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How Arts Integration Has Helped K–2 Teachers to Boost the Language Development of English-Language Learners

ABSTRACT: This study looks at the impact of a cost-effective professional development model in which teaching artists helped early elementary teachers master arts-based strategies for boosting the oral language development of English-language learners (ELLs). Teaching artists visited K–2 classrooms for 50 minutes weekly for 28 weeks. Student scores on the listening and speaking sections of the California English Language Development Test were used to determine the impact on language development. The experimental group consisted of 267 students; the comparison group consisted of 2,981 students. The analysis of the listening and speaking scores, fall 2010 to fall 2011, showed significantly more improvement for students in the experimental group. This research has implications for school leaders who, in times of tight budgets, seek professional development opportunities that can assist teachers in addressing the language development needs of English-language learners.

Across the United States, students who are still developing proficiency in English constitute a large and growing subpopulation. The number of English-language learners (ELLs) enrolled in public schools nationwide increased by 51%—from 3.5 million to 5.3 million—between the 1997–1998 and the 2008–2009 school years (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2010). ELLs now represent 1 in 9 students in the United States. In California, they represent 1 in 4 students (Educational Testing Service, 2009). Yet, many teachers feel—and are in fact—underprepared to teach these students (Téllez & Waxman, 2005). More than two-thirds of

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American teachers report that they have not had even 1 day of training in supporting the learning of limited-English-proficient students during the previous 3 years (Hirsh, 2009).

Along with a sustained and coherent academic focus, professional development is one of the top school- and district-level factors leading to ELLs' academic success (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). Research has repeatedly shown that teacher quality is the most important school-based determinant of student success (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007; Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). The research summarized in this article looked at an arts-based professional development program in San Diego, California, that significantly boosted the listening and speaking skills of ELLs, measured by the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), in five randomly selected experimental schools. Interviews and focus groups were used to capture the perspectives of participating teachers.

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF EQUITY

In state tests for the 2009–2010 school year, San Diego ranked first among California's seven large urban districts in language arts and science, third in mathematics. Yet, San Diego is a border city with one of the largest ELL enrollments in the United States; nearly 30% of public school students are designated ELLs (Education Data Partnership, 2010). In recent years, a stubborn achievement gap has opened up between San Diego's affluent and less-affluent neighborhoods. This has given the city a bifurcated student achievement profile. The Teaching Artist Project (TAP)—a partnership between the San Diego Unified School District and the University of California, Irvine—was set up to address this gap. TAP uses arts-based strategies to enhance the English-language development of young ELLs.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF ELLs

In the decade since passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001, there has been a growing discrepancy between students who benefit from this reform and students who are in fact being left behind. ELLs nationwide are not reaping the promised benefits of No Child Left Behind; instead, they are performing 20 to 50 percentage points below native English speakers (Menken, 2010). For example, a Florida Reading First study (Al Otaiba et al., 2008) showed success with intensive reading instruction. Yet,

only 5 of the 286 students were nonnative English speakers. Two-thirds of Spanish-speaking ELLs do not have basic reading skills by fourth grade (Sanchez, Bledsoe, Sumabat, & Ye, 2004). Such reading difficulties are the most common reason why students are designated as requiring special education (Al Otaiba et al., 2009).

Young ELLs have unique learning needs. Not only are these children learning a second language, but they are simultaneously developing proficiency in their home languages (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). ELLs need frequent opportunities to engage in structured academic talk with teachers and peers who know English well and can provide accurate feedback (Francis et al., 2006; Gersten et al., 2007; Wong Fillmore & Snow 2000). Most experts agree that development of oral English proficiency is an essential first step toward reading development (Brouillette, 2012; Goldenberg, 2008; Greenfader & Brouillette, in press).

Spira, Bracken, and Fischel (2005) found that it was possible to predict fourth-grade reading levels from kindergarten oral proficiency and vocabulary. Ideally, early intervention would enable struggling students to catch up. But, unfortunately, the national focus on reading comprehension has come at the cost of time spent on oral language (O'Day, 2009). This makes it difficult for ELLs to gain ground. Ironically, it is often the underperformance of ELLs that prevents urban schools from making adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind. One reason why this can be a difficult problem to address is that oral language has not been emphasized in teacher certification programs. Many teachers have little training in oral language development.

Professional development is needed if these teachers are to master instructional strategies designed to teach ELLs more effectively. Early intervention is pivotal, since 74% of children whose reading skills are less than sufficient by third grade will have a drastically reduced likelihood of graduating from high school (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998). Fortunately, dramatic play comes naturally to young children, providing rich opportunities for expressing themselves and interacting with others. Theatre activities have been shown to boost literacy skills (Mages, 2006; Podlozny, 2000). In visual art and dance, nonverbal modeling is utilized in combination with verbal instruction to encourage oral language use and give useful feedback.

The K-2 TAP uses an arts-based curriculum with a strong focus on dance and dramatic play to provide children with adaptive tools for expressing themselves and interacting with others. Dramatic play provides an especially a rich opportunity for language acquisition and development. But what about the needs of teachers?

