

# Expanding opportunities to learn to support inclusive education through drama-enhanced literacy practices

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**This study examines how the Early Years Educators at Play (EYEPlay) professional development (PD) programme supported inclusive learning settings for all children, including English language learners and students with disabilities. The EYEPlay PD model is a year-long programme that integrates drama strategies into literacy practices within real-classroom contexts. Inclusive education refers to ensuring equal opportunities to access and participation in learning activities for all students. Cultural-historical activity theory was used to understand and unpack the drama practices. Twelve semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with 19 preschool teachers. The data were analysed via constant-comparative and interpretive methods. The study findings showed that EYEPlay PD practices enhanced inclusive learning settings for diverse groups of students by increasing access and expanding opportunities to learn, and supporting a positive learning environment.**

**Key words:** inclusive education, professional development, drama, student with disabilities, cultural-historical activity theory

## Introduction

As students around the world are presented with varying educational opportunities, they may be marginalised, excluded, or positioned as incapable learners by their teachers or other education professionals (Artiles et al., 2011;

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McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). For instance, in the USA, this is reflected in the achievement gap that occurs between students that have disabilities or those that are identified as English language learners (ELLs), and their typically developing or native English-speaking peers. Moreover, some teachers' low expectations towards certain students (such as children with disabilities and ELLs) constrain students' opportunities to learn and the development of students' abilities (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). In this article, we examine how a drama-enhanced professional development (PD) programme supports inclusive education for all students.

Inclusive education has historically been defined as giving students with disabilities access to general education classrooms (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Kilinc, 2016). This definition has raised some critical questions, such as 'What happens after placement?', 'Are there other students who experience marginalization or exclusion due to their perceived differences?' and 'How can educational stakeholders ensure educational equity for all students?' (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). Although students with disabilities are physically included in general education classrooms, they often cannot engage in meaningful learning activities, which limits their participation and leads to their marginalisation and exclusion within classroom contexts (Ferri & Connor, 2005b; Mitchiner et al., 2014). Additionally, students' differences (for example, ability and/or linguistic) are subject to misinterpretation by educational stakeholders. This results in deficit perspectives towards certain students and even causes disproportionality in special education (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Artiles et al., 2010; Ferri & Connor, 2005a).

In order to address some of the current educational inequities, we have reconceptualised the definition of inclusive education. In this article, we define inclusive education as ensuring equal opportunities to access and participation in learning activities for all students including ELLs and students with disabilities (Artiles et al., 2011). To create an inclusive learning environment, we conceptualise key inclusion characteristics as 'students collaborating and participating, working on social and academic goals, solving problems through inquiry, and making meaning by having shared experiences and opportunities to reflect' (Farrand, 2015, p. 49).

### **Dramatic inquiry and inclusive education**

Dramatic inquiry is a strategy that teachers can use to position all students, including those with disabilities and ELLs, as valued, smart, and competent members of the classroom. As an inclusive educational process, it provides a context for teachers in shared meaning making opportunities with their students to dialogue, interpret, and dramatise texts (Wolf et al., 1997).

‘Drama can productively disrupt the sense of classroom normality to create spaces where children can be viewed primarily as people using strengths in learning practices, rather than as children with or without disabilities.’

(Edmiston, 2007, p. 338)

The use of drama strategies provides students with a variety of mechanisms that allow them to demonstrate that they are smart in a multitude of ways, encouraging them to actively participate and collaboratively construct meaning with their peers.

