

The Effects of Integrating Theatre-Arts Strategies and Traditional Strategies on Student  
Performance in an English Classroom at a Selected High School

Lacie N. Black

Milligan College

### Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
IRB	
<u>Chapter</u>	
<u>1. Introduction.....</u>	<u>5</u>
Statement of Problem.....	6
Purpose Statement.....	7
Significance of Study.....	7
Limitations of Study.....	7
Definitions of Terms.....	8
Overview of Study.....	9
<u>2. Review of Literature.....</u>	<u>10</u>
Theatre Integration and Academic Achievement.....	11
Theatre Integration in Content Areas and Extracurricular Activities.....	13
Theatre Integration’s Positive Impact on Diverse Student Bodies.....	15
Theatre Integration and Teacher Improvement and Collaboration.....	17
Theatre Integration in the Language Arts Classroom.....	18
Conclusion.....	20
<u>3. Methodology and Procedures.....</u>	<u>22</u>
Population.....	22
Sample.....	22
Data Collection Instruments.....	23
Procedures.....	23
Research Questions and Related Hypotheses.....	25
<u>4. Data Analysis.....</u>	<u>27</u>
Collection of Data.....	27
Research Questions and Related Hypotheses.....	28
<u>5. Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications.....</u>	<u>32</u>
Introduction.....	32
Summary of Findings.....	32
Conclusion.....	34
Recommendations for Future Studies.....	34
Implications.....	34
References.....	36
List of Tables	
Table 1.....	28
Table 2.....	29
Table 3.....	30
Table 4.....	31

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies and traditional strategies in high school English classrooms. The sample consisted of one eleventh grade English class of twenty-one students. Data were collected from students' cumulative grades. The study was conducted throughout an eighteen-week term, divided into two nine-week semesters. Theatre-arts strategies were implemented for four weeks of the first nine-week semester. Traditional teaching methods were employed for four weeks of the second nine-week semester. The data from the study were analyzed using a dependent T-test to compare the scores of students when taught using theatre-arts strategies and traditional teaching methods. Although each student's score increased 3.05 points when taught using theatre-arts strategies, the results indicated no significant difference found between the scores ( $t(20) = 1.86, p > .05$ ). An independent T-test was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies. A significant result was found between the mean scores of males and females ( $t(19) = -2.93, p < .05$ ). Another independent T-test was also conducted to determine whether there was a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using traditional methods. A significant result was found between the mean scores of males and females ( $t(19) = -2.46, p < .05$ ). These findings suggest that theatre integrated strategies are beneficial to both males and females, although females tend to excel in theatre integrated classes.



# Institutional Review Board Decision Tree

**Based on your responses, you do not need approval from the IRB.**

It looks like your research is exempt because it is educational research.



[Refer to 45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(1\)](#)

[Return to Beginning](#)



## Chapter I

### Introduction

Theatre-arts integration in schools has proven to be an effective means of increasing student engagement and learning. McFadden, in her article *Integrating Theatre Arts Techniques into Your Curriculum* (2012), conducted a study of over eight hundred fourth and fifth grade students to reveal an increase in standardized test scores, student participation, and positive attitudes when exposed to theatre-arts integrated elementary classrooms. Similarly, in another study conducted by Lorimer in 2011 consisting of five middle school classrooms in Southern California, students in theatre-arts integrated classrooms were found to have increased confidence, motivation, persistence, and critical thinking skills. Further research by Walker, Tabone, and Weltsek concluded that middle school students exposed to theatre-arts integrated classrooms not only outperformed peers from traditional classroom settings, but also continued to score above the control group a year after the study ended. This suggested that theatre-arts integrated classrooms have a positive impact on student success that is both “immediate and sustaining” (Walker, Tabone, & Weltsek, 2011). A more recent study, conducted by Brouillette, Childress-Evans, Hinga, and Farkas in 2014, yielded results that showed a positive correlation between theatre-arts integrated classrooms and student attendance in an urban elementary school in San Diego. The conclusions of the above mentioned studies suggested that theatre-arts integrated classrooms resulted in positive gains regardless of racial or ethnic background, sex, or socioeconomic status. With such positive results from a variety of sources, it would seem as though theatre-arts techniques would be integrated more frequently in classrooms. The opposite is occurring, however, as art funds are being slashed in school districts across the country in favor of implementing more traditional teaching strategies.

Theatre in the classroom allows students a chance to engage in their learning and create new, emotional experiences. Heyward (2010) indicates that students learn best when emotionally invested in an educational experience. Information is more easily stored and retrieved by a student when it is accompanied by an emotion. Furthermore, theatre allows students to make “personal meaning and sense of universal, abstract, social, moral, and ethical concepts through the concrete experience of drama” (Norman, 1981, p. 50, as quoted by Bolton, 1985, p.155). There is a common misconception, however, that learning by way of theatre is the same as learning about theatre (Robbins, 1988). This could not be further from the truth, as theatre-arts strategies have been effectively integrated in subjects ranging from elementary social studies to middle school science and math. These methods present information to students in a way that is relevant, interactive, and intriguing. There is a disparity, however, in the research conducted regarding theatre-arts integration. Robbins (1988) notes that despite its wide acceptance in nearly every other classroom subject, theatre-arts integration is lacking in English classrooms. It would seem as though the course in which theatre-arts integration would make most sense-- alongside the classic works of Shakespeare and Moliere as well as the contemporary masterpieces of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller-- is the very course in which theatre-arts integration is used least. In addition, the few studies that have been conducted to include language arts, as mentioned above, were limited to elementary and middle school classrooms with little regard to the use of theatre-arts strategies in secondary English settings.

