initial step towards researching the impact of this original Drama Discovery program. It examines the self-efficacy of students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities regarding their own exceptionality. The following statements suggest other avenues for research:

Having a therapist or counselor in the classroom to evaluate the study as it progressed could provide further insight. Also, a therapist could join the teacher training Drama Discovery workshop to help teachers identify when they need professional therapeutic help with the emotional breakthroughs.

Parents provided some insight to the carryover to the home life in this study. However, it was not written as a formalized part of the study. In a future study of the Drama Discovery program it would help to garner more information if the researcher interviewed or provided a questionnaire to the parent and/or therapists that work with the students.

The author of this dissertation would suggest that in future studies research could include a longer study of the Drama Discovery curriculum with a larger sample size. Research that included a control group of regular education students would further serve to inform the researcher. A quantitative study of the Drama Discovery program would

provide a different way of looking at the information that could be garnered through assessment instruments that measure self-efficacy.

This dissertation could be compared to a study of the Jack Gantos' children's literature series used without the Drama Discovery program. Conversely, a study of the Drama Discovery bibliotherapy in combination with drama games could be used with other children's literature to compare and contrast the results.

A similar study of the Drama Discovery curriculum conducted by a researcher who is not personally invested in the program would help to abolish the fears of bias based on a personal connection to the program. This would also serve to further establish its efficacy with an additional level of objectivity.

### Conclusions

The teacher who implemented the Drama Discovery curriculum in her classroom for students with emotional and behavioral needs drew her own conclusions to the impact on her classroom. The following was her impression of how her students were affected:

I feel the program was a definite success. It turned non-readers into readers.

Students wanted their parents to purchase the books so they could read them at home. Others went home and relayed the day's reading session to their parents.

Through this program, the students also seem to learn to trust one another because they had to work with each other so closely and act together. This level of trust led them to opening up and sharing dark, deep secrets to one another for four days after the program was completed. Because of the comfort level they had developed, they said things they might never share with their therapists. They

now understand disabilities better and many saw themselves through the reading of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* by Jack Gantos. They recognized that many people have disabilities of varying degrees of severity; that there are ways to work through disabilities and having a disability is not something to be ashamed of. They learned that people can cope with a disability and lead a normal life. They learned that the person with the disability has to take care and be responsible for his own actions and responses. They saw, through reading this book, that it wasn't so "bad" to be labeled ADHD. After participating in the activity of imitating different disabilities, they now show a respect for those that are truly handicapped. What a blessing to be a part of this program. It needs to be used to reach other students who have ADHD, learning and other disabilities; so they can understand and grow (personal communication, November 4, 2004).

The four main strategies that are used in the Drama Discovery Curriculum are: reading about situations that the students relate to, discussions, acting out situations, and writing based on prompts. Students saw elements of themselves in the characters in the book and they were able to tell stories from their personal lives that parallel the characters' lives and issues. Their discussions led to positive coping mechanisms. Through the use of dramatic games and activities, the students can develop strengths in communication and begin to learn more about themselves and their peers on a deeper level. Writing in journals based on prompts that are specifically geared towards the bibliotherapy in the classroom can engage the students in a profound way to express their

innermost feelings, even discussing issues that have been repressed from conversations with therapists.

There were some unusual findings that were surprises to the researcher and did not match up with the Pre-conceptual Map. In Chapter Four the assumptions are matched with the reality of the study.

It was found that the reading class touched the lives of both the students and the staff. The bibliotherapy component went above and beyond affecting the student's self-efficacy, as the staff in the classroom began to relate to the characters in the book and made life changes based on this new knowledge.

Drama Discovery may not be as effective for regular education students as E/BD students. The student who was not labeled as having emotional and or behavioral disability was the only student in the class of twelve students who did not experience a profound impact from the program.

The Drama Discovery program had a revelation a few days past the pilot study: "emotional breakthroughs". Emotional breakthroughs can occur in a safe classroom setting in which the students have established trust and formed solid relationships with their peers. This is when students allow their emotions to come tumbling out verbally, expressing prior pains and sharing them readily with their peers who have survived similar situations.

