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A CASE FOR THEATRE-BASED PROGRAMMING IN EARLY-CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

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A CASE FOR THEATRE-BASED PROGRAMMING IN EARLY-CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Chairperson: Jillian Campana
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This paper seeks to answer the question, How can I use my professional experience developing a theatre-based curriculum for early-childhood and elementary students as a platform to advocate for the importance of theatre-based curricula in early and elementary education? The subject of this research project is a Pre-Kindergarten through Fifth Grade theatre-based education program founded by the author. The program was developed over the past 20 years at the Bertschi School, an independent PK-Fifth elementary school located in Seattle, Washington. For the purposes of this paper, the program itself will serve as a proving ground to explore and define primary lasting outcomes experienced by program participants. Using a Theory of Change data-science process, the author will identify, define and seek evidence of three possible primary long-term outcomes, or Anchor Changes, resulting from participation in the program. Quantitative data will be collected by surveying program alumni and their families for the purpose of evaluating evidence of ongoing behaviors and practices associated with the projected Anchor Changes. This research is being done as an act of advocacy in an effort to generate interest and discussion about possible effects resulting from early and consistent participation in theatre-based programing as part of an early-childhood and elementary education. This research is being conducted to gather evidence in support of the many ways theatre-based instruction can be developed to serve the individual child, the entire class, and the community beyond the walls of the classroom. It is my hope that the data collected will provide compelling evidence in support of theatre-based curriculum with early-childhood and elementary-aged children.

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Introduction

Pre-Show: "How Not To Act In School,"

Discovering project-based learning

In fifth grade, desperate for extracurricular projects that could help to elevate my less-than-stellar class grades, I requested permission to write and oversee the creation and production of a play. With my teacher's permission, I wrote a script, populated the play with interested classmates, and performed in the play---aptly titled, "How Not To Act In School." We performed in our home classroom and were then invited to share the play during an all-school assembly. At the time, I couldn't have imagined how formative this act of academic self-preservation would come to be in my life---that a child's organic impulse would lead to a life of learning and teaching through theatre and performance.

My need to filter learning through theatre is also what drew me to apply to Creative Pulse. It is no accident that the work I do today, the program I developed and execute, its vision and methodology, grew out of my own intrinsic needs as a sentient learner. Merriam Webster's defines Sentient as: "finely sensitive in perception or feeling." I share this, not on the assumption that the reader is unfamiliar with the definition, but rather, to remind the reader of the highly specific attribution the word affords. For years, I had considered and researched the idea of attending graduate school. I would seek more detail about a program I found interesting, only to be disappointed by the lack of art integration. I would be working full-time while going to school and needed a program that would support my professional schedule and feed my artistic soul. A colleague of mine gave me a brochure for the Creative Pulse.

Ask any artist "What are you working on?" and they can tell you a list of actual projects and vision for projects of the future. That purple brochure was my vision for a

project of the future. I came across it for years, every time I cleaned my desk. I had family obligations which prevented me from making the commitment to live in Missoula for the 5 weeks the program required. But as I continued to search for other programs, I continued to visit the programs page on the U of M website, trying to grow my confidence and interest in the program. Changes in my life and the format of the program somehow happened all at once, and I applied the following fall and was excited to be accepted.

From the day I showed up to take my place in the opening circle, the Pulse provided me a way and means to identify and feed my needs as an artist and a teacher. In my first year, as a part of my Field Project, I was able to undertake a project that was instrumental in identifying and generating immense personal growth through an exploration of Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioral therapy. The complex ideas and opportunities found within the Creative Pulse affected my artistic knowledge base, providing individualized learning opportunities provided a pattern of alternating academic and artistic exploration which fed my sentient self.

Like the cast of a play, the camaraderie within my Pulse cohort was nothing like I had heard graduate school described. It was not competitive or cutthroat, with pressure to produce and publish. It was instead an opportunity to hold a magnifying glass up to my life, the Pulse there to give me the framework and fuel, challenging me to rigorously examine my work, both as a teacher and artist. It taught me to celebrate my strengths, then gave me process and systems for unearthing and eliminating obstacles to future artistic and professional success.

My Final Creative Project details and examines the development and outcomes

of the early-childhood/elementary theatre-education program I've been working to develop over the past twenty years. The program has always meandered and grown at an organic pace, in response to the needs of individual students and class groups. Before the Pulse, I had never thought to examine the program to see how or why it worked, or to look at the effects of the program on former students. My involvement in the Pulse, provided me an opportunity to deconstruct the program and explore the curriculum's effects on early-childhood and elementary learners. My ability to prioritize this important work would have likely never happened without my having enrolled in the Creative Pulse.

Act I: You can't always get what you want Scene I: Do we even know what we want?

