Teaching for Transformation

Drama and Language Arts Education

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If at present it isn’t possible to merge the work of adults and the work of students because we don’t value the contribution young children can bring to cultural development of the world’s good, we can rely on proven drama systems to create ‘the mirror to nature’ and harness, through identification and empathy, the life knowledge which children will bring generously to meet us half-way. (Heathcote, 2006, p. xii)

Introduction

In this chapter I explore how adults can use drama to teach for transformation. I ground my analysis in the educational philosophy and drama pedagogy developed over half a century by Dorothy Heathcote (1984; Heathcote & Bolton, 2005) as well as in the synthesizing pedagogical model of transformative education, which includes language and literacy teaching, as presented by Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope (2008) in New Learning: Elements of a Science of Education.

Transformative teaching requires adults as change agents focused both on designing, creating, and assessing collaborative critical learning situations as well as on strategic teaching interactions (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Teaching that promotes shifts in adults’ and young people’s identities is key so that all might become “collaborative researchers, designing and tracking purposeful, transformative interventions” in networks of collaborative inquiry (p. 37).

Heathcote (1984) envisions that drama, like the other arts, “could be a vehicle for changing the work of school” if teachers regarded themselves as “part of a recognized cultural power to influence [and shape] a society in action thinking. knowing, living human beings engaged with their culture” (pp. 192–193). As her biographer and colleague, Gavin Bolton (1984), notes, Heathcote not only “brought drama back to the track of pursuing knowledge” but her work has “challenged what a teacher is” (pp. 7–8, emphasis in original). Heathcote’s “remarkable innovations” center on creating dramatic representations with young people that can mediate their desires to examine and shape culture both in their schools and as active participants in society. Her pedagogy (1984) assumes the following: first, adult participation with young people in the process of creating and exploring imagined worlds, in contrast with a view of adults as only facilitators; second, a need for teachers to draw on extensive content knowledge as well as have high skills and standards in creating aesthetic form; third, ensemble- and inquiry-based learning rather than individualized or transmission-based approaches; grounded, fourth, by a core belief that teachers must always respectfully begin by accepting, and then using positively, students’ energies, attitudes, interests, and existing understanding.

Heathcote’s philosophy and pedagogy is echoed in Kalantzis and Cope’s (2008) argument that ideally in classrooms, as in life, learning is social and distributed among collaborating, inquiring young people and adults who, over time, engage in the following interrelated shared processes: experiencing both the known and the new; conceptualizing not only by naming, as learners new to a topic do, but also, as more experienced learners do, by using cultural frameworks to theorize about the world; analyzing life experiences both functionally and critically; while always doing so through an appropriate, yet also creative, application of knowledge in authentic or life-like situations (pp. 178–186). These four inter-related pedagogical processes are used as organizational headings for this chapter.

Experiencing

For over a century, experiential learning has been considered the heart of educational practice and learning; young people should address real problems by making, actively doing, and experimenting with materials and ideas (Dewey, 1956). Yet, as literacy researchers applying spatial theory to classroom life have pointed out, the lived experiences of students are
largely ignored in classroom spaces (Leander & Sheehy, 2004). Drama can address that absence.

James Moffett (1968) argues that all discourse is grounded by the “drama” of “present-tense” experiences. In “the universe of discourse” people build from, and toward, both direct lived felt experiences of events and their “projections” into the imagined experiences of literature and other narratives (p. 50). Moffett contrasts the drama of “what is happening” with people’s stories of past events and other increasingly abstract and speculative uses of language they use to make ideational connections and construct understanding for themselves and others. Even in writing about abstract ideas for remote audiences, “experience is behind the discourse, buried in the processing and combined with other experiences” (p. 245). Moffett makes clear Kalantzis and Cope’s pedagogical implication. Students learning to use language must “abstract from the ground up” (p. 247): new understanding must be rooted in lived experiences.

**Imagined-and-Real Experiences** As Maxine Greene notes, “Imagining things being otherwise may be the first step toward acting on the belief that they can be changed” (1996, p. 22). A core difference between experiencing actions in everyday life and in socially imagined events is that the later occur in what Heathcote (1984, p. 128) calls a “no penalty zone” where young people, without fear of physical consequences, can experiment and improvise with how the world could be different. No one actually dies when they imagine the events of *Hamlet*. Yet, a group can explore and learn about how people’s actions may affect another’s life, and death, as they imagine together they are in Elsinore and explore each other’s interpretations of the play. “I am concerned, in my teaching, with the difference in reality between the real world where we seem to ‘really exist’ and the ‘as if’ world where we can exist at will. I do live but I may also say, ‘If it were like this, this is how I would live’” (Heathcote, 1984, p. 104).