### **Statement of Problem**

Numerous studies have indicated the benefits of theatre-arts integration in a classroom setting. McFadden (2012) revealed that when exposed to theatre-arts techniques students were twice as likely to score advanced proficient on state standardized tests than students exposed to

traditional teaching strategies. Brouillette, Childress-Evans, Hinga, and Farkas (2014) noted a 10% reduction in absences when students were engaged in theatre-arts techniques in the classroom compared to those receiving traditional instruction. Nonetheless, schools across the United States are limiting students' access to theatre-arts techniques in favor of more traditional teaching methods. Research has shown that when theatre-arts strategies are integrated in a school they are typically introduced into elementary and middle school settings. Furthermore, the classes in which these methods are used disregard the effects of theatre in language arts in favor of integration in social studies, science, and math courses. Therefore, the problem of this study was to determine the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies and traditional strategies in high school English classrooms.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies and traditional strategies in high school English classrooms.

### **Significance of Study**

The significance of this study was to raise awareness of the effects of theatre-arts integration in high school English classrooms. With a variety of studies suggesting a positive correlation between theatre-arts integration and student achievement in elementary and middle school settings for social studies, math, and science courses, this study aimed to close the gap in research by focusing on secondary English education.

### **Limitations of the Study**

**1. Limitations of classroom.** The first limitation encountered by the researcher was that of the classroom. Neither the classroom nor its students were randomly selected. The researcher

was assigned a placement by Milligan College and conducted the research within one specific classroom at one school, and therefore the results cannot be generalized.

**2. Limitations of Data Collection.** The data collection instruments were designed by the researcher and were not tested for reliability and validity.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Academic achievement.** For the purpose of this study, academic achievement refers to the scores received on both formative and summative assessments, as well as the overall score received at the end of a grading period.

**Formative assessment.** Formative assessment is assessment that occurs during instruction while knowledge is still being produced. This assessment strategy allows both students and educators to modify their approach in order to increase understanding before a unit concludes (Frey, 2014).

**Individualized Education Program (IEP).** An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legal document containing information regarding the required classroom accommodations for students in need of special education services.

**Summative assessment.** Summative assessment is an assessment strategy that measures student performance after instruction is complete (Frey, 2014).

**Theatre-arts integration.** For the purpose of this study, theatre-arts integration refers to any strategy that would be employed in a typical theatre setting. These techniques include character development and analysis, role-play, music, creative writing, visual-art, and set and prop development.

**Title I.** Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act issues grants to schools in which at least 40% of the student-body comes from a low-income family. The funds ensure

students with low socioeconomic statuses are provided with the programs and tools necessary for success (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

### **Overview of Study**

This study is concerned with the difference between the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies and traditional strategies in high school English classrooms. Chapter I begins with an introduction of the study, and includes the problem statement, purpose statement, and the significance of the study. Chapter I also details the limitations of the study, definitions of terms, and provides an overview of the study. All relevant literature is reviewed in Chapter II and is followed by an explanation of methodology and procedures in Chapter III. Chapter III also includes information regarding the population and sample of the study, as well as the data collection instruments, procedures, and research questions and related hypotheses. Chapter IV is concerned with data analysis and examines the collection of data and further research questions and related hypotheses. Findings, recommendations, and implications of the study can be found in Chapter V.

## Chapter II

### Review of Literature

Integrating theatre-arts strategies is beneficial to both students and teachers. Theatre-arts integration has proven to increase student academic success and attendance while simultaneously decreasing behavioral problems and academic referrals or suspensions. In addition, theatre-arts strategies increase both social and cognitive skills that increase motivation, engagement, long-term memory, and concentration. As a result, students exposed to the integration of theatre-arts strategies outperform their peers on standardized tests and benefit from the positive results of theatre-arts integration both in and out of the classroom. Teachers also benefit from the implementation of theatre-arts integration through increased cross-curricular collaboration and administrative support that leads to professional development for the educator and positive learning outcomes for the students. Theatre-arts integration is a powerful approach to education as it reaches a variety of diverse learners and answers the need for increased differentiation in the classroom (Snyder, Klos, and Grey-Hawkins, 2014).

Strategies most commonly associated with theatre-arts integration can be seen throughout content areas. History, math, science, and language arts classes introduce and implement theatre-arts techniques to increase student success and behavior. History and social studies courses employ theatre-arts techniques most often, but the strategies can also be seen in foreign language classrooms and extracurricular activities. Theatre-arts strategies are most commonly observed within elementary and middle-level classrooms. High school English curriculums neglect to implement theatre-arts strategies in the classroom and, as a result, place their students at an academic disadvantage while overlooking a variety of learners (Robbins, 1988).