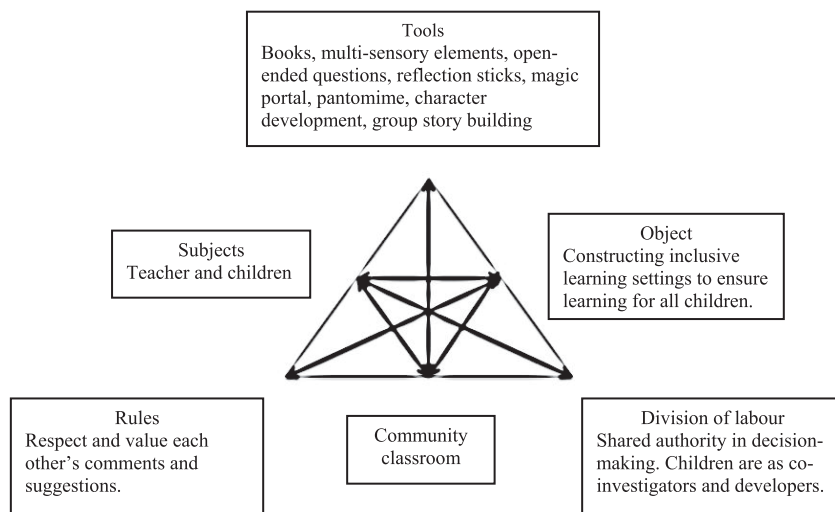
### **An overview of EYEPlay PD program**

The EYEPlay programme was a year-long early childhood PD programme, which provided preschool teachers with drama strategies to integrate into their literacy curricula. It consisted of six units in an academic year and each unit was completed in a month. A drama frame, which refers to pairing drama strategies (pantomime, character development and group story building) with curricular objectives (vocabulary development, speaking and communicating and story comprehension), was implemented in each unit. As an apprenticeship model, professional theatre teaching artists paired with classroom teachers to scaffold their learning and drama implementation (Kilinc, Kelley et al., 2016). Thus, each unit included, in order, a model lesson, an in-service (a workshop outside the classroom day where teaching artists work with classroom teachers to refine and practice a particular skill), a co-taught lesson, a planning session, a solo lesson and a reflection session (Kilinc, Kelley et al., 2016).

### **Theoretical framework**

In this study, cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) was used to describe how the EYEPlay PD practices supported inclusive learning settings for all students. CHAT includes six components – subject, tool, object, rules, community and division of labour – to examine activities. It conceptualises human action as object-oriented, which is mediated by tools, rules, community and division of labour (Engeström, 1998). Close examination of the interplay of each CHAT component reveals how context can allow or constrain the participation and learning of students. For instance, if we imagine a traditional literacy activity in a kindergarten classroom (community), we visualise a teacher (subject) reading a book (tool) by stopping in certain parts and asking questions (division of labour) and students (subject) sitting silently in a circle (rule), listening carefully and answering the teacher’s questions by raising their hands (division of labour). This activity does not embrace the learning needs of all students because certain ways

**Figure 1: EYEPlay PD activity**



of being and behaving are privileged over others. With the inclusion of the drama frames, we aimed to unpack the components of a traditional literacy activity to promote an inclusive space that ensures all students have an opportunity to learn and participate, and are valued for their diverse abilities and backgrounds.

The EYEPlay PD activities aimed to transform the traditional literacy activity system into an inclusive literacy setting by providing various drama and literacy tools and conceptualising division of labour and rules in a way that increased students' motivation to participate in drama-enhanced literacy activities within the classroom community (see Figure 1).

Teachers are key subjects for change by being aware of how contextual factors influence participation and learning, and by critically examining their literacy activities. In this study, the classroom teachers reflected on their experiences to help us understand how changing contexts can enhance inclusive learning settings where all children are positioned as learners.

### **Situationally embodied learning experiences**

EYEPlay PD activities provided situationally embodied learning experiences that enabled meaningful opportunities for children. According to Barab et al. (2007, p. 2), situationally embodied learning:

‘involves more than seeing a concept or even a context of use; it involves being in the context and recognizing the value of concepts as tools useful for understanding and solving problems central to the context in which one is embodied.’

Within situationally embodied learning experiences in drama activities, students and teachers alike are able to embody experiences as themselves and as characters in a story through real and imagined worlds created in the classroom. Students and teachers can use mediating tools, such as talking, artefacts, moving, writing, reading and listening, to communicate and make meaning (Edmiston, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978).