HELPING TEACHERS TO ATTAIN THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Only 11 of the 50 states are meeting adequate yearly progress targets for ELLs under No Child Left Behind (Zehr, 2010). In a survey of 3 million public school teachers, less than 13% reported receiving 8 or more hours of preparation to teach ELLs, even though 41% reported having ELLs in their classrooms (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2002). In California, the likelihood of ELLs meeting the linguistic and academic criteria for reclassification to fluent English-proficient status after 10 years in public schools is less than 40% (Parrish, Perez, Merickel, & Linquanti, 2006).

Between 2000 and 2005, half of California teachers whose classes included from 26% to 50% ELLs received either no or only one in-service that focused on their instruction. Among teachers with 50% or more in their classrooms, 43% received no more than one in-service that focused on ELLs. Only half of the new teachers in the sample—those required by law to participate in some ELL-focused in-service as part of their induction and progress toward a credential—had done so (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005).

Yet, there are professional development strategies that work. Comparison group studies found that teachers who receive coaching are more likely to enact the desired teaching practices and apply them appropriately than are teachers receiving more traditional professional development (Kohler, Crilley, Shearer, & Good, 1997; Neufield & Roper, 2003). Classroom-based coaching has also been shown effective in helping teachers to expand skills, sustain change over time, and improve student achievement (Speck & Knipe, 2001). Other research (Veenman, Denessen, Gerrits, & Kenter, 2001) suggests that, for coaching to be most useful, it may need to be embedded in broader efforts to build professional knowledge. As Guskey (2000) noted, quality professional development is “a process that is (a) intentional, (b) ongoing, and (c) systemic” (p. 16). Teachers find it difficult to apply new knowledge from professional development programs unless it is both ongoing and job embedded (Sparks, 1994).

LEARNING FROM OTHER NATIONS' SUCCESSES

Although the achievement level of students in the United States has changed relatively little in recent years, the achievement levels of students in other nations have garnered international attention. China's stellar

debut of international standardized testing results—in which 5,100 students from Shanghai outscored 15-year-olds in dozens of other countries on a respected exam (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010)—helped reignite concern about student achievement in the United States. The 2009 Program for International Student Assessment tested student knowledge in reading, math, and science. The assessment is given every 3 years by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, which includes the world's major industrial powers.

As in the past, the performance of students in the United States was mediocre. Since students taking the Program for International Student Assessment work on different test booklets, raw scores must be scaled to allow meaningful comparisons. The scaling procedure is tuned such that the a posteriori distribution of student competences, with equal weight given to all Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development countries, has a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100. On the math test last year, students in Shanghai scored 600, Singapore 562, and Germany 513. Students in the United States scored 487. In reading, Shanghai students scored 556, while the United States scored 500 (17th place). In science, Shanghai students scored 575, while the United States scored 502 (23rd place).

While difficulty exists in comparing nations with compulsory education (United States) to nations with noncompulsory education (China), one must still consider the global setting in which American students will have to perform. That American students should be competitive with those from nations with very different educational systems is a high expectation, but lower expectations would not provide a platform that enabled our students to compete. As secretary of education Arne Duncan observed in responding to the Program for International Student Assessment results, “we have to see this as a wake-up call” (Dillon, 2010, p. A1). But what might be done that has not already been tried?

According to Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009), the reason for the mediocre performance of U.S. students may lie in the culture of American schools. In comparison to the United States, other members of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development provide teachers with significantly more professional learning. Although passage of Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has resulted in the allocation of more than \$3 billion to professional development, the public schools of the United States have failed to leverage this support to provide every educator with highly effective professional learning (Hirsh, 2009). Well-designed teacher professional development is still relatively rare; few teachers have access to

regular opportunities to engage in intensive professional learning (Blank, de las Alas, & Smith, 2007).

An analysis of well-designed experimental studies found that a set of programs offering substantial contact hours of professional development (ranging from 30 to 100 hours in total), spread over 6 to 12 months, showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement gains (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). But few American teachers receive such support. On the 2003–2004 National Schools and Staffing Survey, a majority of teachers (57%) said that they had received no more than 16 hours (2 days or less) of professional development during the previous 12 months on the content of subjects that they taught.

This contrasts sharply with teachers' experience in most European and Asian nations, where instruction takes up less than half of a teacher's working time (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2007); about 15 to 20 hours per week are generally spent on tasks related to teaching—such as preparing lessons, marking papers, meeting with students and parents, and working with colleagues. In the United States, teachers are generally given only 3 to 5 hours per week for lesson planning, which is usually scheduled independently instead of jointly with colleagues (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Also, U.S. teachers average far more net teaching time in direct contact with students (1,080 hours per year) than does any other Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development nation—the average of which is only 803 hours per year for primary schools and 664 hours per year for secondary schools (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2007). Therefore, teachers have more time for planning and developing curriculum.

What might this look like? In *The Learning Gap* (1992) psychologists Harold Stevenson and James Stigler described the effectiveness of Japanese and Chinese teachers, who spent only 3 to 4 hours per day working with students (in comparison to the 5 to 7 hours per day that American teachers spend in the classroom) but also worked with larger classes (up to 50 students at a time). An argument can be made that the average American teacher works “harder” (in terms of the amount of time spent teaching) but that the Asian teacher works “smarter” (meeting and working with others on a daily basis to prepare lessons for the next day). In Japan, teachers meet regularly to discuss teaching techniques and improve classroom presentations.