Typical of the Washington State Public School system of my era, instruction in the Arts (Visual Art, Drama, Music and Movement) at my elementary school was few and far between, save an infrequent visiting-artist school assembly. Performance arts in my school were virtually non-existent. Nor did I come from an art-focused family. While I was growing up, my family did not attend any form of live performances or own any original artwork. Rather, I lived in a world where theatre was television and visual art was commercially-produced oil paintings from Sears and Roebuck. Despite a lack of exposure to live theatre and performance, I somehow managed to advocate for my personal need to prove my knowledge and mastery of complex ideas and the world around me through theatre.

Although never diagnosed, now as an educator looking back at my own learning

experiences, I see pieces of the puzzle that have fallen into place that are suggestive of the presence of one or more of the following learning challenges: ADD, ADHD, and dysgraphia/dyslexia. I still recall my frustration as an elementary learner in recognizing that I understood the ideas my teachers were communicating, but somehow lacked the ability to "prove" my comprehension through testing and other traditional evaluative methods. After that first play production, I went on to use this technique in other grade levels. For extra credit in sixth grade I organized fellow students to perform my original adaptation of "Rip van Winkle." As a high school freshman, I sought permission to research and perform songs of the Second World War to make up for poor test scores in US History class. Not all of my teachers allowed me to bolster my grades through such alternative means. But, for those who did, I proved both my knowledge and mastery of both subject matter and performance. I displayed vision, motivation, focus, intrinsic-goal setting, and complex organization skills in the coordination, creation and production of these performance events.

I succeeded in school because I was allowed and supported by a handful of teachers who were intuitive enough to understand that my learning depended on finding ways to use this self-generated project-based theatre model to be successful in their classrooms. I did this to survive, or rather, to flourish, in a learning environment that relied on traditional, academically centered curriculum, a model devoid of art or theatre. From the perspective I have now, I can see that this happened because of how my brain worked. Maybe, in the way a dehydrated body can detect thirst and force one to seek water, I was, on a cellular level, motivated to manifest a way to infuse creativity into a mainstream education model in order to insure my success in the school

environment.

College was not a given for me. I fought to go to college. I was born to loving parents from a blue collar background. The only person in my immediate family to attend college, my parents did not support my interest in higher education or my ardent desire to attend university for the purpose of studying theatre. I may as well have told them I was going to colonize the moon as to go to college to study theatre. Despite their lack of support and understanding, I had a singular vision to attend college, study theatre and become an actor at any cost.

I applied, was accepted, and began to pay my way through four years of undergraduate study in Theatre Performance. The college environment freed me of the need to independently produce theatre experiences to make school palatable. Suddenly most of what school became about was acting and theatre. Ironically, in light of my future career, I was so committed to performing that I even sought special permission from the Chair of the theatre department to opt out of the Children's Theatre class, otherwise required to graduate. I had no interest in learning about the interface of children and theatre.

Upon graduation, I moved to Seattle and began to explore how to make a living as a working actor. Many opportunities came, but none with much money attached. I had rent to pay and needed to balance working a real job with the time needed to participate in auditions and fringe theatre opportunities. I began to work teaching drama by day as a way to support myself. Teaching drama paid well, gave me the flexibility I needed to audition and perform, and, although not my end goal, teaching drama was still in the realm of theatre. I patched together enough classes through children's theatre

organizations such as Youth Theatre Northwest (YTN), where I worked as a teacher, playwright, director; and then as the Executive/Artistic Director. Eventually gaining work with other children's theatre organizations and state- and city-sponsored workshops as an Independent Teaching Artist.

Slowly, I moved away from only wanting to be the person onstage and only desiring a life as an actor. The tipping point was the confluence of the need to find steady employment and the opportunity to draw from my childhood theatre experiences to craft a theatre-education curriculum. I could see a way to provide for those kids who, like me, needed learning opportunities seated in creativity to truly become who they were intended to be. Then a major shift happened. At some point, teaching started to become how I made theatre. I continued to work as an actor, but there was a gradual change in my relationship with theatre and how I defined my place in it. Having generated so many of my own theatre-based experiences out of necessity from such a young age, I knew firsthand the inherent and unlimited potential for exploration that the theatre-based education model presented. I had seen it work with many different kinds of people, not just artists. After all, I was aware at this point that none of the classmates I had organized to help me in my primary and secondary school projects identify as and or showed any interest in pursuing careers in theatre, or even in the arts generally. I had landed on a way of teaching that I believed could embody unlimited opportunities for instruction and I began using the theatre-education model to explore everything from social-emotional development to confidence building, from the history of a nation to the cycle of a butterfly. It dawned on me at the time that the opportunities of what, where, and how I could use this method to teach children seemed endless. What was not clear

to me was how to introduce the technique I was developing into a mainstream elementary curriculum.