We unpack a drama-enhanced lesson plan to illustrate situationally embodied learning. The purpose of the EYEPlay drama activities is to create an imagined context by specifically choosing a book that includes a conflict or a problem that will be solved collaboratively by students later in the drama activity. Although each book chosen had some themes (such as overcoming fear or building empathy) to follow, the students had agency to reflect on those themes. The students stepped in-role as a character in a book to engage in problem solving by exploring different solutions to the story problems in the fictional world of the book that they created in their classroom.

For instance, the theatre teaching artists and classroom teachers set the object of the book, *There's an Alligator Under My Bed* (Mayer, 1987), as creating a new ending. The story was about a child who tried to make an alligator get out from under his bed and go outside his home. The drama activity began with an anticipatory set in which certain multimodal tools (for example, an alligator puppet, pictures of alligator habitats, alligator sound effects) and key vocabulary (for example, habitat, swamp, marsh) were introduced. Then, the book was read until a critical problem was reached in the story: ‘I just had to do something about the alligator’ (Mayer, 1987). By using an imaginary door, the students stepped from the real world of the classroom into the fictional world, the bedroom of the child.

They stepped in-role as the character of the child who got ready for bed by using narrative pantomime (that is, putting on pyjamas, brushing teeth, washing faces, climbing into bed, pulling up the covers, closing their eyes). While the students were ‘sleeping’, the teacher, who was also in-role as the alligator, made an alligator voice and appeared as a puppet, and then disappeared. By using teacher-in-role, the teacher then became the mother who went to the child’s bedroom and

did not believe there was an alligator under his bed. Therefore, by spotlight questioning, the students brainstormed different ideas to get rid of the alligator.

By using action pantomime, students-in-role as characters in the book explored at least three different ways (asking alligator to leave, scaring it away, brainstorming what alligators do not like and putting that under the bed) to make the alligator leave. After their third attempt, the alligator left and the students-in-role as the child finally went back to sleep. Later, the teacher ‘woke them up’ and told them it was time to go to the classroom. Using the imaginary door, the students stepped into the real world of the classroom and out of the role of the child to become students again. After that, the teacher read the remainder of the story to explain how the child in the story solved the problem.

The teacher purposely did not read the entire book prior to the dramatic inquiry. In this way, the students could have a chance to step into the fictional world of the book to create their own ending and meaning-making. Having multiple answers during the dramatic inquiry allowed the students collaboratively to create an inclusive space with new possibilities for learning and participation. Then, by using inquiry to support higher-order questioning about the text, the children reflected on their experiences using drama strategies and their personal thoughts about the story.

## **Methods**

Qualitative inquiry was conducted to understand how the EYEPlay PD activities supported inclusive learning settings for all children. Qualitative inquiry aims to understand people’s practices and meaning-making processes within their socio-cultural context through using naturalistic and interpretative approaches (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

### *Setting and participants*

The study took place in an urban city located in the south-western USA. The preschool classrooms were situated in low socio-economic settings in several urban school districts and one university-related preschool. Preschool classrooms were linked to state schools, community-based programmes, or Head Start programmes.

Thirty-two preschool teachers participated in the EYEPlay PD programme across two years. Sixteen were involved in the programme for 2012–2013, and the other half committed for the 2013–2014 academic year. Some of the volunteer teachers remained in the programme for one more semester after the year-long programme

ended. For this study, we included data from 19 teachers (18 females and one male); three of them were teachers from Year 1, and 16 of them were from Year 2. They self-identified as African-American (n=2), Caucasian/White (n=12), Latina (n=3) and multi-racial (n=2). Two teachers had some university-level course work, one had an Associate's degree, 10 had a Bachelor's degree, and six had a Master's degree, all in education. While all participating teachers reported having ELLs in their classrooms, none indicated receiving any specialised training in working with ELLs. Eleven of the 19 teachers had some experience working with preschool-aged students with disabilities. None of the teachers had any formal background or training in drama prior to the EYEPlay programme. Teachers' names have been changed to pseudonyms throughout this study.