Diverse student bodies benefit the most from theatre-arts integrated strategies, particularly those considered at-risk. Theatre-arts techniques decrease mental health symptoms and increase confidence and positive peer relations. Theatre-arts techniques also increase the cognitive and higher order thinking skills of lower-achieving students from low socioeconomic statuses. The integration of theatre-arts in the classroom provides access to information for students with a variety of learning styles and particularly appeals to those with kinesthetic and visual tendencies. Though often reserved for high-achieving students, theatre-arts integration gives access to the upper levels of Bloom's taxonomy to all students regardless of skill or ability level. Theatre-arts enable students to not only take in information in a variety of ways, but also present their knowledge through many different outlets. As a result, students previously overlooked in traditional classrooms—minorities, low-performers, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with learning disabilities—are able to grow and succeed through the integration of theatre-arts strategies in the classroom.

### **Theatre Integration and Academic Achievement**

Theatre-arts integration has proven to be an effective means of increasing academic achievement among students across a variety of ages, skill levels, and demographics in a range of content areas. Snyder, Klos, and Grey-Hawkins (2014) conducted a study of sixth through eighth graders that compared and contrasted results from students in theatre-arts integrated classrooms to students from a control school. Both groups studied consisted of low-income, diverse student bodies. Theatre-arts integration was used in math courses and the results were increasingly positive. Students exposed to theatre-arts in the classroom performed above their peers on state assessments. There was an overall increase in success and achievement, as well as an increase in attendance. Suspensions and referrals decreased with the increasingly positive



school climate. The reason for such improvements is evident—theatre-arts integration provides the differentiation and support necessary for students to succeed. The integration of the arts meets Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and helps diversify the classroom (Snyder, Klos, & Grey-Hawkins, 2014). Gardner’s theory dictates eight intelligences, or learning styles. Of these, theatre-arts integration applies linguistic intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, spatial intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence. Few other methods of teaching other than theatre-arts integration employ such a variety of learning skills to reach all students. As a result, more students succeed above their predicted scores and attain academic achievement.

Theatre-arts integration is able to help students attain academic achievement through increased cognitive and social skills. Theatre-arts integration increases long-term memory through the use of rehearsal, elaboration, generation, enactment, oral production, effort after meaning, emotional arousal, and pictorial representation (Duma, 2014). The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and CETA (Changing Education Through the Arts) conducted three studies in which the positive effects of theatre-arts integration on long-term memory are evident. Through the studies, it was concluded that students with exposure to theatre-arts integrated strategies in the classroom consistently outperformed their peers on standardized assessments. This was even true of lower performing students and students needing special education services. With differentiation being the focal point of education today, theatre-arts integration is the most efficient and effective way of increasing student engagement and attention while reaching all learners and providing them with a variety of ways to gain and express their knowledge (Duma, 2014).

Learning is most effective when students learn by experience, or learn by doing. Theatre-arts integration allows students to make academic strides through experiential learning that unites the intellectual and the emotional sides of the brain (Dragović & Balić, 2012). Doing so can increase verbal communication skills, teamwork and interpersonal skills, personal development, and academic achievement. Students succeed when exposed to theatre-arts in the classroom because performance is the oldest way of conveying information for humans; therefore, theatre-arts integrated strategies are inherently appealing to every learner and should be commonplace in the classroom (Brodsky & Koralek, 2010).

### **Theatre Integration in Content Areas and Extracurricular Activities**

Theatre-arts integrated strategies have been implemented in a variety of content areas and in extracurricular activities in order to encourage better academic and social performance. In a study conducted by Inoa, Weltsek, and Tabone (2014), sixth and seventh grade students with low socioeconomic backgrounds in an urban school continually outperformed their counterparts when exposed to theatre-arts integrated strategies in math. Though traditionally appealing to logical intelligences, math is able to become more accessible to a variety of students when presented with theatre-arts integrated strategies. As a result, students in math classes that employ theatre techniques regularly make academic gains significantly higher than those of their peers in traditional classroom settings. Extracurricular activities that focus on the arts can also increase student performance in traditional content areas such as math as suggested by a three-year longitudinal study by Metsäpelto and Pulkkinen (2012). Their findings concluded that when exposed to theatre-arts strategies, even outside the classroom, students increased performance in arithmetic skills and increased persistence, concentration, and carefulness—all of which are

necessary to succeed in the math classroom. However, these same skills are necessary for success across content areas.

Theatre-arts strategies have been successfully employed in math and science classes, social studies classes, and foreign language classes. Through a process known as “drama grammar” students are able to learn another language in a meaningful context in which they create roles that move beyond textbook scripts (Even, 2011). Such techniques allow students to increase their confidence levels, feel more comfortable taking risks, and learn to self-monitor their progress. While theatre-arts and related arts techniques that improve student abilities in the classroom have typically been reserved for high-achieving and high-income students who do not need remediation and have time in their schedules for elective arts courses, theatre-arts integration in the classroom helps the students who need it most have access to the benefits of arts integration. Lorimer (2011) conducted a study consisting of five middle-level classrooms with diverse populations. In all content areas student performance and attendance increased when exposed to theatre-arts integrated strategies in the classroom. The quality of work also increased due to increased engagement and motivation. Bringing theatre-arts to the classroom through implementation across content areas makes the positive results associated with theatre-arts techniques available to every learner, regardless of ability level or income.