As play theorists have argued, people know they are pretending, intend their imagined interactions, and have real social and emotional experiences as they play. Thus, the felt experiences of dramatic improvisation in imagined events, and the learning that occurs, always take place in spaces that can be considered imagined-and-real (Beach, Campano, Edmiston, & Borghmann, 2010). Players actively and intentionally transform objects and actions into imagined things and events that players use as tools to create abstract meaning different from their everyday meaning (Vygotsky, 1967). For example, a moving stick can become a horse or a chair can become a throne. Any socially imagined event may be used in conjunction with other semiotic representations (e.g., talking, moving, drawing, or writing) as social and cultural meaning-making tools. As Vygotsky (1967) stressed, it’s the symbolic meaning of action rather than the literal act itself that predominates when people play. Vygotsky’s play theory can be applied to all modes of dramatic improvisation ranging from spontaneous dramatic play to formal dramatic performance.

Life can be experienced in both the drama of everyday life and the drama of imagined lives whether in reading and writing, children’s dramatic play, or teacher-led classroom uses of drama. Significantly for language arts educators, young people (often with adults) use and compose language to abstract meaning from their experiences of text-based or improvised representations of life. Whereas the projective imagination required in reading and writing texts is both individual and one step removed from actual interaction in the world of a text, any fictional dramatic experience, like that of everyday life, is social, emotional, and enacted; in drama young people move, talk, think, and feel as if events are actually happening to them in a world they collaboratively imagine that may include participating adults.

**Ensemble-based Learning** Given that theatre is “a quintessentially collaborative art form,” Michael Boyd, the artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company has asked, “Can an ensemble...act in some sense as a...better version of the real world on an achievable scale which celebrates the virtues of collaboration?” (Neelands, 2009, p. 176). Leading drama education scholar, Jonathon Neelands reflecting on this question, has drawn parallels between the ensemble approach to theatre, the socially transformative power of the arts, and the possibility of creating and experiencing an ideal of participatory democracy in classrooms where drama is used.

An ensemble will not develop unless teachers can both be team-members as well as leaders who aren’t domineering while assisting young people to focus and achieve in an exploratory workshop environment. As Heathcote (1984) has stressed, adults are needed to “keep the team together, work them to capacity, forwarding their projects efficiently, using their strengths, and helping them to know and overcome their weaknesses” (p. 44).

**Applying**

A situated view of language and literacy education recognizes that young people learn best in the sorts of everyday life “communities of practice” that provide people with supportive, extended, collaborative opportunities to apply past and new knowledge in authentic, practical, appropriate, social, and cultural situations (Wenger, 1998). In contrast, much of schooling is individualized and only focused on reports of other people’s lives rather than sustained collaborative participation in communities where multiple literacies may be learned and practiced.

Adults who facilitate informal dramatic play and ensemble-based theatrical performances both create support for extensive application of situated uses of language. As Karen Wohlwend (2008) has convincingly shown, when young children’s play is supported by adults providing resources that the children can transform into literacy tools, dramatic play becomes a collaborative “literacy of possibilities” grounded in children’s passions and multimodal strengths. And as the research of Shirley Brice Heath and Shelby
Wolf (2005) has illustrated, students committed to dramatic performances will be prepared to explore competing interpretations, engage in background research, compose scripts, and express multiple representations as they collaboratively create and enact play scripts.

**Imagined-and-Real Community Literacy Practices** Teachers who engage with young people in extended dramatic inquiry create community social practices in which literacy applications may become more nuanced and complex. My term, “dramatic inquiry,” privileges drama pedagogy that is a hybrid of dramatic play, dramatic performance, and inquiry-based education (Beach et al., 2010). As with informal dramatic play, an imagined world is formed and explored in multiple modes as participants experience and interact as if they are imagined people. Like dramatic performances, new views are shared as well as experienced: adults and/or young people may present ideas to others in the group. In dramatic inquiry teachers mediate students’ inquiry and shape the work. Adults enter shared imagined spaces as a “teacher in role” (Heathcote, 1984) to negotiate and shape the creation of an imagined-and-real community in which, interacting as if they are fictional people, all may collaboratively engage in actual literacy practices.