As I began to command more work within this field, I noticed two distinct methods of drama instruction; one which limited the youngest learners to an exploratory or play-based creative-dramatics model; and the second which relied upon and incorporated limited elements of a theatre/performance model. The latter method was primarily executed with students 8 years or older. Most often, particularly with early childhood and elementary students, I observed seasoned educators working strictly in a play-based, make believe and/or creative-dramatics framework.

A play-based creative-dramatics model generated for early-childhood and elementary students might begin with the introduction of a theme, for example "Fairies". Teachers would talk about what a fairy is, how they might move, asking and incorporating the ideas of the students about fairies and fairy worlds. Music and colorful scarves might be introduced and students given instruction to move around the room as fairy creatures, dancing, spinning, jumping and using their scarves as wings or elements of costume. Unlike a theatre model, the play-based model did not expect students to memorize or repeatedly recreate, in a "rehearsal" format, any of the moments they discovered. Text, or a script, was rarely, if ever, included. Most often students in the class grouped together to work as a chorus, primarily moving and dancing in one large group. An element of direction might come in the form of a teacher hitting a drum once to stop, twice to spin, three times to jump, etcetera. Depending on the length of the class, the experience might end here, with the intent of repeating it again the next week with the same and/or perhaps a similar theme. If the class was longer than an hour, the

teacher might give the students a snack break, followed by a short play time, and then an art project such as making fairy headbands. This play experience would repeat weekly until the final week of class when parents and guests would be invited to the classroom to observe students as they played. Young students enjoyed an enriching and overall positive experience in creative-play and parents were happy.

I went along with this framework for some time. Then one day during "free time" I overheard a group of kids expanding on the ideas which had been introduced to the class group. Through spoken offers and negotiations, the children were organically and independently incorporating elements of story. They were literally sharing storyline ideas with one another. One child might offer, "Your fairy has a broken wing and that fairy has to hide her so that the wolves won't eat her." Another child might respond, "I don't want wolves in the story, wolves are scary." Back to the originator: "Okay, what do you want?" Again, a volley of collaboration happening in real time: "Let's make it kittens . . . the kittens are trying to get the fairies!" They were writing a play! They were identifying characters and problems, assigning status and defining relationships, and not always, but often, solutions would become part of their construct as well.

I began to see these offers and negotiations between 3- and 4-year-olds as the key to an alternative model for teaching drama to the very young. This model grounded itself in dramatic structure, characters and relationships. I could see an opening for the poetics of Aristotle, and most importantly, a final outcome inclusive of a rehearsed performance for an audience, a kind of demonstration of a mastery of skills. These child playwrights inspired me. As I found myself teaching more and more classes with these very young students, I began to engage in developing what would become a strictly

theatre-based model for early-childhood and elementary aged learners.

I set out to combine elements of creative-play with theatre. Bringing in elements of story structure, including a problem, presence of an antagonists and protagonists, and culminating in some kind of shift or change in one or more of the characters. Knowledge and prioritization of these theatre elements became shared objectives within the class groups. My approach required students to take and follow detailed direction, execute blocking, and engage in character development. To work toward the development and animation of characters through repetitious exploration of the story--- also known as rehearsal---and using theatrical elements of presentation. Whereas the creative-play modeled class experience culminated in a "class share" of stop-and-go fairy world play, my class invited parents in to see a 30-minute performance of fully developed plays with titles like "Dog Escape, Dog Escape," or "How the Tiny Bird Fell From the Nest." These plays were organically generated by the students with my guidance to develop their ideas using theatre techniques.

To keep the youngest students feeling safe and to develop their confidence, I would narrate from the stage, walking amongst them and using an echo technique. This allowed those who had not memorized lines support in executing text onstage. In this way, I modeled vocal inflection, volume, pace, and gestural action for animation of character. Most of the students mirrored my actions, but some insisted on memorizing their lines and specifically asked me not to help them. And, as students worked from year to year in the classes I was teaching, their confidence onstage grew, and they began to self-actualize these elements with minimal modeling and prompting from me. Everything we did within our class construct somehow fed the performance. Opening

circle murals became sets and backdrops, old pillowcases and watercolors allowed kids to design and paint their own costumes, and soundtracks combining music and sound effects helped students by providing them an undertone of rhythm, pace and feeling. I held a firm line in making sure the kids respected the audience's need to understand the story. I explained that was our shared priority; moreover, our true responsibility. I emphasized that we needed to share all the important moments of the story with the audience by either showing or telling them our story. They were directed to face the audience with the story, create loud voices so the story could be heard, to use emotion in their voices and facial expression, and to use expressive bodies to help audiences feel the story.