One area which incorporates theatre-arts integration the most in order to benefit a variety of students is social studies and history courses. Students involved in role-play are able to establish a variety of viewpoints and examine the history of the human condition. The viewing of period-appropriate plays helps contribute to students’ understanding of a particular culture or time in history. Taylor (2008) explains that art should not be taught in isolation, but alongside the cultures that created it. As such, theatre-arts techniques are easily incorporated in the history and

social studies classroom. Theatre allows students to become active participants in worlds beyond their own. It creates ownership of learning while increasing critical thinking and investigation skills, gaining multiple perspectives, and teaching cooperation and abstract thinking (Mattson, 2008). The use of characters and storylines helps students become engaged and provides an additional, intriguing layer to textbook material (Ward-Penny, 2008). Theatre-arts strategies are an effective and engaging tool to incorporate in any classroom to help fuel student success.

### **Theatre Integration's Positive Impact on Diverse Student Bodies**

Theatre-arts integrated strategies provide a plethora of positive academic and social outcomes to a variety of students. However, most students with access to theatre-arts techniques are high-achieving students from high-income families. These students do not need remedial courses and are, therefore, able to take theatre-arts courses as an elective. Furthermore, if unable to gain access through school to theatre-arts techniques, students from high socioeconomic statuses are able to become involved in programs within their community. As a result, the positive academic and social effects of theatre-arts integration are not accessible to the majority of students. As such, the only option is to bring theatre-arts techniques into the classroom and incorporate theatre-arts strategies into every content area and lesson (Landsman, 2011).

Research suggests that theatre-arts integrated strategies could be particularly helpful in increasing the success of at-risk youth both in and out of the classroom. Using a quasi experimental pre- and posttest, Rapp-Paglicci, Stewart, and Rowe (2012) were able to conclude that when given access to theatre-arts strategies, female at-risk students' mental health symptoms decreased and male at-risk students' behavioral problems decreased. The study also revealed the students made academic gains. However, many at-risk students do not have access to such theatre-arts strategies from which to benefit. In fact, areas in which theatre-arts integration would

help the most (Title I schools, rural schools, and urban schools) have the least amount of access to it. Landsman (2011) states that these schools have eliminated the arts and creativity “to make more room for math and reading drills, for rote instruction, for endless worksheets, study plans, and test preparation” (p. 128-129). As a result, many students, particularly minorities, are suffering from the lack of theatre-arts integration as it is reserved for private schools and public schools serving students of higher incomes. The students of lower income schools are suffering a loss of higher order thinking skills as theatre-arts integration has proven to increase imagination, critical thinking, problem solving skills, real-world and cross-curricular connections, stimulation, collaboration, motivation, and excellence (Landsman, 2011). Therefore, educators have the tools to help at-risk youth succeed as Landsman (2011) states the following:

If we are aware of the way art and music, drama and poetry create a bridge to [at-risk] youth, and we do not use this bridge, then we have only ourselves to blame for this opportunity gap... We are failing students, and all the while we know what we can do to help them succeed. (p.131)

Boldt and Brooks researched the theory of theatre-arts integration’s positive effect on success in 2006 at a charter school in Texas focusing on the academic achievement of at-risk eighth graders. Traditional school did not appear to work for these students, so teachers changed their pedagogy to reflect theatre-arts techniques. The incorporation of such strategies allowed students to write and perform poetry, plays, songs, and raps. As a result, the students made increases in academic achievement, responsibility, respect, and self-management. Boldt and Brooks also observed a decrease in behavior problems and an increased sense of community among students. The results of this study are further supported by the fact that on a state assessment in U.S. History, 85% of the at-risk youth exposed to theatre-arts integration in the

classroom passed the exam compared to the 70% of at-risk youth that passed statewide. Therefore, the U.S. Department of Education (2002) declared theatre-arts integration should be viewed as “essential parts of the human experience” that should be made accessible to all students and “not a frill” reserved for the elite student body (as cited in Landsman, 2011, p.127).

### **Theatre Integration and Teacher Improvement and Collaboration**

The concept of theatre-arts integrated classrooms is generally well received by administrators and educators. Many teachers find that theatre-arts integration is equally beneficial to them as their students. Williamson and Zimmerman studied the effects of theatre-arts integration on both students and teachers in a 2009 study at Old Adobe Elementary School in California. The question guiding both the research and the facilitation of theatre-arts integration revolved around ways in which to incorporate performance techniques in every classroom that is beneficial to students. This shift in pedagogy moved the average elementary school classroom from teacher-centered to learner-centered, which helped improve the academic outcomes of the students.

The use of theatre-arts integrated techniques in Williamson and Zimmerman’s 2009 study led teachers to engage students in active response items, which increased engagement, challenged the learner, and increased excitement for learning. In order for the new theatre-arts based curriculum to be effective, however, educators relied on drama teachers to lead professional development seminars and help plan content area lesson plans. As a result, teachers were able to effectively implement theatre-arts integration strategies in their classrooms and witnessed an increase in students’ writing, presentation, and discussion abilities. The positive effects of theatre-arts implementation, however, would not have been as noticeable without sufficient support from fellow teachers and the administration.

In order for theatre-arts techniques to be successfully implemented in every content area classroom, teachers need to take part in professional development that emphasizes arts integration. In addition, theatre teachers should be employed to assist in the transition and content-area teachers should work together to exchange ideas and facilitate creativity.

Williamson and Zimmerman (2009) concluded that collaboration among faculty and staff in regards to implementing theatre-arts techniques in the classroom led to stronger, more effective lessons. Working together, teachers were able to collaborate, plan, implement, reflect on, and improve upon lessons. Integrating theatre-arts across content areas ensures teacher collaboration and, as a result, increased student success. The results of increased teacher collaboration is positive and builds on John Dewey's principal philosophy that educational settings should be a place of interaction.