Over 500 three-, four- and five-year-old students from diverse backgrounds participated in the programme for two years. Of the students, 23% were three-year-olds, 62% were four-year-olds and 15% were five-years-olds. The race/ethnicity of the students were identified as 48% Caucasian/White, 43% Hispanic/Latina, 6% African American and 3% Indian American, Asian American or multi-racial. Additionally, it was reported that 58% of the students were typically developing, 11% of them were identified as having learning challenges or delays, and 28% of them were ELLs. Moreover, according to US federal definitions of low income, three-quarters of the students lived in low-income households.

#### *Data collection and analysis*

Data were collected through 12 semi-structured focus group interviews. At the end of the autumn term, six focus group interviews were conducted with the pre-school teachers to capture the teachers' experiences of implementing drama strategies and their opinions about students' participation in the drama activities. After the teachers completed the programme at the end of the spring term, six additional focus group interviews were conducted. During the focus group process, additional questions were added in order to member-check the preliminary analysis of the autumn term. Between four and seven teachers participated in each one-hour focus group interview.

The transcribed data were analysed using constant-comparative (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and interpretive methods (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), which included multiple cycles of data coding in order to identify emergent themes. The open coding approach, specifically the In Vivo process, and descriptive coding, were conducted during the first cycle of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, Saldaña, 2013) in order to understand the teachers' reflections on their experiences. For example, we used 'safe space' as a descriptive code in instances when the

teachers explained how students with disabilities and ELLs felt comfortable participating in drama. Additionally, we used ‘opportunity to participate’ as an In Vivo code when the teachers described how drama supports multiple ways of participation of students. We used NVivo 10 computer software to organise codes and possible themes. After the open coding was complete, the codes that had emerged were discussed in weekly research meetings and some of the data were reorganised and recoded in order to identify codes that were related to emerging themes. During the data analysis process, researchers also wrote analytical and theoretical memos to make sense of the data and connect the codes to larger theoretical frameworks. Although four themes were identified, in this manuscript, only two themes related to inclusive education are presented:

1. inclusive education as accessing and expanding opportunities to learn;
2. an enhanced inclusive learning environment.

## **Results**

### *Constituting inclusive learning settings*

The study findings showed that the EYEPlay PD activities provided tremendous benefits for all students regardless of their differences. The EYEPlay drama activities specifically focused on integrating drama strategies into literacy practices by using different tools, which opened up a space for students to explore through situationally embodied learning and participation in activities in a variety of ways. It supported inclusive education settings in two ways: inclusive education as it relates to accessing and expanding learning opportunities and enhancing the inclusive learning environment.

### *Inclusive education as accessing and expanding opportunities to learn*

All teachers reflected that the EYEPlay PD programme provided opportunities to learn for all students, especially ELLs and children with disabilities. The drama practices disrupted the teachers’ previous beliefs about literacy instruction, which valued certain ways of participation (such as raising hands and responding to the teacher’s questions) or ways of being (for example, sitting silently and listening to the teacher in a circle). The previous activity setting limited the students’ potential to be active learners in the classroom. In this programme, the drama practices provided a multitude of diverse ways for students and teachers to participate physically and valued the learning styles of all students. Thus, integrating drama strategies into literacy practices transformed the way the teachers enacted story-time and how the students participated in the learning process. For instance, Mary stated that:



*'I think the difference for me is maybe in the old way it was hearing a story, maybe understanding the story. Now they are IN the story. They are PART of it. They are engaged. And now when we talk about it, they don't say "remember when we read about, or remember when we saved the lion, the guy with the net." It is their story. I think that's the power and the difference, you have ownership. You are going to remember it forever because it is yours . . . the difference is it is theirs, because they help build it. They engaged in it and they acted it out.'*