Regarding the students gaining self-efficacy through the program, prior to the pilot program of the Drama Discovery curriculum the students predominately responded to questions regarding their own special needs with three words, "I don't know." The

results from observations and journals stressed that the students did not initially intellectually grasp their exceptionality or simply did not want to talk about the situation and issues therein.

“Self-efficacy beliefs exercise a powerful influence on the level of accomplishment that individuals ultimately realize” (Pajares, 2001, p. 242). The students “ultimately realized” that they could acquire an awareness of and come to terms with their needs. Students in this population experience daily the negative effects of their denial or misunderstanding of their exceptionalities. By increasing understanding of their own disabilities, the students increased their chances of finding tools to triumph over these burdens. Once the realization of need occurred, the healing process began. Now the students can focus on developing their strengths and abilities for the future.

Through reading about characters that they related to, and engaging in drama strategies and other activities combined with personal verbal and written reflection, the students began to truly garner a deep comprehension of their exceptionalities and they began to formulate coping strategies. They also supported each other in these self-discoveries and found comfort in the classroom as a safe place to share what they were experiencing as students who deal with having an emotional, behavioral, and/or learning disability. One can see through this study that the Drama Discovery curriculum that utilizes the combination of bibliotherapy and dramatic activities works to help emotionally and behaviorally disabled students gain self-efficacy regarding their exceptionalities.

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APPENDIX A

Parent Consent Form



DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY  
600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

**TITLE:** DRAMA DISCOVERY: THE EFFECT OF DRAMATIC ARTS IN COMBINATION WITH BIBLIOTHERAPY ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES REGARDING THEIR OWN EXCEPTIONALITIES

**INVESTIGATOR:** Michele Jacobs, M.Ed.  
Dean of Instruction  
P.O. Box 70  
Zelienople, PA 16063  
(724) 452-4453 X 238

**ADVISOR:** Dr. James Henderson  
Dept. of Foundations and Leadership  
Canevin Hall Duquesne University  
600 Forbes Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
(412) 396-4880

**SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Duquesne University.

**PURPOSE:** You are being asked to grant permission for your child to participate in a research project that will pilot a curriculum called *Drama Discovery*. The students will read stories about children with learning disabilities similar to their own and will act out some of the scenes in a classroom setting. The study will look at ways this process can help the students deal more positively with the learning challenges they face. I will observe your child while he or she learns and participates in the classroom with this new curriculum. Audio taped

documentation will take place for reference when the final paper is written on the topic. In addition, I will interview the student asking questions about their impressions regarding the Drama Discovery program for fifteen minutes before and after the study. The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed.

These are the only requests that will be made of your child.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There is minimal anticipated risk to the students. It is possible that some of the acting games and discussions could bring on some emotional reactions. If this happens, the teacher will recognize this and talk the student through the situation. If more is needed, there is a trained counselor who the student could talk to at the school. The benefits will be that your child may be able to strengthen reading skills and there is potential for a boost in self-esteem through this new and innovative way of looking at reading and acting out the characters that the students relate to in the literature.

**COMPENSATION:**

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

No identity will be made in the data analysis of the name of the school or your child. A fictitious name will be used instead of the name of your child. No identifying information about your child will be used. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's office. Your child's response(s) to the program will only appear in written summaries. All audio taped materials will be transcribed into notes. In the notes, all identifiers will be deleted. These include identifiers of other people as well as of the subjects themselves. The audio tapes will be destroyed after the project is completed.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

Your child is under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent for your child to participate at any time and they will receive the same curriculum in a different class for a classroom period. If the Matthewoes withdraw, you have the right to request that their data be destroyed.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of my child. I also understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to allow my child to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412) 396-6326 or Michele Jacobs (724) 452-4453 X 238.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Legal Guardian of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B

Student and Parent Assent Form



DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY  
600 FORBES AVENUE PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

**ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

**TITLE:** DRAMA DISCOVERY: THE EFFECT OF DRAMATIC ARTS IN COMBINATION WITH BIBLIOTHERAPY ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES REGARDING THEIR OWN EXCEPTIONALITIES

**INVESTIGATOR:** Michele Jacobs, M.Ed.  
Dean of Instruction  
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(724) 452-4453 X 238

**ADVISOR:** Dr. James Henderson  
Dept. of Foundations and Leadership  
Canevin Hall Duquesne University  
600 Forbes Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
(412) 396-4880

**SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This research is being written as a part of Miss Jacobs' homework for her college classes at Duquesne University.