American teachers, isolated in their own classrooms, find it much more difficult to discuss their work with colleagues. The tradition of long hours

spent teaching smaller classes means that teachers in North America are isolated from other adults, with little opportunity for meaningful interactions with colleagues; “it exhausts their energy. . . . At the end of the week they are tired; at the end of the year they are exhausted” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 33). In the face of demanding moment-to-moment and day-to-day obligations, teachers are left with little time or energy for study or reflection. Moreover, a pervasive ethic of individualism prevents teachers from sharing innovations. As Roland Barth (1990) has observed,

professional isolation stifles professional growth. Unless adults talk with one another, observe one another, and help one another, very little will change. There can be no community of learners when there is no community and when there are no learners. (p. 18)

Given the budgetary restraints currently faced by schools in the United States, cutting the hours that teachers spend in the classroom is not a realistic option. However, if a cost-effective coaching model could be designed, sufficient hours of professional development might be offered to raise the total to the level needed to boost achievement (Yoon et al., 2007) while providing learning that was both ongoing and job embedded (Sparks, 1994). Since the K–2 TAP in San Diego focuses on dramatic play, it was a plausible choice to employ teaching artists as coaches. The teaching artists were skilled in dramatic play.

Since California was, at the time, going through a budget crisis that had hit public schools harder than any other in the state’s history, affordability was also a key consideration. Teaching artists could be trained in a reasonable amount of time at a cost that the project could afford. District resource teachers agreed to work with university partners to create a set of 27 weekly lessons at each grade level, addressing both the visual and performing arts standards and the oral language portion of the English-language arts standards. In place of a summer institute, teaching artists would make weekly trips to each teacher’s classroom to model each of the 27 lessons.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Utilizing the strategies described here, the project team set about designing an intervention that would (1) provide at least 30 contact hours of professional development spread over a school year; (2) focus on boosting the oral language and vocabulary development of ELLs; (3) include demonstrations of exemplary strategies and classroom-based coaching; (4) be ongoing, systemic, and job embedded; and (5) be affordable yet

serve a large number of teachers. The design team created professional development activities that, following a few introductory workshops, took place primarily in each teacher's classroom. For the first 15 schools, the program consisted of 27 weekly lessons, lasting 50 minutes each, taught in each teacher's classroom by a teaching artist. The lessons were divided into three 9-week units of visual art, theater, and dance (see sample lesson in the appendix).

Before beginning each unit, teachers met with the teaching artists to discuss the lesson plans. At the start of each 9-week unit, teachers took an "assistant" role, with the teaching artists doing most of the teaching. Gradually, over the 9 weeks, the classroom teacher assumed more teaching responsibility, with the collaboration evolving into more of a team-teaching approach. However, variability existed regarding the level of engagement for individual teachers; that is, some teachers were more apt to jump in and teach part of the lesson, while others preferred to focus more on observation. After each trimester, a debriefing meeting was held after school to allow teachers, teaching artists, and TAP staff to discuss the unit, make suggestions, and build on what they had learned during the 9 weeks.

In its initial form, the program provided professional development for 178 teachers in 15 large urban elementary schools. Each year, 5 schools were invited into the program. The goal of the teacher professional development program was to provide K-2 teachers in high-poverty schools with the content area knowledge and pedagogical skills necessary to

- utilize arts-based teaching techniques that engage ELLs to build socio-emotional and academic competencies,
- provide ELLs with rich opportunities to build vocabulary and engage in meaningful interpersonal interactions using oral English,
- engage students in standards-based instruction in the performing arts for at least 1 hour per week during the school year, and
- boost the English-language development of students as measured by their scores on the CELDT.

Introductory meetings (colloquially called the "Road Show") were held at each school the spring before the school year when teachers would begin the program; teachers were introduced to the K-2 TAP and given a chance to ask questions. All K-2 teachers at a school had to agree to participate. Teacher participants became more familiar with the arts-based teaching strategies during a daylong professional development workshop before school started in the fall. Experts introduced teachers to the *California Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards* (California Department of Education, 2001) and to the lessons that they would coteach

weekly with teaching artists during the coming school year. Teachers in the current revised version of TAP have the following group experiences during the first year:

- 2-hour introductory session the spring before implementation begins,
- 7-hour workshop on new lessons at beginning of fall and spring semesters (14 hours), and
- 2-hour debriefing and feedback sessions at end of fall and spring semesters (4 hours total).

In the current version of TAP, each teacher receives 53.6 contact hours of professional development during the first year. Teaching artists spend 28 hours coteaching with each teacher in the classroom and an average of 5.6 hours (paid at the same rate as hours in the classroom) consulting with each teacher outside of class time. So, each teacher has about 33.6 one-on-one contact hours with a teaching artist.

A TEACHING ARTIST IN THE CLASSROOM

In a kindergarten class, a teaching artist is beginning the warm-up for a creative drama lesson. “Actors—stand up. Let’s make a circle.” Standing in a circle, the children watch him model the movements. When he asks them to “hold out your right hand,” they immediately respond. The classroom teacher moves around the circle, helping children identify their right hands. “Shake your arm like a wet spaghetti noodle.” Children giggle as they comply. “Now hold out your left hand.” (The teacher again assists children who seem perplexed.) “Now, actors, balance on one foot.” Children smile as they lean on one another to help with balance.