### **Theatre Integration in the Language Arts Classroom**

Theatre-arts integrated strategies can be an effective means of language arts instruction. Theatre-arts integration in language arts classrooms increases intrinsic motivation through the increased use of choice, as well as develops discussion skills, writing skills, and positive attitudes towards the subject. Through the implementation of theatre-arts techniques, students are more likely to remain on task, engage in more on-task peer conversations, and enrich their public speaking abilities. Performance enables students to actively perform the writing process while creating stories, thus improving the stories "tellability", as suggested by Clark (2012). Clark explains the positive effect of performance in the language arts classroom by stating, "role play enabled students to physically and socially construct their stories and notice which areas needed more details" (p. 66). Students' work developed, as they were able to see the need for character development, rich settings, and stronger emotions. Clark noticed that after performing



improvisational scenes, seventh and eighth grade language arts students were able to shift easily from performing to writing.

Theatre-arts also allow students to create stories and experience the action in literature. Cordi (2011) explains theatre-arts techniques can move beyond role-play and performance and enable students to take part in readers' theater and the creation of scripts. Theatre-arts integration when applied correctly takes the focus off performance and on to learning. In the language arts classroom, theatre is a successful way to experience characters from their point of view. It takes the student beyond the text and answers the question "What happens next?" (Cordi, 2011).

Theatre-arts integration allows students to interact with a text and explore the world found within the pages. Emert (2010) conducted research in a middle school and noted the interaction that occurs between students and a text when engaged in theatre-arts integrated language arts classrooms. In his research, Emert observed students experience the drama of poetry through readers' theatre as they created their own scripts, which created ownership of learning. As such, theatre-arts integration allows students to move beyond the most basic levels of Bloom's taxonomy and into levels of application, analysis, evaluation, and creation.

Morrison and Chilcoat (1998) developed an effective way of implementing theatre-arts strategies in the language arts classroom through a technique called "living newspaper theatre", which builds upon a performance technique that originated in the 1930s. Morrison and Chilcoat noted an increase in the comprehension and problem-solving skills of the students involved in the theatre-arts integrated classroom. In addition, students developed stronger listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills as they created and performed their own scripts after analyzing historical texts. Morrison and Chilcoat's work demonstrates the importance of theatre-

arts integration as it engages both the logical and creative sides of the brain and engages all learners regardless of ability level or skill.

Although used less frequently in language arts classes than in other content areas, theatre-arts integration helps students gain an appreciation of literature when implemented correctly. Robbins (1988) discovered that theatre-arts strategies in the language arts classroom help students gain new perspectives while connecting to the material and making learning a personal experience. He also concluded that theatre-arts techniques were particularly beneficial to visual and kinesthetic learners. Theatre-arts integration is a teacher-facilitated, student-centered approach to education that increases writing skills and reading comprehension. Robbins notes that it is a technique that focuses on the learner, not the audience, and is therefore fundamentally different from a theatre class. Instead, theatre-arts strategies are tools to use in order to increase the academic success of students in language arts classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

Integrating theatre-arts strategies increase academic achievement while engaging both the logical and creative areas of the brain. As a result, theatre-arts techniques positively affect students' attitudes towards school and learning, which increases motivation and engagement. Increased ownership of learning, cognitive development, and positive peer relations are additional results of theatre-arts integration. In addition, theatre-arts in the classroom decrease behavioral problems, referrals, and suspensions. Students involved in theatre-arts integrated classrooms also display increased effort and willingness to participate, which leads to higher test scores when compared to counterparts enrolled in classrooms employing traditional teaching techniques. Teachers, particularly in elementary and middle school social studies settings, are increasing their use of theatre-arts in the classroom with positive results. Teachers' increased

cross-curricular collaboration attributed to theatre-arts integration helps students make scholastic gains. Diverse student bodies consisting of minorities, at-risk youth, and low-performing students benefit the most from theatre-arts integration. The differentiation theatre-arts strategies employ allow a variety of students to gain and express knowledge regardless of learning style. Despite the positive effects of theatre-arts integration, it is rarely implemented in high school English classrooms (Robbins, 1988).

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology and Procedures**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies and traditional strategies in high school English classrooms. The students' test scores, daily assignments, and unit grades were evaluated after implementing theatre-arts strategies for four weeks of the first nine-week semester. These results were then compared to the effects of traditional teaching methods, which were implemented for four weeks of the second nine-week semester. This chapter explains the population, sample, data collection instruments, and procedures used for this research, as well as the research questions that guided the process.

#### **Population**

This research study took place in a rural, Title I high school in Northeast Tennessee. The school had 1,311 students enrolled, 51.8% of which were considered economically disadvantaged. Of the total student body, 13.7% of students were considered to have disabilities. The demographics of the student body were 93.7% white, 2.7% Hispanic or Latino, and 2.4% African American. The remaining students were Asian or Native America/ Alaskan.

#### **Sample**

The sample of this study consisted of one eleventh grade English class of twenty-one students. Eight students were female and thirteen were male. All of the students were white in this sample. The ability levels of the students varied. Four of the students had IEPs and the class as a whole was below grade level in reading, writing, and comprehension. The students were between sixteen and eighteen years old. The sample was not randomly selected, as the researcher was assigned a class that was already composed.

### Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected from students' grades, which consisted of formative assessments, daily assignments, and summative assessments in the form of teacher-made tests. In addition, the researcher observed student behavior, participation, motivation, and engagement. The eighteen-week term was divided into two nine-week halves, or semesters. Theatre-arts strategies were implemented for four weeks of the first nine-week period, which covered the impact and literature of Puritan society in America. In particular, the play *The Crucible* was studied as students developed knowledge of characterization, dramatic structure, and the historical context in which the play was set and written. Traditional methods were employed for four weeks of the second nine-week period, which covered the American Revolution and the works of Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Paine. Students were assessed on their ability to analyze eighteenth century texts for rhetorical devices and historical/literary significance. The grades from both four-week units were compared and contrasted to determine whether there was a difference in students' academic achievement when exposed to theatre-arts integration in the classroom and traditional teaching techniques.

### Procedures

Permission was granted from the principal of the school at the beginning of the first nine-week period to conduct a study researching the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies in the classroom. Permission was also granted from the Institutional Review Board. After receiving the appropriate permission, the study was conducted during a second period English III class using a theatre-integrated approach for four weeks of the first nine-week semester, and using traditional teaching methods for four weeks of the second nine-week semester. The class was on a block

schedule, which meant each class was eighty-five minutes long and the course concluded by the end of the first half of the school year.

The sample consisted of a class of twenty-one eleventh grade students, ages sixteen through eighteen. Eight students were female, thirteen were male, and four had IEPs. Two units were selected for this study. The English department head deemed the units equal in difficulty and comprehension. The first unit was implemented over the course of four weeks during the first nine-week period, previous to fall break. Students studied the play *The Crucible* and compared and contrasted the time period in which the play was set to the historical context in which the play was written. In addition, students gained knowledge on characterization, archetypes, and dramatic structure and terminology.

Several different methods of theatre-arts strategies were implemented throughout the four-week unit exploring Puritan literature and society. To examine the play *The Crucible*, students created G.O.T.E charts. This technique is used for character development in theatre and explores characters' goals, obstacles, tactics, and expectations. However, students primarily explored the play through the use of role-play. Students took on the role of a reporter in Salem covering the Witch Trials during the 1600s and wrote an expository article for neighboring towns. Students also kept diaries in which they frequently wrote from the point-of-view of various characters in *The Crucible*. This method is employed by actors to help them develop backstories for their characters and understand a certain character's perspective. In addition, costume pieces and props were used for students to act out climatic scenes of the play. At the end of each act the students completed a teacher-made summative assessment.

After fall break, students began a four-week unit on the literature of the American Revolution. Traditional methods were employed to teach excerpts from *The Autobiography* by

Benjamin Franklin, “Speech to the Second Virginia Convention” by Patrick Henry, and “The Crisis No.1” by Thomas Paine. Traditional methods of instruction involved teacher-centered pedagogy. Lectures and worksheets were the primary means by which the material was presented. In addition, quizzes were used for formative assessment in place of creative writing and role-play. Students completed a teacher-made summative assessment for each piece studied.

After completing the second four-week unit, the grades acquired by the students throughout the course of the study were compared and contrasted. The researcher examined the data to determine if there was a difference in academic achievement when students were exposed to the implementation of theatre-arts strategies in the classroom and traditional teaching methods.

#### Research Questions and Related Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Is there a difference in academic achievement when students are taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional methods in a high school English classroom?

Research Hypothesis 1: There is a difference in academic achievement when students are taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional methods in a high school English classroom.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is not a difference in academic achievement when students are taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional methods in a high school English classroom.

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies in a high school English classroom?



Research Hypothesis 2: There is a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies in a high school English classroom.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is not a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies in a high school English classroom.

Research Question 3: Is there a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using traditional methods in a high school English classroom?

Research Hypothesis 3: There is a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using traditional methods in a high school English classroom.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is not a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using traditional methods in a high school English classroom.

## Chapter IV

### Data Analysis

The implementation of theatre-arts strategies correlates with positive academic gains in elementary and middle school settings. However, high schools often neglect to incorporate theatre-arts strategies in their curriculums, particularly in English courses. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies in a high school English classroom, and compare the results to traditional educational strategies. This was obtained by teaching a class of English students with theatre-arts related techniques for four weeks of a nine-week semester. The same class was then taught using traditional methods for four weeks of the following nine-week semester. The students' grades from each unit, which consisted of test scores, daily assignments, and unit grades, were evaluated to determine the results of this study.

### Collection of Data

Data were collected using the students' end-of-unit grades, which consisted of formative assessments, daily assignments, and summative assessments. The summative assessments were teacher-made tests. The first four-week unit, which implemented theatre-arts strategies, covered material pertaining to the literature of Puritan society in America and the play *The Crucible*. The second four-week unit, which implemented traditional teaching methods, covered material from the American Revolution. The head of the English department at the high school deemed both units equal in difficulty and comprehension. The cumulative grades of students were compared to yield the results of this study and to assess whether or not there was a difference in students' academic achievement when exposed to theatre-arts integrated techniques and traditional teaching methods in the classroom.