**PURPOSE:** During the first nine weeks of school, your teacher will be teaching reading classes using a special program called Drama Discovery. This means that you will be reading about characters that you may think are a lot like you in some ways. You will be able to talk, write, and act out situations in the books and see if you have better solutions to problems. What you feel and believe is very important to us and this will give a safe place to talk about how you feel about the characters in the book and yourself.

Here's what will happen:

- We will sign papers that say that you understand what you will be learning and that Miss Jacobs will be writing about it.

- Miss Jacobs will ask you some questions to see what you know already.
- Miss Jacobs will be in the classroom during your reading classes to observe what you are learning and to see what you have to say.
- Miss Jacobs will write down what she sees and hears. She will also have a tape recorder running so that if she doesn't write down every single word, she can go back and see what was said.
- You will read the book.
- Your class will discuss, write and play fun acting games.
- At the end of the first grading period, Miss Jacobs will ask you questions about what you learned and what you thought of the Drama Discovery program.

The reason that Miss. Jacobs is going to be writing is that it is a part of her homework for college to write a book about the Drama Discovery program. She is very excited about this project and she hopes that you will learn a lot in your reading classes!

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There is very little risk to you as a student. It is possible that some of the acting games and discussions could make you emotional (for example you could feel frustrated). If this happens, your teacher will recognize this and talk you through the situation. If more is needed, there is a counselor who you could talk to at the school. You may be able gain more reading skills and your self-esteem could be higher after the program. It is a new way of looking at reading and acting out the characters that the students relate to in the literature.

**COMPENSATION:**

No money will be given for your participation. However, you will not have to pay to participate.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

When what goes on in the class is written in a book, a pretend name will be used instead of yours. No information that could let someone know that it is you will be used. All written materials and these

forms will be stored in a locked file in the Miss Jacobs' office. What you say about Drama Discovery will only appear in written summaries. All audio taped materials will be written down in the notes and at the end of the research it will be destroyed so that no one else can listen to it.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

You do not have to be a part of this study. You can get out of it at any time and you will get the same lessons in a different class for a classroom period.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

If you ask for it, you can get a copy of what Miss Jacobs' is writing at no cost.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read this paper and I understand what I will be asked to do. I also understand that I am volunteering and that I can get out of the study at any time for any reason. Knowing this, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412) 396-6326 or Michele Jacobs (724) 452-4453 X 238.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C

Student Pre-Interview Questions

**Interview Questions: Student**

**Drama Discovery**

**Pre Questions**

- Do you like to read? Why? Why not?
- Do you know how to play theater games?
- When someone talks about a “disability” what do you think they mean?
- Describe a character in a book that reminded me of yourself.
- When someone talks about a person with an “emotional problem” what comes to mind?
- Describe a person with “behavior issues”.
- What do you do when you are angry or sad?

APPENDIX D

Student Post-Interview Questions

**Interview Questions: Student**

**Drama Discovery**

**Post Questions**

*The following questions relate directly to the pre questions.*

- How has this program helped you to read better?
- Describe your experience with the theater games.
- When someone talks about a “disability” what do you think they mean?
- Which characters did you understand? Why?
- Describe a person you know who has behavior issues.
- What are some new ways that you have learned to cope with being sad or angry?

*The following questions can only be asked after the curriculum has been implemented:*

- Which was your favorite game and why?
- What did you learn about yourself from Drama Discovery?
- Have you learned new ways to cope with feeling sad or angry?
- When you discussed the issue that the character had in the book how did this help you?
- Can you describe what Drama Discovery is and does for students?