The children appear to be having fun. All eyes are on the teaching artist. Once the children seem to be easily following along, the teacher joins the circle. When the teaching artist calls on a specific child, he respectfully addresses the child as “sir” or “miss.” During the warm-up, the class explores a range of words and sounds. After pretending to eat a marshmallow, everyone says “mmmmm” and rubs their bellies. Next they squat down, pretending to shrivel into raisins; then, they grow into juicy grapes, standing tall and reaching for the sky. After the warm-up, the teaching artist brings out pictures of animals and discusses how they might convincingly imitate some of them. Holding up a lion, he asks, “Is it loud or quiet?” “Loud.” The artist demonstrates how a lion might move across the rug. The children emulate his movements.

Before the artist's next visit, the teacher and children will rehearse the lesson that the teaching artist is now modeling with the class. This allows children to practice the words and movements. If needed, the teacher will refresh her memory by viewing the online streaming videos¹ in which a teaching artist models the same lessons. The following year, teachers implement these same arts lessons on their own; the videos help with recall of important details. Experienced teachers are familiar with the gestures, behaviors, and nonverbal responses that young ELLs use to indicate understanding. Now they are becoming adept at building on those nonverbal responses to stimulate extended verbal interactions. Once mastered, these oral language strategies are readily transferred to other content areas.

Although some teachers may be initially concerned that a focus on the needs of ELLs could result in inequities (Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003; Reeves, 2006; Schmidt, 2000), addressing the needs of ELLs need not undercut the learning of other students. A growing body of literature shows that best practices for promoting vocabulary knowledge among ELLs are also best practices for building breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge among native English speakers (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Beck & McKeown, 2007; Carlo et al., 2004). The challenge lies in designing lessons that encourage varied kinds of learning.

GETTING STARTED

The K-2 TAP was set up so that five schools started each year. During a school's second year in the program, the goal was for teachers to implement the arts lessons in their own classrooms, supported by a district resource teacher. Streaming videos of expert artists delivering each lesson were made available online. Each summer, the resource teachers and TAP staff studied the data gathered through interviews, observations, and teacher surveys to revise lessons and procedures, to optimize the effectiveness of the program.

A major change took place when the original Improving Teacher Quality grant, which had been administered by the California Department of Education, ended. Feedback from classroom teachers indicated that although children enjoyed the visual art lessons, little verbal interaction took place as children painted, sculpted, and created collages. If a key goal of TAP was to boost oral language, it would be more effective if visual art lessons were replaced by additional theater and dance instruction. So, when a proposal to replicate the TAP project was submitted

to the U.S. Department of Education, the nine visual art lessons were replaced by five more theater and five more dance lessons, with a culminating performance at the end of each semester.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM

The mixed-method study summarized here utilized three approaches to investigate whether TAP was meeting its objectives. To better understand how teachers perceived the professional development program, interviews were carried out by an outside researcher. The impact of the program on student engagement was measured through a comparison of student attendance on art and nonart days. The effect of the integrated arts-and-literacy lessons on English-language development was assessed through a quasi-experimental study that used the CELDT to measure the language development of students in experimental and comparison groups. The CELDT is a state-mandated standardized test given annually at the start of the school year to ELLs.

TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Twenty-four teachers were interviewed about their experiences in integrating arts-based activities into their classroom teaching. Interviewees were chosen in two ways. Each school had a veteran teacher at each grade level who acted as a coach for less experienced participants and as a liaison to the project staff. The teacher coaches from each participating school were interviewed, with a focus on choosing teachers from kindergarten, first, and second grades, as well as with varied levels of experience. The rest of the interviewees were with classroom teachers from two schools that began implementation in the first year of the program. This brought in teachers who might be less knowledgeable about the experiences of their peers but who offered differing perspectives.

Four themes emerged from the analysis of teacher interviews: First, before receiving the TAP professional development, most teachers had rarely taught standards-based arts lessons and/or did not feel comfortable implementing the arts in their classroom. Second, teachers indicated that the opportunity to gradually increase their participation in coteaching arts lessons with a teaching artist contributed to their content knowledge, confidence, and skill in teaching the arts. Third, teachers reported greater appreciation for the role of the arts in education after participation in

TAP. Fourth, teachers reported benefits specific to the English-language development of ELLs.

Limited arts implementation and knowledge before implementation. Most teachers mentioned that they had very little training in the arts and/or felt uncomfortable implementing the arts into their classroom before TAP, often reporting that their students had done art projects no more than monthly. As one teacher noted, “I haven’t done much [art instruction], because I didn’t feel very confident in my knowledge.” When teachers did teach arts lessons before TAP, they consistently mentioned using art as a filler activity. A representative observation was “Generally, [art] was a pretty much an end-of-the-week thing, we weren’t using the language that [the teaching artist] taught with visual arts.”

Coteaching with a teaching artist built up teachers’ content knowledge and skills. Some teaching artists were better than others in being able to facilitate the learning of teachers. However, most teachers reported gaining the content knowledge and confidence needed to teach the arts as a result of the design of TAP, which allowed them to gradually take on the role of arts teacher. While teachers may not have felt comfortable implementing the arts before their involvement in TAP, by taking on more and more responsibility for teaching the lessons, they were able to learn how to implement the arts units in way that they felt comfortable. The following quote describes the gradual shift of responsibility from the teaching artist to the teacher: “Every week [the teaching artists] ask us to take on more responsibility, maybe lead the warm-up one week, then the next week lead the lesson. So we do build throughout the first 8 weeks. But, I’m comfortable doing that.”