Through dramatization, dramatic inquiry extends inquiry-based pedagogy (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1995; Beach & Myers, 2001). Young people engaged in classroom study organized around inquiry research and grapple with problems but they are limited by the tools actually available in the classroom. By contrast, in dramatic inquiry young people may investigate with the role and responsibility of people in a community that they identify with, having access to almost unlimited literacy tools made available through the use of social imagination. The following examples are all from central Ohio classrooms (Beach et al., 2010). In all cases, teachers took on roles alongside the young people. The students from mostly affluent households in Trish Russell’s first-grade classroom identified as travel agents as they researched and planned a safe scuba diving vacation to a sunken wreck off Hawaii. Fifth-grade students in Sarah Higgins’ mixed-income mostly White classroom designed a Thanksgiving memorial creating images from competing narratives of the events of 1610, and sixth-grade students at a middle school with a student population of high-poverty and a history of student violence, critiqued entries on a fictional Web site they created with Mary Ann Buchan, their student teacher, while reading Doug Wilhelm’s *The Revealers*, a novel with a theme of bullying. High school students, in role as collaborative directors of a new movie adaptation of *Hamlet*, could choose words and actions from a possible script edited from Shakespeare’s text in order to explore reasons for Hamlet’s indecision. In each case, potential literacy events are embedded in the professional practices of a community in which the young people participate. Collaborating teachers can extend students’ practices through interactions in imagined-and-real spaces: as a potential vacationer phoning travel agents for vacation ideas; as the historical character called Squanto, by Whites, being interviewed and giving factual information about how the peace treaty was broken; as a victim of bullying dictating a website entry; or as a fellow script writer collaboratively representing characters to create a text showing Hamlet’s conflicting thoughts as he contemplates avenging his father’s murder.

**Dramatic Form** The imagined-and-real social practices of dramatic inquiry shape and are shaped by its evolving aesthetic form: “everything irrelevant to the main issues must be lacking, and the relevant material [as considered by the group] must achieve order and style” (Heathcote, 1984, p. 55). As Susanne Langer (1953) states, in the arts, form is always more than shaping ideas with tools, form is experienced as “symbolic of human feeling”. Visual artists create form using, for example, paints and clay, whereas dramatic artists primarily use people’s words and movement. In addition, dramatic representations may incorporate the other arts, for example drawings, models, or soundscapes of imagined settings.

Heathcote (1984) clarifies the intended outcome of dramatic forming: “good drama for me is made up of the thoughts, the words and the gestures that are wrung from human beings on their way to, or in, or emerging from a state of desperation” (p. 80). Drama is always experienced with differing degrees of “dramatic tension” in “now and imminent time” (p. 161), as if events are actually happening. Learners are collaboratively engaged by their experience and the creation of dramatic tension in social and cultural spaces. For example, as a community of travel agents the first-grade children practiced what they would do if their clients encountered problems: children wanted to imagine the tension of a shark attack; the sixth-grade students as Web site-makers enacted the events and effects of bullying; and as Hamlet filmmakers the high school students could collectively select, represent, and experience, the dramatically conflicting deadly possibilities in Hamlet’s mind. In each case, young people seamlessly participate in literacy practices when they compose and interpret the dramatic form of people in imagined-and-real “desperate” social situations and surrounding events.

Teacher participation, both as a member of the ensemble and as if people in any imagined world, both assists with the creation, and affects the experience of, dramatic form. The teacher must balance “structure and spontaneity” (O’Neill, 1995) to harness, on the one hand, playfulness that tends toward open-ended possibilities and lack of group cohesion and, on the other hand, theatricality that tends toward imposing predetermined representations of events. Operating like collaborative improvising playwrights, the teacher works with young people to negotiate the creation of dramatic form using the multimodal elements of theatre that include the dynamics of performance (movement and stillness, sound and silence, light and darkness) and conventions of representation e.g. using a chair with a draped cloth to represent a throne, a still person with a crown to
represent a portrait of the dead king, or eerie music to evoke the feelings of those who saw the ghost (for more examples see Edmiston & Enciso, 2002).