Like other teachers, Mary compared her old practices of just reading a story to her new practice of using drama strategies, which altered the traditional literacy context and empowered the students to lead the direction of the story. The teacher stressed that the students were 'in' and 'part' of the story within the drama frame provided for literacy instruction. The students and the teacher stepped in-role as the story characters who could rewrite the story by collaboratively enacting different possibilities and suggesting solutions to the story problems. From a CHAT perspective, the drama strategies constructed a new literacy activity system in which the objects, roles, tools and rules of the activity were altered. One of the most revealing changes was noticeable in the roles of the teacher and the children. Mary's comment showed that students moved from being passive listeners to being active contributors to their literacy practices. She identified that *'it [the story] is theirs, because they help build it. They engaged in it and they acted it out'*, which supported the students in becoming active participants in their learning and allowed them to feel a sense of ownership of the shared story they created. Being 'in' and 'part' of the story offered situationally embodied learning for the children, which also embraced students' funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) by valuing their unique contributions and provided opportunities to learn that incorporated the diverse needs of all students. For instance, Lucia stated that:

*'Probably we have always read to them and they listened to the story and saw the pictures, but to have that experience of almost being in that character, it is a totally different experience for them. And so even some of the children with limited vocabulary are able to express a frustration or happiness. This is kind of hard work. They acted it out, so it kind of helps them to connect with the text and they connect to other experiences even when it wasn't intentional. For example, [in Chickens to the Rescue] they are digging out when I brought the little shovels out there. They are like, "children to the rescue". I am like they are using their vocabulary. They are making their own connections and weaving their own little schema of*

*things with how they experienced the book. So I think it kind of broadens what they are taking from that book versus had I just read it to them.'*

In this excerpt, Lucia expressed that 'being in a character' within a story was a new experience for the students, which supported their understanding of the story. They connected it to their experiences and participated in a variety of ways. Her example above involves *Chickens to the Rescue* (Himmelman, 2006), in which chickens (that is, students in-role as characters from the book) solve serious problems (the farmer drops his watch down the well or the cow gets stuck in a tree). Further, they connected their experiences with other contexts by saying 'children to the rescue' while digging with shovels. Thus, they created their own meaning-making by expanding the context of the story in their dramatic play. Moreover, other teachers also explained these rich experiences as 'auditory, visual, and kinesthetic'. Students in-role as characters lived the story as they solved problems in the fictional world of the story together, collaboratively, as they explored different possible outcomes. Gee (2008) explains that providing rich embodied learning experiences, in which students can manipulate the context, leads children to transform the contextual affordances into action. In other words, environment affords certain learning possibilities, in which individuals need to have a capacity to take action. For instance, students in-role as the characters had multiple opportunities to 'transform affordances into action' (Gee, 2008) by leading the directions of their learning.

Drama-enhanced literacy activities incorporate various tools (for example, pantomime, magic bag, magic dust, magic door, breaking down the syllables, reflection sticks) and support multiple modalities of learning and participation. The use of various tools was important because it allowed every learner in an activity to be included regardless of their ability or linguistic differences. Teachers explained the tremendous benefits of using new tools on students' participation and learning outcomes. For instance, Gabrielle explained that:

*'The biggest unexpected bonus for me is I have four ELL kids and three speech-delay kids in my class this year. At the beginning of the year [they were] shy, didn't want to really participate in any sort of formal story time because I'd sit and we'd read a story and I'd ask questions, and then the kids who have trouble speaking didn't want to speak, because they don't want to be told, "Excuse me. What?" Then ELL kids, they don't know what the heck was going on so why are they going to speak, so it is a challenge. Enter drama, and suddenly that need for language goes away, especially during the first time pantomime, which is what we*