Teachers pointed out the benefits of learning from an expert who validated their role as an arts teacher. The following quote highlights the importance of the teaching artist’s role:

When we started this program [TAP], they asked “Do you want to do it”? I thought it was great to expose the students to it. I love it. Then they said . . . you need to participate in it. You need to do it. And I was like “I don’t know. I don’t want to do that.” But Mike [the teaching artist] was the first one I worked with and he was so natural that . . . I was able to try it with my students with his guidance. . . . So I think that was very helpful.

Teachers enthusiastically described the benefit of having professional development occur in their own classrooms. The teachers repeatedly mentioned that seeing children respond to the arts instruction was much more helpful than being presented with abstract information that was not clearly relevant to their own classroom experiences. One teacher pointed out,

The thing that was wonderful was that they were working with my kids. A lot of times with professional development . . . it's just not realistic for my classroom. . . . To see it come alive in my class is huge. That is something missing in a lot of professional development.

In the surveys that the teachers filled out, there were comments that a teacher had preferred working with one artist as opposed to another. However, the training that the artists received in delivering the lessons kept the standards high.

Greater appreciation for the role of the arts in education. Teachers repeatedly reported that involvement in TAP opened their eyes to the impact of arts education on children's academic and social development. Many teachers mentioned that, before TAP, art was just not a priority in their classrooms, in part because of the pressures associated with high-stakes testing. When asked how often she used arts before implementation of TAP, one teacher was quite forthright: "Very seldom. It's really hard when we have a very big curriculum. We've just never had the time." Another teacher observed, "I think we were doing it [implementing the arts] . . . but I was not very conscious of the purpose of it. . . . After the program, I'm more focused on the objectives of the music or the drama." TAP helped her to understand how arts education contributed to children's overall social and academic development.

The growing appreciation that teachers showed for the benefits of arts education grew out of workshops they had attended on the *California Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards*, especially relating to how K–2 theater activities could be used to address the oral-language segment of the English-language arts standards. One teacher noted that the arts standards helped her understand the purpose of the arts lessons: "I didn't understand it. . . . The students gained a lot by me learning a lot, too. I got a lot out of [visual and performing arts], especially."

Teachers also described how the TAP strategies boosted student learning. The process of acting out a story—physically projecting themselves into the make-believe situation—seemed to help children mentally simulate what is going on in a story. This brought the decontextualized language to life, helping them understand the plot and/or feelings of characters. A first-grade teacher explained, "Children act out the story elements and that helps them to get a better understanding of what it looks like. They act it out first; then they write. It helps a lot." Another teacher noted that acting out stories "is a good assessment because you see that they get it [oral language, vocabulary, characterization]—or they don't."

Teachers reported benefits specific to the English-language development of ELLs. Teachers often mentioned the impact that theater and

dance activities had on vocabulary acquisition. The following comments were typical:

- “For ELLs, it is a great way to practice vocabulary.”
- “Children take the vocabulary they learn in these lessons, then use it elsewhere.”
- “Their background knowledge grows. That increases their vocabulary.”

When K–2 teachers described their experiences in integrating creative drama activities into their daily teaching, their comments contained striking echoes of descriptions found in the research literature. The following quote describes a kindergarten teacher’s experience: “I found acting it out would help my English learners remember the message of the story. They need visuals. They need to see it to make connections.”

First- and second-grade teachers gave examples of the impact that drama lessons had on other literacy activities. A teacher explained, “When we were discussing characters from stories, I’d say: ‘Remember when you had drama, how you felt when you acted it out?’”

Impact on student engagement and attendance. School engagement in the early grades may be of special importance, given that research has shown that absenteeism among kindergarten students is associated with negative first-grade outcomes and correlated with dropout rates (Peek, 2009). In interviews, teachers in the TAP pointed out children’s need for movement and fun, which many teachers felt had been stifled by the heavy emphasis on teaching—and testing—for basic skills following passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Typical comments included the following:

- “For me, it’s bringing the fun back in the classroom. The children are moving. Before [all the testing] there used to be more ways for children to learn.”
- “I can see my kids more involved and excited. Drama is the fun time of the day. So, that gets them going. It gets them excited about the day.”
- “It makes children want to come to school and do well in other areas.”
- “There is a lot of enthusiasm and eagerness to participate. As soon as the teaching artist arrives, they are up and ready to go.”

During the 2008–2009 school year, a study was carried out to investigate whether the increased level of student engagement on arts days had a measurable impact on attendance. The research team looked at five schools where all the arts lessons at a specific grade level were taught on the same day. Attendance rates on arts days were compared to attendance rates on days without arts lessons. Because schools varied in regard to the day of the week on which the art lessons were taught, day of the week was not a

confounding variable. The analysis also controlled for school, grade, and month of the year (Hinga, Brouillette, Farkas, & Grove, 2012). We found that, on average, student attendance was a statistically significant 0.65 percentage points higher on days and in locations where the teaching artists were present.