Analyzing

As Dewey (1934) argued, personal experience and social participation alone is inadequate if people are to shape their learning and make changes in the world; young people must reflect on, and analyze, their own and others’ experiences and they can do so via the arts. At the same time, though the application of knowledge in classroom communities of literacy practices builds cultural understanding, without critical analysis and inquiry into power relationships young people are more likely to become passive consumers than active citizens working for social justice (Comber & Simpson, 2001). Heathcote (1984) concurs: “In art we reflect upon nature, people’s affairs, ideas and behaviour… the antiseptic and often sterile behaviour demonstrated in schools can be authenticated by [dramatic inquiry] another apparently unreal mode of communication in order to make school and society come into some form of [transformative] power for good influence” (p. 177).

Negotiating an Analytical Stance To be able to analyze any experience, as Heathcote (1984) argues, drawing on the seminal scholarship of James Britton (1970), young people must initially shift from the role of “participants” to that of “spectators”. Writing and reading for meaning requires the ability to individually imagine oneself as both a participant in, and a spectator on, imagined events in a social world referenced only by the words and/or images of a particular text. However, when events are dramatized what would usually be abstracted literacy events can become enacted, visible, and thus more accessible for analysis. The performance dimension of dramatic inquiry means that as young people watch and listen to fictional presentations by peers, adults, or via electronic media, they may reflect for the possible meanings of what is being, or has been, represented. Without shifting to take up a spectator stance they cannot analyze events critically.

Young people may not readily take up a spectator stance. On the one hand, in spontaneous dramatic play young children tend to focus mostly on the experiences of participating in imagined events as if they are people in places they could never be in everyday life. Children seamlessly shift to a spectator stance in order to negotiate new roles and situations, for example “Let’s not be travel agents, let’s be divers now” but they spend little time analyzing. On the other hand, when students are asked to perform in front of their peers in everyday classroom spaces older students especially can be more focused on how they are being perceived by peers rather than on the ideas they are presenting (Leander, 2004).

Drawing on Erving Goffman’s (1974) sociological theory of everyday performance, Heathcote (1984) conceptualizes a continuum ranging from life experiences mostly as participants, e.g., sharing an anecdote, to experience as spectators watching others show how life is lived, e.g., in ritualized events, like weddings or funerals, and highly crafted stage or screen performances.

Any performance may be the object of dramatic inquiry activities; anecdotes told in pairs about old king Hamlet; in a contemporary setting, a video news report of the marriage and coronation of King Claudius; or reenactments, using words from the text, of how Claudius poisoned his brother. At the same time, the ensemble nature of activities may similarly range from those closer to spontaneous dramatic play with a minimal spectator stance (e.g., pretending to be servants preparing for the wedding), through events improvised in different ways (e.g., practicing where, how, and by whom the crown will be presented), to a choreographed presentation (e.g., the critical selection of what will or will not be shown on the television news, given that the king will see the presentation).

Dramatizing inquiry activities may thus be regarded as on a continuum between those that are more playful to those that are more performative: the more playful the easier to shift viewpoints but the more performative the more a spectator stance is already assumed. When adults participate and reflect with students, as if they too are caught up by events in an imagined world, they can directly negotiate, or indirectly encourage, students’ shift into a reflective stance.

Teachers can socially position young people as spectators of their actions as they interact with them in a dramatic role as if in a shared imagined-and-real space (Edmiston, 2003). If students are unable or unwilling to perform an episode, adults can always do so for the purpose of providing the young people with an object for their contemplation. As Heathcote (1984) puts it, “By taking up a role one offers not only a point of view to the others, but places them in a position from where it is assumed that they will also find a point of view… One cannot endow people with a commitment to a point of view, but often by placing them in the response position, they begin to hold a point of view, because they can see it has power” ranging from the crudest power of disagreeing with the role’s position to agreement (pp. 164–165). At the same time, adults can introduce other material and conceptual objects for analytical reflection.

Inquiry Questions Frame Analysis Using Goffman’s (1974) sociological theory of frame analysis, Heathcote (1984) proposed that every dramatic social role also provides potential “framings” of events. Teachers can negotiate with young people how they frame their analysis of imagined events. Whereas young people’s framing of school topics tends to be from the viewpoint of their everyday role of “students”, fictional roles provide them with framings that have much more responsibility for in-depth analysis than is usual in classrooms. In drama, “participants have to be framed into a position to influence… placed in a quite specific relationship to the action because this brings with it inevitably the responsibility, and more particularly the viewpoint which gets them into an affective [and analytical]
involvement” (p. 168). Heathcote’s (Heathcote & Bolton, 2005) “mantle of the expert approach” to dramatic inquiry illustrates how much young people may learn when over time they gradually take on a professional “mantle” of the responsibility and analysis that accompanies an area of expertise, for example as travel agents, as they carry out tasks for imagined clients. Shaffer’s (2006) analysis of computer-game players similarly notes that players have a shared “epistemic frame” that provides “the ways of knowing, of deciding what is worth knowing, and of adding to the collective body of knowledge and understanding of a community of practice” (p. 161).