The classroom studied had a variety of students ranging in ability level. The majority of the class was male, with the minority being female. The study did analyze the results of the students' academic success both as a whole and in regards to gender. The demographics for the class are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Demographics of Students

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	13	61.90%
Female	8	38.09%
Total	21	100.00%

### **Research Questions and Related Hypotheses**

Three research questions and related hypotheses were analyzed during the course of this study. The results were examined using 0.05 level of significance.

#### **Research Question 1**

Is there a difference in academic achievement when students are taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional methods in a high school English classroom?

To answer this question a dependent t-test was used to compare the cumulative grades of the students when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional teaching methods. The mean score for students when taught using theatre-arts strategies was 81.24. The mean score for students when taught using traditional teaching methods was 78.19. The mean difference was 3.05. The standard deviations for each group were 9.75 and 12.37 respectively.

#### **Research Hypothesis 1**

There is a difference in academic achievement when students are taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional methods in a high school English classroom.

### Null Hypothesis 1

There is not a difference in academic achievement when students are taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional methods in a high school English classroom.

To determine whether the mean difference was statistically significant, a dependent t-test was conducted. The results indicated no significant difference found between the scores of students when implementing theatre-arts related strategies and traditional teaching methods ( $t(20) = 1.86, p > .05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The results are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Dependent T-Test for Theatre-Arts Scores and Traditional Scores

<b>Group</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>Sig. (2-Tailed)</b>
Theatre	81.24	9.75	1.86	20	.08
Traditional	78.19	12.37	1.86	20	.08

### Research Question 2

Is there a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies in a high school English classroom?

To answer this question an independent t-test was used to compare the cumulative grades of male and female students when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies. The mean score for male students when taught using theatre-arts strategies was 77.08. The mean score for female students when taught using theatre-arts strategies was 88.00. The mean difference was 10.92.

The standard deviations for males and females were 9.26 and 6.32 respectively.

### Research Hypothesis 2

There is a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies.

### Null Hypothesis 2

There is no difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies.

To determine whether the mean scores were significantly different, an independent t-test was conducted. The significance of the F value for the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was 1.20 for the theatre-arts related grades. This is greater than .05 and, therefore, the variances were assumed equal. A significant difference was found between the means of males and females ( $t(19) = -2.93, p < .05$ ) when using theatre-arts related strategies to teach English. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect size was 1.32 for the theatre-arts related strategies. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

Independent T-Test for Theatre-Art Scores

<b>Gender</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T-Value</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>ES</b>
Male	77.08	9.26	-2.93	19	.009	1.32
Female	88.00	6.32	-2.93			

### Research Question 3

Is there a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using traditional methods in a high school English classroom?

To answer this question an independent t-test was used to compare the cumulative grades of male and female students when taught using traditional teaching methods. The mean score for male students taught using traditional teaching methods was 73.54. The mean score for female students taught using traditional teaching strategies was 85.75. The mean difference was 12.21. The standard deviations for males and females were 11.46 and 10.31 respectively.

### Research Hypothesis 3

There is a difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using traditional methods in a high school English Classroom.

### Null Hypothesis 3

There is no difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using traditional methods in a high school English Classroom.

To determine whether the mean difference was significant, an independent t-test was conducted. The variances were assumed equal. A significant difference was found between the means of males and females ( $t(16.23) = -2.53, p < .05$ ) when using traditional teaching methods. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect size was 1.11 for the traditional teaching methods. The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

Independent T-Test for Traditional Methods Scores

<b>Gender</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T-Value</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>ES</b>
Male	73.54	11.46	-2.46	19	.02	1.11
Female	85.75	10.31	-2.46	19		

## Chapter V

### Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations for Future Studies, and Implications

#### Introduction

This chapter contains the findings, conclusions, recommendations for future studies, and the implications of the study to determine the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies and traditional strategies on student performance in an English III class at a selected high school.

#### Summary of Findings

The first research question examined the difference in academic achievement when students are taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional methods in a high school English classroom. To determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the students, a dependent t-test was conducted. The results found no significant difference between the grades of students when implementing theatre-arts related strategies and traditional teaching methods ( $t(20) = 1.86, p > .05$ ).

The results of this study were not consistent with the results of previous studies conducted by other researchers. The results of a study conducted by Snyder, Klos, and Grey-Hawkins (2014) suggest that students exposed to theatre-arts integration increase in academic achievement. Inoa, Weltsek, and Tabone (2014) found similar results when sixth and seventh grade students exposed to theatre-arts integrated techniques outperformed their peers who had been taught using traditional methods. In addition, Boldt and Brooks (2006) researched the positive effects of theatre-arts integration on diverse student bodies and found a significant difference in academic achievement. Lorimer (2011) conducted a study that found a significant increase in every student's score when exposed to theatre-arts strategies in the classroom.



In response to the first research question, the researcher believes that, while the findings were not statistically significant, the average increase of 3.05 points to each student's score when exposed to theatre-arts related techniques is advantageous and beneficial to the student's cumulative grade. In addition, the researcher noted an increase in student engagement and participation, as well as fewer classroom disruptions and missing assignments when students were engaged in theatre-arts related techniques. Students taught using traditional methods were often uninvolved, inconsistent in their work, and either turned in their work incomplete or not at all. Students were also less interested in their lessons and more frequently absent.