MEASURING IMPROVEMENT IN LISTENING AND SPEAKING

As mentioned earlier, there have been two slightly different versions of the K-2 TAP. The version of the project evaluated in the quantitative study described here sent teaching artists into classrooms to coteach 14 theater lessons and 14 dance lessons with classroom teachers. To determine the impact of the K-2 TAP on CELDT listening and speaking scores, a quasi-experimental study was designed to control for differences between the experimental and comparison groups. What follows is the analysis of data from five randomly selected experimental schools and 13 randomly selected comparison schools. The level of analysis is the student. At the beginning of the study, the schools had been randomly assigned to experimental or comparison conditions to eliminate selection bias.

CELDT data for fall 2010 and fall 2011 were provided by the San Diego Unified School District, along with demographic data that could be linked to each student participant. These files represent students in first, second, and third grades who could be matched across two CELDT scores: from fall 2010 to fall 2011. Three separate data files were merged, and the data were cleaned to eliminate students from both the experimental and comparison schools who had moved during the intervention or who were lacking the needed scores for the analysis.

What resulted was an experimental group consisting of 267 students and a comparison group consisting of 2981 students. Boys and girls were proportionately represented in the sample, with the experimental group containing 52.4 percent boys and 47.6 percent girls. The comparison group contained 51.8 percent boys and 48.1 percent girls. The experimental and comparison groups also demonstrated comparable distributions related to ethnicity, with the largest representation being 89.5% Hispanic for the experimental group and 86.2% Hispanic for the comparison group. The largest notable difference for ethnicity was realized in the combined category for Asian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino students, where the experimental group showed 3.7% while the comparison group showed 9.8%. Table 1 provides the complete distribution of ethnicity for the experimental and comparison groups.

Table 1. Experimental and Comparison Group Student Ethnicity

<i>Student Ethnicity</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Experimental		
African American	11	4.1
Asian / Pacific Island / Filipino	10	3.7
Hispanic	239	89.5
White	7	2.6
Total	267	100.0
Comparison		
African American	102	3.4
Asian / Pacific Island / Filipino	293	9.8
Hispanic	2,571	86.2
White	15	0.5
Total	2,981	100.0

A similar consideration related to group comparability was that of socioeconomic status. District data provided a measure of this variable, by student, consisting of a self-reported level of education collected from parents during school enrollment in the fall of 2010. Table 2 provides a view of the level of comparability for socioeconomic status, with the greatest number of parents in the experimental group reporting as “high school graduates” (28.1%) and the greatest number in the comparison group reporting as “not a high school graduate” (32.2%). For the experimental group, the second-highest parent-reported level of education was “declined to state

Table 2. Measure of Student Socioeconomic Status by Experimental and Comparison Group

<i>Parent-Reported Level of Education</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Experimental		
Graduate school / postgraduate	6	2.2
College graduate	20	7.5
Some college / associate's degree	35	13.1
High school graduate	75	28.1
Not a high school graduate	58	21.7
Declined to state or unknown	73	27.3
Total	267	100.0
Comparison		
Graduate school / postgraduate	56	1.9
College graduate	130	4.4
Some college / associate's degree	273	9.2
High school graduate	901	30.2
Not a high school graduate	960	32.2
Declined to state or unknown	661	22.2
Total	2981	100.0

or unknown” (27.3%) and third, “not a high school graduate” (21.7%). In the case of the comparison group, “high school graduate” (30.2%) was the second-highest reported level of education and “decline to state or unknown” (22.2), the third. In the experimental group, 77.1% of parents had a high school education or less. In the comparison group, 84.6% of parents had a high school education or less.

The CELDT fall 2010 and fall 2011 listening and speaking score analysis utilized a gain scores analysis approach. Through this approach, the fall 2010 listening and speaking scale scores were subtracted from the fall 2011 listening and speaking scale scores to produce a gain score between the 2 years. The gain score was then converted to a *Z* score (Rogosa & Willett, 1983), which is a commonly used approach for multiyear analysis via an analysis of covariance framework. Table 3 provides scale scores, gain scores, and *Z* scores for the experimental and comparison groups from the fall 2010 and fall 2011 CELDT. The table demonstrates the pattern of higher experimental group scale scores, gain scores, and *Z* scores for the CELDT fall 2011.

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis of covariance for the CELDT listening gain scores. A gain score was calculated from the student’s 2010 CEDLT listening score to the 2011 CEDLT listening score. The gain was then standardized to a *Z* score. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of regression.

Table 3. California English Language Development Test: Scale Scores, Gain Scores, and *Z* Scores for Listening and Speaking

<i>Score Variable</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental (<i>n</i> = 267)				
ListeningSS10	220	570	444.73	56.35
SpeakingSS10	140	630	463.03	66.15
ListeningSS11	267	640	497.95	62.71
SpeakingSS11	330	630	500.54	46.32
GainListening	-146.00	218.00	53.21	49.03
GainSpeaking	-101.00	274.00	37.51	57.06
Zscore (GainListen)	-3.37	2.98	0.10	0.85
Zscore (GainSpeaking)	-2.31	4.24	0.10	0.99
Comparison (<i>n</i> = 2,981)				
ListeningSS10	220	570	440.39	61.35
SpeakingSS10	140	630	454.39	73.40
ListeningSS11	220	640	487.04	69.62
SpeakingSS11	140	720	485.12	52.49
GainListening	-206.00	289.00	46.64	57.92
GainSpeaking	-260.00	327.00	30.72	57.11
Zscore(GainListen)	-4.42	4.22	-0.009	1.01
Zscore(GainSpeaking)	-5.09	5.17	-0.009	0.99