Negotiating the sort of inquiry questions that professionals are likely to grapple with focuses the analysis opened up by a particular epistemic framing. For example, the first graders in role as travel agents framed their analysis of potential vacations in terms of client safety as well as enjoyment. An ongoing inquiry question was negotiated by their teacher, embraced by the children, and displayed in their travel agency to guide enacted and text-based research: Are vacations going to be safe as well as fun? Negotiating a different role or asking a different inquiry question frames analysis of events differently. For example, as if they were members of the Florida Safety Commission the children, and their teacher, considered this additional critical inquiry question, “Should we shut down a travel agency if it’s unsafe?” The children with great delight collectively represented the dangerous events of a “Swimming with Sharks” vacation run by Scuba Adventures when a vacationer was bitten and then, with their teacher-as-his-mother, the hospital where he was in intensive care. As commissioners they framed their analysis of the agency’s actions in relation to enacted events exploring the consequences for the man and his family.

Inquiry becomes critical when students, “question the everyday world and consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice” especially as they “question and challenge the attitudes, values and beliefs that lie beneath the surface” (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, p. 8). Whereas classroom inquiry may dissipate into individual projects and uncritical concerns, dramatizing explorations can easily be quickly focused by an implicit or explicitly negotiated critical inquiry question framed by a fictional role’s attitude in relation to a particular event that will likely engage the students if it illustrates an open, contested, ambiguous, or troubling aspect of whatever problem is under consideration. When adults engage with young people in the imagined-and-real events experienced and represented in dramatic improvisation, “there is the opportunity for one problem to be faced at a time” (Heathcote, 1984, p. 69). For example, should Hamlet kill his uncle, Claudius? This question could be posed by a teacher-as-Hamlet displaying uncertainty in recalling that the ghost of his dead father tells him he was murdered. The specific question and event illustrates a broader critical inquiry question relevant to both the multi-faceted world of Hamlet and young people’s everyday lives: How do people know what to do if they’re unsure about the truth of what others’ say? The question could be explored in social imagination from the multiple viewpoints of those affected, across any of the times and places of the imagined world: Ophelia unsure of the meaning of Hamlet’s love letters and her father’s belief that Hamlet is mad; Hamlet’s mother Gertrude before the play opens, considering marriage to her brother-in-law; all in contrast with Laertes’ impulse to immediately kill Hamlet to avenge his own father’s death.

When inquiry is dramatic, different epistemic framings provide people with different degrees of emotional as well as analytical “distance” from events. Using another of Heathcote’s (1984) terms, different framings allow young people to be “protected into” (p. 153) an analysis of a situation that in their everyday lives might feel emotionally too “hot” to analyze. For example, as advisors to the new King Fortinbras, at the end of Hamlet, students could be protected into an analysis of death, focused by an open inquiry question such as the following: Where should Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, and Laertes be buried in relation to the graves of King Hamlet, Polonius, and Ophelia and what should be written on their gravestones?

How people frame events in the moment of their participation can be contrasted with how people frame prior events when they analyze narrated experiences. There is dramatic tension for those at the end of Hamlet who must deal with an invading king and a collection of cad bodies. At the same time, the relationships among the cad and the living may be explored through dramatizations of memories, reports, records, and conjectures of past events. As soon as the conflicting views and attitudes of different characters are imagined and enacted to explore a critical inquiry question young people’s analysis takes a critical turn.

Finally, as I have illustrated elsewhere in reference to longitudinal studies (Edmiston, 2008; Beach et al., 2010), adults using dramatic inquiry over time can support transformations in young people’s identities. Young people, including those who may have had marginalized positions in classrooms, can be positioned to participate with higher authority and to draw on their social and cultural resources as they act and interpret events in spaces framed with shared responsibilities. Further, over time as they shift positions across events, relationships, possibilities, and perspectives young people may begin to view themselves and others differently as they dialogically evaluate their own and others’ actions and experiences.