The second research question examined the difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using theatre-arts integrated strategies in a high school English classroom. To determine whether the mean scores were significantly different, an independent t-test was conducted. The mean score for males was 77.08 and the mean score for females was 88.00. The results indicated a significant difference between the means of males and females when using theatre-arts related strategies to teach English, with females consistently outperforming males.

The third research question examined the difference in academic achievement between genders when taught using traditional methods in a high school English classroom. To determine whether the mean difference was significant, an independent t-test was conducted. The mean score for males was 73.54 and the mean score for females was 85.75. The results indicated a significant difference between males and females when using traditional teaching methods in an English classroom ( $t(16.23) = -2.53, p < .05$ ). Females scored significantly higher than males. This may suggest that females are superior to males in English Language Arts.

In response to the third research question, the researcher suggests that the female brain may be more aptly suited to processing language arts. The female brain processes language

evenly between both hemispheres. In contrast, language is processed primarily in the left hemisphere in males. In addition, females have a larger corpus callosum than males (Feldman, 2012). This may suggest why females outperform their male peers regardless of the teaching method implemented.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of integrating theatre-arts strategies and traditional strategies in a high school English classroom. A dependent t-test resulted in no significant difference between student scores when taught using theatre-arts integrated techniques and traditional teaching methods. An independent t-test resulted in a significant difference between genders when taught using theatre-arts techniques. Another independent t-test resulted in a significant difference between genders when taught using traditional methods.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

1. In future studies, a different form of measurement needs to be applied other than teacher-made tests. This would increase both validity and reliability.
2. In the future, a larger sample size from across secondary grade levels would provide a better representation of the effect of theatre-arts integrated strategies and traditional teaching techniques in a high school setting.
3. Future studies would benefit from a true experimental design with a control group.

### **Implications**

1. Although no significant difference was found, research from the literature review suggests benefits to integrating theatre-arts techniques in the classroom and, therefore, teachers should continue to use theatre-arts strategies in their lessons.

2. Parents should encourage their children, particularly girls, to participate in theatre programs because it may improve academic achievement.
3. School districts should provide more theatre-arts opportunities, particularly for female students.
4. Female students should engage in theatre-arts related activities as the exposure positively correlates with an increase in academic scores.

## References

- Boldt, R.W., & Brooks, C. (2006). Creative arts: Strengthening academics and building community with students at-risk. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 14*(4), 223-227.
- Brodsky, M., & Koralek, D. (2010). The performing arts: Music, dance, and theatre in the early years. *Young Children, 65*(2), 10-13.
- Clark, S. (2012). Guiding the noticing: Using a dramatic performance experience to promote tellability in narrative writing. *The Clearing House, 85*(2), 65-69. doi: 10.1080/00098655.2011.616918
- Cordi, K. (2011). Using drama in the language arts classroom. *Ohio Journal of English Language Arts, 51*(2), 45-46.
- Dragović, S., & Balić, D. (2012). Drama pedagogy— a way of learning through experience and doing. *Croatian Journal of Education, 15*(1), 191-209.
- Duma, A. (2014). A view into a decade of arts integration. *Journal for Learning through the Arts, 10*(1). Retrieved from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3pt13398>
- Emert, T. (2010). Talking to, talking about, talking with: Language arts students in conversation with poetic texts. *The English Journal, 99*(5), 67-73.
- Even, S. (2011). Drama grammar: Towards a performative postmethod pedagogy. *The Language Learning Center, 39*(3), 299-312.
- Feldman, R.S. (2012). *Child development* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Inoa, R., Weltsek, G., & Tabone, C. (2014). A study on the relationship between theatre arts and student literacy and mathematics achievement. *The Journal for Learning through the Arts, 10*(1). Retrieved from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3sk1t3rx>
- Landsman, J. (2011). Wherefore art? *Journal of Curriculum & Pedagogy, 8*(2), 127-131.

- Lorimer, M.R. (2011). Arts-infused learning in middle level classrooms. *Journal for Learning through the Arts*, 7(1). Retrieved from: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0hp6g86s>
- Mattson, R. (2008). Theatre of the assessed: Drama-based pedagogies in the history classroom. *Radical History Review*, (102), 99-110. doi: 10.1215/01636545-2008-016
- Metsäpelto, R., & Pulkkinen, L. (2012). Socioemotional behavior and school achievement in relation to extracurricular activity participation in middle childhood. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 56(2), 167-182.
- Morrison, T.G., & Chilcoat, G.W. (1998). The “living newspaper theatre” in the language arts classroom. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 42(2), 104-115.
- Rapp-Paglicci, L., Stewart, C., & Rowe, W. (2012). Improving outcomes for at-risk youth: Findings from the Prodigy Cultural Arts Program. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 9(5), 512-523. doi: 10.1080/15433714.2011.581532
- Robbins, B. (1988). Creative dramatics in the language arts classroom. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills*. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED297402>
- Snyder, L., Klos, P., & Grey-Hawkins, L. (2014). Transforming teaching through arts integration. *Journal for Learning through the Arts*, 10(1). Retrieved from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/67d5s216>
- Taylor, J.A. (2008). From the stage to the classroom: The performing arts and social studies. *The History Teacher*, 40(2), 235-248.
- Ward-Penny, R. (2008). The performing arts in the mathematics classroom. *Mathematics in School*, 37(4), 37.

Williamson, J., & Zimmerman, D. (2009). Collaboration takes center stage. *Journal of Staff Development, 30*(3), 38-42.