Table 4. Analysis of Covariance: Comparison and Experimental Group Listening Gain Score

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial h^2
Corrected model	359.377 ^a	5	71.875	80.696	.000	.111
Intercept	160.711	1	160.711	180.434	.000	.053
ListeningSS10	279.261	1	279.261	313.532	.000	.088
Grade enrolled	3.515	1	3.515	3.947	.047	.001
Ethnicity	6.539	1	6.539	7.342	.007	.002
Parent education level	16.094	1	16.094	18.069	.000	.006
Grouptype	4.565	1	4.565	5.125	.024	.002
Error	2,887.623	3,242	0.891			
Total	3,247.000	3,248				
Corrected total	3,247.000	3,247				

^a $R^2 = .111$ (adjusted $R^2 = .109$).

The analysis shows a significant difference for the experimental group (Grouptype) when controlling for the 2010 scaled scores (listeningSS10), grade, ethnicity, and parent level of education: $F(1, 3,242) = 5.125, p = .024$. The adjusted r^2 is low at .111.

Table 5 shows the results of the analysis of covariance for the CELDT speaking gain scores. Following the same procedure used for listening results, a gain score was calculated from the student's 2010 CEDLT speaking score to the 2011 CEDLT speaking score. The gain was then standardized to a Z score. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, and homogeneity of regression. The analysis demonstrates a significant difference for the experimental group (Grouptype) when controlling for the 2010 scaled scores (speakingSS10), grade, ethnicity, and parent level of education: $F(1, 3,242) = 20.1344, p = .000$.

Table 5. Analysis of Covariance: Comparison and Experimental Group Speaking Gain Score

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial h^2
Corrected model	1,673.775 ^a	5	334.755	689.841	.000	.515
Intercept	334.369	1	334.369	689.046	.000	.175
SpeakingSS10	1,184.056	1	1,184.056	2,440.025	.000	.429
Grade enrolled	49.525	1	49.525	102.058	.000	.031
Ethnicity	7.694	1	7.694	15.856	.000	.005
Parent education level	2.096	1	2.096	4.319	.038	.001
Grouptype	9.872	1	9.872	20.344	.000	.006
Error	1,573.225	3,242	0.485			
Total	3,247.000	3,248				
Corrected total	3,247.000	3,247				

^a $R^2 = .515$ (adjusted $R^2 = .515$).

A strong interaction between the experimental group and outcome variables was realized in this analysis with a strong r^2 value of .515.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The analysis of the CELDT scores (fall 2010 to fall 2011) for students in the experimental and comparison groups shows a significant interaction between the experimental group and outcome variables, which was maintained across CELDT listening and speaking scores. The interaction was stronger with the experimental students on the outcome variable for CELDT speaking. Several factors strengthen this noted interaction, such as the selection process initially to randomly assign similar schools to the experimental and comparison conditions. Second, as noted in the analysis of variance, the student populations in both the experimental and comparison groups demonstrated little difference on baseline demographic and CELDT score variables with the exception of ethnicity. This analysis stands as a starting point for the intervention realizing these types of gains for experimental students in the future and replicating this research to confirm future findings against these initial findings.

As with any research study, there exist certain limitations. The sample for the experimental group is small. With new schools rolling into the intervention, future studies of this project will be able to increase both the experimental and comparison group sample sizes. The gains for experimental students maintain a significant interaction; however, these gains do not specifically control for what might be occurring at comparison schools related to English-language development. The analysis assumes a “business as usual” understanding of instructional conditions at the comparison schools. Future studies related to this project would benefit from a further understanding of the instructional conditions for ELLs within the comparison schools.

IMPLICATIONS

In recent decades, the attention of educational reformers in the United States has focused on variables ranging from budget to curriculum, class size, and school-level accountability. None of these initiatives has had a significant effect on the achievement of students. As secretary of education Arne Duncan noted after the results of the 2010 Program for International Student Assessment were released, “the United States came in 23rd

or 24th in most subjects. We can quibble, or we can face the brutal truth that we're being out-educated" (Dillon, 2010, p. 1A).

To react to these discouraging results by rewarding or punishing teachers, based on their students' test scores, is likely to do little to improve schools. Leaders must identify professional development opportunities that will enable educators to respond effectively to challenges, such as the achievement gap between ELLs and other students. Instructional strategies such as those used in the San Diego TAP hold the promise of not only expanding listening and speaking skills but also presenting ELLs with task types—visual representations, movement activities, oral responses—that allow them to show what they know and can do. Additionally, building academic language through integration of the arts and literacy bodes well for addressing aspects of the Common Core State Standards that are currently a focus of attention for many building-level leaders and leadership teams.

The San Diego Unified School District is the eighth-largest district in the United States; many factors have an impact on student achievement in such a large diverse district. Still, it is interesting to note that, in spring 2013, the district's student achievement scores were the highest that they had ever been—and the gap between high- and low-income students was the lowest it had been. What makes this achievement remarkable is that, during the previous 5 years, California's public schools had weathered the worst budget crisis in the system's history.