Conceptualizing

Transformative education requires learners not only to conceptualize by “naming” as they “clarify, classify, group and distinguish” but also “to be active theory makers” as they “consider their own lifeworld experiences, critically reflect on the knowledge they encounter, and apply that knowledge to real-world experiences” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2006, pp. 182–183). As teachers and young people collaboratively form, frame, and explore from different viewpoints inquiry
questions about events in a drama world (O’Neill, 1995), their conceptualizing processes are significantly extended to include analysis of an evolving sequence of imagined-and-real events.

**Dialogic Understanding**

Bakhtin (1981) argues that creating any understanding always involves a “dialogic” intermingling of competing interpretations of the same event; people must be able to hold, and experience at the same time, the conflict between more than one perspective; new understanding requires that old views are “refracted” by new views. Participation in any type of drama inherently exposes people to a felt tension between conflicting viewpoints; teachers who intentionally and dialogically sequence dramatic inquiry activities mediate young people’s creation of understandings that are more nuanced and complex (Edmiston & Enciso, 2002; Edmiston, 2008). As Heathcote (1984) puts it, “the realignment of...old experience [and attitudes] becomes useful when applied to the newer problem, thus enabling us to see new and deeper meanings” (p. 50). In comparison with everyday life, in imagined-and-real spaces there can be a greater “angle of refraction” between competing views and productive dissonance felt between competing views; there can be both more potential for deep change and more possibility of resisting change in understanding.

In Sarah Higgins’ fifth-grade classroom, using dramatic inquiry for the first time, she initially focused a Thanksgiving inquiry by posing a critical question: from whose perspectives should the story be told? The students all agreed that indigenous perspectives had to be included. The inquiry questions were contextualized in the imagined task negotiated with her students; a group of sculptors were charged with designing a sculpture to commemorate Thanksgiving. Dramatic performances by her and two visiting adults presented alternative perspectives in relation to the stereotypical views assumed by the students’ textbook and revealed in their initial drawings. The students encountered some of the voices in the Thanksgiving story silenced in their textbook, e.g., that the indigenous people kept the Pilgrims alive but were then attacked by the English who broke the 1621 peace treaty. However, it was only when the inquiry question was dramatically, and dialogically, tightened to focus on a more difficult question that the students-as-Wampanoag revisited their designs refracted their original views and began to comment on their assumption of their power to shape different interpretations: Should we continue to celebrate Thanksgiving as we have always done, or like many contemporary indigenous and non-indigenous people, should we participate in the National Day of Mourning?

**Xavier:** People think we got along and they want to put up a statue of us getting along, we did NOT get along.

**John:** You really can’t change what happened in the past. The past is the past.... We’re here and we’re alive and that’s all in the past and we’re doing fine so we should just let it go.

**Xavier:** But you can change it now. You can change the past now so in the future...show a sculpture of a peace treaty but behind the sculpture a war scene.

John regarded the past as unchangeable events that should be let go whereas Xavier realized that he had some power to shape people’s future interpretations about the meaning of the past. He became adamant that images of war should destabilize images based on the traditional discourse that Thanksgiving was an idyllic peace. The students-as-contemporary-Wampanoags were then asked to reinterpret their previous stereotypical drawings. Sarah noted that Xavier’s ideas made a significant difference. His comments opened up a critical discussion about how the past dictates present-day actions.

**Conclusion**

The transformative and expansive tools of drama, which are available to whoever can imagine their use, may be used by adults and young people to harness dramatic imagination in order to create classroom spaces where collaborative, dialogic, and critical explorations of diverse social and cultural worlds becomes a norm.

Teachers who desire to use drama, and dramatic inquiry in particular, must be ready to create ensembles where young people and teachers take actions, grounded by playful collaboration, and shaped in the dialogic understanding made possible when people embrace, perform, and explore what they know of the world and how they imagine life might be different.

Like first-grade teacher Trish Russell, teachers are likely to begin a transformation in their identities. When reflecting on her experiences of learning over a year to use dramatic inquiry with her students her view of herself as a teacher had changed significantly from someone previously focused more on students’ achievement of objective standards: “Not only do you teach them how to be creative and how to incorporate language arts but also how to be real people and to feel like they’re going to be somebody in the world.”

**References**