APPENDIX E

Teacher/Para-educator Pre-Interview Questions

**Interview Questions: Teacher/Support Personnel**

**Drama Discovery**

**Pre Questions**

- How do you feel about teaching reading?
- Have you read books with your class that the students were able to truly relate to the characters?
- Are you comfortable leading theater games to enhance your reading teaching?
- Do your students think of themselves as having an “emotional and/or behavioral disability”?
- Are you looking for more ways for students to discuss coping mechanisms for their severe emotions?
- How do you think that the Drama Discovery curriculum will help your students?

APPENDIX F

Teacher/Para-educator Post-Interview Questions

**Interview Questions: Teacher/Support Personnel**

**Drama Discovery**

**Post Questions**

*The following questions relate directly to the pre questions.*

- Did the Drama Discovery curriculum help your students to practice their reading skills?
- Could the students identify with the characters in the book? If so, which one and why?
- What was your experience with the theater games like?
- Can your students explain and define an emotional and/or behavioral disability?

*The following questions can only be asked after the curriculum has been implemented:*

- What did the students learn about themselves from Drama Discovery?
- Have your students learned new ways to cope with feeling sad or angry?
- When you discussed the issue that the character had in the book how did this help the students?
- Did this program change the way that you teach in any way?
- Can you describe what Drama Discovery is and does for students?
- What should be changed or strengthened about Drama Discovery?
- What are the positive results of Drama Discovery?

APPENDIX G

Drama Discovery Workshop Outline

Drama Discovery Workshop Outline

1. Introduction (*Shellie Jacobs*)
  2. Relaxation/Warm-up Exercises (*Dennis Palko*)
    - a. Stretching
    - b. Tension/Release Isolations
    - c. Shakedown
    - d. Spine Rolls
    - e. Zoo-Sha
  3. Voice & Speech Warm-up (*Dennis Palko*)
    - a. Facial Stretching/Relaxation
    - b. Vocal Slides
    - c. Diaphragm
    - d. Consonant/Tongue Twister Exercises
  4. Ice Breaker Improv Games (*Dennis Palko*)
    - a. Name Games
    - b. Rhythm by Numbers
  5. Drama Discovery Curriculum
    - a. User Information (*Shellie Jacobs*)
    - b. Improvs (*Dennis Palko*)
    - c. Post Discussion (*Shellie Jacobs & Dennis Palko*)
- Closing (*Shellie Jacobs & Dennis Palko*)

APPENDIX H

Drama Discovery Workshop Feedback Form

# Drama Discovery Workshop Assessment

Please rate the following on the Drama Discovery Workshop on a scale of 1-3:

1 = Needs improvement

2 = Meets staff needs

3 = Excellent

Warm up/relaxation activities

Vocal exercises

Overall curriculum

Lesson plans

Theater games

Student activity sheets

My understanding of the Drama Discovery Program

Overall training

In what ways do you feel that the Drama Discovery Program would affect your students?

---

---

---

What would help to strengthen the curriculum?

---

---

---

What did you feel about the overall training?

---

---

---

APPENDIX I

Teacher Reflective Feedback Sheet

Teacher Reflective Feedback Sheet

Drama Discovery Curriculum

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the following from 1 to 3:

1 = Needs improvement

2 = Met your needs

3 = Success

Rating	Question	Comments/Suggestions
	Was the objective clear?	
	Did the procedures support objectives?	
	In what way did the students demonstrate the objective?	
	Were you able to assess student learning?	
	Was the time allotted appropriate?	

Based on this week write one improvement that should be made to the Drama Discovery Curriculum:

---

---

---

---

What did you or your students add to the curriculum this week?

---

---

---

---

Describe a success that you had this week with the Drama Discovery Curriculum:

---

---

---

---

The attached sheet is a copy of the lesson plan that you used this week. Mark changes that you feel would be helpful for the second edition on the *Drama Discovery* using a pen or highlighter. Thank you for your help towards improving the overall quality of this curriculum!

APPENDIX J

Dram Discovery Information

To Purchase

***Drama Discovery:***

***Curriculum Combining Bibliotherapy and Dramatic Games for  
Adolescent Students with Emotional/Behavioral Challenges***

Contact

**Pro>Active Publications**

Toll-free number: 1-866-401-4337

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