In at least 37 states nationwide, public schools received less state funding in 2011 than in 2010. In 30 states, schools were receiving less funding than they had 4 years before (Oliff & Leachman, 2006). If teachers are to close the achievement gap between ELLs and other students, affordable but effective ways must be found to fill the continuing need for professional development. The TAP proved to be both effectual and cost-effective. Many highly qualified professional actors and dancers have welcomed this opportunity for regular part-time employment. Yet, in contrast to the high fees charged by many professional developers brought in for a one-time presentation, the San Diego teaching artists receive about the same hourly remuneration as a veteran teacher.

In San Diego, salaries of the artists were paid by a federal grant. Costs were kept low by utilizing in-house expertise. Resource teachers from the district's Visual and Performing Arts Department organized the training sessions for teaching artists, carried out observations of the artists in the classroom, and presented the introductory professional development sessions for classroom teachers. Many options exist for school districts that wish to implement a similar program. Local theater or dance companies are often eager to partner with school districts in approaching local spon-

sors or writing grants to support teaching artists. Arts programs also tend to be popular with parents, who may volunteer to assist with fundraising.

Compared to sending teachers to a summer professional development institute, the TAP offers two advantages: first, the teacher receives one-on-one coaching from an expert—in her or his own classroom, working with her or his own students; second, the students in the teacher's class benefit from weekly lessons with the teaching artist. The San Diego lesson plans and classroom videos are available as a free resource to any school that wishes to make use of them: <http://sites.uci.edu/class/theatre-grades/> (for theater) or <http://sites.uci.edu/class/dance-lessons-grades/> (for dance). Should a school not wish to employ teaching artists, these same self-guided lessons could be implemented by motivated teachers, perhaps with the assistance of parents who possess theater or dance experience.

IMPACT ON ANNUAL YEARLY PROGRESS

Under the federal No Child Left Behind legislation of 2001, ELLs are one of the mandated subgroups whose test scores are used to determine whether schools and districts are meeting goals for adequate yearly progress based on state-level performance standards. However, designing programs that effectively boost ELLs' language development and move students toward higher levels of achievement on standardized tests has proven difficult. ELLs in United States schools come from a wide range of linguistic backgrounds. Although a majority of ELLs speak Spanish at home, it has been estimated that approximately 400 different native languages are spoken by ELLs nationally (Educational Testing Service, 2009). While a bilingual Spanish–English program may be helpful to a Spanish-speaking population, speakers of Chinese, Somali, or Urdu would not benefit. In contrast, the arts-based approach taken by the TAP benefits all ELLs.

The isolation of many minority communities has presented a stubborn challenge. Nearly 70% of limited-English-proficient students are enrolled in only 10% of the nation's elementary schools (Cohen, 2005). In these predominantly urban schools, limited-English-proficient students account for almost half the student body (on average). Because these schools tend to be located in neighborhoods where most residents speak a language other than English at home, children may have limited opportunity to learn oral English in informal settings. Therefore, opportunities to improve listening and speaking skills at school are crucial.

APPENDIX

GRADE 1, INTRODUCTORY LESSON: THEATER

Note: The teaching artist will lead this lesson the first week. Each following week, the teacher will lead a version of this lesson immediately prior to the arrival of the teaching artist.

Warm-Up

The teacher introduces the theater lesson, telling students that they will all learn how to be actors and audience members. The teacher asks students: What do you think an actor does? The teacher follows this discussion with an explanation that actors use their bodies like an instrument and they have to tune that instrument every day.

Modeling

The teacher arranges students in a circle, emphasizing personal space or “bubble.” (Students must keep enough distance between them not break the bubble that constitutes someone else’s personal space.) Then the teacher demonstrates how students are to introduce themselves, circling an arm in an exaggerated wave, being sure to cross over the midline of the body, and saying their name in a loud theater voice. Students take turns doing this around the circle.

Guided Practice

Have students follow the instructor through a series of warm-up theater activities to improve focus and concentration while warming up the body, voice, and imagination. These may include: stretching, yawning, tongue twisters, mirroring, loud/soft voice, large/small shape, humming.

Debrief

Pull the class together to discuss what an actor does, how to use their body, and why focus and concentration are important. Remind students of any rules of conduct that need to be shared.

GRADE 1, LESSON 1: FACIAL EXPRESSION**Modeling**

Choose two classroom texts, one fiction and one non-fiction. With the class, review the pictures in each book without looking at the words. Assist students in describing the people/characters with words. Assist students in making “I wonder. . .” statements about the people/characters. (Example: I wonder if she is feeling sad/happy/scared/curious/worried, etc.)

Guided Practice

In pairs have one student (A) create a facial expression to portray one of the people/characters in the book. The other student (B) mirrors this facial expression. Repeat with the other characters in the book, alternating who leads and who mirrors. Circulate among the students, calling out specific details about the facial expressions they are creating. Read the books to the class.

Debrief

Lead a discussion focused on the following questions: How does an actor use the face to show emotion to an audience? What kind of emotions did we see in the fictional book? What kind of emotions did we see in the non-fiction book? Were the emotions we came up with in class the same as the emotions described by the words of the story?

NOTE

1. To view lesson plans and videos, go to <http://sites.uci.edu/class/first-grade/theater-first-grade/grade-1-theater-lesson-1/> (for theater) or <http://sites.uci.edu/class/first-grade/dance-first-grade/grade-1-dance-lesson-1/> (for dance). Use toolbar to choose grade level.

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