*first started with, which is genius. Suddenly when we would talk about let's use the word ferocious, we would tap it out, everybody can do that, we practice saying it, but when we get to be ferocious, how would your body move? Even the kiddos who might not know exactly what I am saying could see what my body was doing, what my face was doing, and then what their friends' faces were doing. Suddenly they are getting it, "Oh, that looks angry to me." "Oh, ferocious." You could see these lights come on, and suddenly they went from being shy and withdrawn during drama to being in it wholeheartedly because it's something they could do and they were good at. When it came time for questions, if they didn't have the exact words they could show with their bodies, with their actions, or with their hands . . .*

*I'm not saying that they're off, but their ability to participate fully in the class was truly helped by the drama, the gifts that I was able to give to them. Same with my ELL kiddos, the comfort level interacting with non-Spanish speaking peers was achieved far sooner than it had been in years past in a class that I wasn't doing drama.'*

In this excerpt, Gabrielle explained that the tools, such as tapping out the words and pantomiming, provided opportunities for ELLs and students with a language delay to meaningfully participate in and learn within the drama frame. She described students' challenges in participating in story-time due to being shy and having language barriers, as she reflected on their learning. Over time, with the drama frame, the need for spoken language and English proficiency was removed as a barrier to participation. In the anticipatory set of the drama practices, the teachers introduced the story words (for example, 'ferocious'), and they tapped or clapped the syllables of the words, which supported the participation of all students in the classroom. Thus, with the drama frame students built confidence to participate meaningfully and demonstrate their understanding by using the multi-modal tools they had learned, such as showing with their bodies, to demonstrate that they were smart and participating with their peers.

The teachers' reflections revealed the importance of accessing high quality learning activities for all students, especially ELLs and children with disabilities, to provide equal opportunities to access, learn and participate in classroom activities.

#### *An enhanced inclusive learning environment*

The EYEPlay PD programme also enhanced the inclusive learning environment of the classroom, in which children felt safe and felt that they were valued

members of the classroom community. Furthermore, students developed empathy towards one another. This enhanced inclusive environment encouraged all students, especially students with disabilities and ELLs, to engage in drama-enhanced literacy practices. For instance, Laura stated that:

*'I think that the reason those hyper-children or any special needs child, a child that can't talk, likes this programme or these activities so much is because they know that when they're sitting down, I am going to sit for a certain amount of time, but I am going to be able get up and it's going to be ok for me to jump and for me to run, or for me to scream or something. She is going to let me do that, and I am going to not get in trouble for that. For the kids that can't talk I can pantomime, because I know what I want to do, but it's going to be ok and nobody is going to look at me funny . . . It's this comfort zone that they are doing something for us and at the same time we are going to let them do something that they really want to do.'*

In this excerpt, Laura explained that the fictional and real-world spaces created with the drama-enhanced literacy activities formed a non-threatening safe space where the contributions of students with disabilities were valued and respected. Although certain ways of behaving, such as jumping or running, were previously often conceptualised as misconduct in a traditional literacy context, these behaviours took new forms and were accepted by teachers and students alike. Previously, possible misconceptions of behaviours might lead students to be excluded or marginalised in these classrooms, but now the drama activities pushed the boundaries of what was viewed as acceptable. Students' unique contributions were respected regardless of their ability differences. For instance, Sue shared that:

*'I wonder if that's why the special education kids feel safe and willing to participate because they have that same feeling of it is not like that is a right answer here that the teacher's trying to get me to say. If you've 20 children, you can have 20 different bunnies.'*

Sue pointed out the importance of recognising students' diverse contributions, which took different forms in the spaces created in the drama-enhanced literacy activities. Dramatic activities provided a frame for learning where there was no right answer. Thus, the teachers did not look for the 'right' answer; the context encouraged students to participate in their own unique ways. Various ways of participation provided opportunities to explore all possibilities that the students created together as meaning makers.

Moreover, the context built supportive relationships among students as well. During the drama-enhanced literacy activities, students explored emotions and experienced ways to respect each other's feelings in the fictional and real-world spaces created in the classroom. Emily explained that:

*'Our kids are just paying more attention to how the other ones are feeling and then especially the old ones helping. Not even just in the drama but just in so many cases. We had a kid who hurt his finger on I don't know, it's Tuesday. I mean, three kids right away, "Are you okay? What happened? What can I do to help you? It's okay. You'll be okay." Responding to the other child's emotions which before it would just be like, "Why is he crying?" "Oh, okay."'*

The teachers reflected that students increased their attention to emotions and developed empathy towards each other's feelings by asking their classmates how they felt and by providing support, such as sitting with a friend when they were sad. Exploring emotions was one of the objectives that were incorporated into the drama-enhanced literacy activities. As the students engaged in exploring the feelings of story characters during dramatic activities, their experiences of emotions crossed boundaries through dramatic inquiry from the fictional world to the real world and daily classroom life. In this way, it supported building an inclusive classroom community in which each child was respected and valued.

### **Discussion and recommendations**

In this article, we examined how a new drama-enhanced literacy activity setting supported inclusive education practices in preschool classrooms. We found that the use of drama strategies in the classrooms by the teachers provided their students with a new way of accessing and participating in the literacy curriculum, while at the same time enhancing the inclusive educational environment in the classroom. The implementation of drama strategies became a way for students and teachers to collaborate together to support the inclusive classroom environment with multimodal tools, a new sense of empathy for peers, and a reconceptualisation by teachers and students alike of what it means to be smart and how that is demonstrated during learning. In other words, the drama-enhanced literacy activities altered the students' and teachers' division of labour and rules of the activity. Thus, it opened up a space for new ways of participation and learning. For instance, while running or jumping was previously conceptualised as misconduct, these behaviours were accepted and seen as ways of participation and a reflection of learning in this new activity setting. Our previous study (Kilinc, Chapman et al., 2016) also showed that drama-enhanced literacy activities

supported teachers in recognising students' unique abilities within drama practices, which disturbed their deficit-oriented positioning of students, and led them to reconceptualise students as capable learners.

Our findings aligned with previous literature about the positive impact of drama on students' learning, participation, social skills, self-esteem and understanding of emotions (for example, Antonelli et al., 2014; Band et al., 2011; Edmiston, 2007; Szecsi, 2008; Kempe & Tissot, 2012; Kim, 2009; Mages, 2008). Additionally, several studies noted that integrating drama into classroom settings created a safe space for students with disabilities to participate in social interactions, enhanced their motivation to participate in learning activities, and empowered the students (for example, Antonelli et al., 2014; Kempe & Tissot, 2012; Edmiston, 2007; Farrand, 2015; Kilinc, Chapman et al., 2016). Moreover, Kim (2009) found that a specific focus on a character in the story, who was a child with a disability, increased general education students', teachers' and parents' empathy and awareness of the life experiences of children with disabilities. Rieg and Paquette (2009) noted that ELLs who participated in drama activities advanced their literacy abilities (for example, vocabulary and writing).

Although the findings from our study relied on teacher focus groups across multiple time frames, we believe that multiple sources of data (that is, observations, child interviews, artefacts and photo/video documentation) are needed for future investigations to expand the understandings and practices of inclusive education for diverse groups of students. Additionally, we suggest that teacher education programmes consider providing experiences (for example, classes, seminars, workshops, or guest lecturers) that embrace the use of drama strategies in classrooms. Special education programmes can equally benefit from drama-infused experiences, which may create opportunities for future educators to reflect on their beliefs and assumptions about the abilities of students with disabilities and provide unique ideas about creating inclusive spaces in which all students' abilities are valued, respected and recognised. Interdisciplinary collaborations between teacher education programmes and theatre departments, as well as local theatre or drama organisations, can support the use of drama strategies that can enhance the repertoires of teaching practices for future educators.

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