One of the most effective ways I found to support the youngest students in making the leap between creative-play and theatre was to expose them to seeing plays. What do we learn by watching? Monica Prendergast, as part of her article "'Playing Attention': Contemporary Aesthetics and Performing Arts Audience Education," shares what she terms an *Audience in Performance Web,* as a way of identifying the varied and complex experiences of members of an audience. Pendergast notes; "a performance is a transitory and ephemeral event. This nature of performance makes creating a curriculum for the purposes of enhancing audience-in-performance experiences a real challenge" (48). She breaks the audience experience into three segments, "pre-performance, performance, and post post-performance" and provides a list of questions for each segment (49-50). Prendergast poses questions for group discussion in an effort to inform or illuminate what one's processes as a member of an audience should be. Three of the questions posted as part of the Predictive (Pre-

Performance) Curriculum include (49):

- Who am I as a spectator?

- What are my roles and functions within the performance?

- What are my expectations for the performance?

Pendergast touches on elements of audience/performer interface that I have been building upon for years---especially as a way to transition the early-childhood learners through their first onstage experiences. I have found using the act of "being an audience" one of the most effective tools available when working to establish a young child's intrinsic interest to performing in front of an audience themselves. Most of the organizations I taught at often had multiple camps and classes happening simultaneously with varying aged students. Often, I would coordinate with my colleagues to bring my younger students in to watch what the older students were working on. It was important for these young students to see, feel, and then discuss the performances of the older students because it allowed for their exposure to and assimilation of the mature and complex concepts inherent in the communication of a story to an audience. The power of being part of an audience is paramount to the process of shepherding early-childhood and elementary learners beyond exploring theatre as a game of dress-up. In being a part of an audience, these young students experience first hand what it is to feel empathy for others onstage. It provides them immediate and tangible examples of the risks others take to make moments in the play memorable by being funny, scary or sad. As they suspend their disbelief and become lost in the world of the play, students begin seeing only characters, rather than actors or fellow students. This opportunity to see, hear and feel is paramount in supporting the

youngest students in growing their confidence and desire to get in front of an audience themselves because it provides an example for them to draw from as they prepare to take their turn onstage. Conversations about how they themselves felt while watching others onstage can then become a tool to remind them of what to expect from the audiences that will come to see them onstage. Teachers can ask, " When you saw that play, were you looking at the kids or the characters?" Or, if something unexpected happened in the play they attended, "how did the actors move through that unexpected moment and how did that affect you in the audience?" After having been in an audience, I see an increase in early and elementary learners wanting to perform for an audience themselves. The "watching" experience helping to build intrinsic desire and confidence around what may be assumed to be the most challenging element of the theatre-education model, especially for the Pre-K and Kindergarten students.

Additionally, after seeing a performance, I could lead the class through a discussion to reinforce the skills I was trying teach them. We would talk about what we, as an audience, knew after seeing the play. We talked about the characters, their secrets and actions, and discussed the problem in the story. We worked to understand why we felt a certain way about a character: were they funny, scary, or mean? This exposure to complexities of character, seeing unexpected things, like a kind witch or a frightened monster, helped develop understanding of story. Kids would talk in detail about the story they had seen and I could ask them "But how do you know that the monster was nice?" They would tell me things like, "The monster said he was shy and wanted friends" or "The witch helped the children and wanted them to be safe"---the students had seen and felt the story and began to imagine themselves telling the stories

of their own. They had "suspended their disbelief" and in doing so believed what other kids, kids not unlike themselves, had shared with them from the stage. Like seeing an older sibling learn to ride a bike, the younger students began to put themselves in the play, began to imagine what it would feel like to be funny, be scary and/or walk and talk like a monster. Hence, by coupling the opportunity to watch other children perform onstage with opportunity to perform onstage, as in learning a new game by watching others play, children became eager for their turn, eager to try to make an audience understand their story.

Rather than distract and or overwhelm these young students, the real-life goals, objectives and even pressures of performing for an audience seemed to empower them. The idea that adults were going to help make "real" plays out of their stories and create worlds based upon their imaginings shifted the act of creating and performing a play from being an external experience, done to please others, to that of being an intrinsic one, done to challenge and please their own personal goals and objectives. Once early learners can take the initial step, overcome what for some is the challenge and fear of performing in front of others, as they continue to repeat that process they shift from doing it to only to gratify themselves and begin to think of how the work they do onstage might gratify the audience.

Act I, Scene II: Marrying Theatre Processes and

Elementary School Practices

After teaching for several years at YTN, and shortly after being promoted to the position of Executive/Artistic Director, I received a phone call from Brigitte Bertschi, the

Founding Head of Bertschi School. She was searching for someone to develop and execute an in-house drama component for Bertschi School. Her interest was to provide all of the students, then serving K-5 now a PK-5, with drama---not as an extracurricular program, but somehow integrated into students weekly schedules. A partnership was established between YTN and Bertschi School. As the primary contact and program manager for YTN, I was tasked with developing, staffing and teaching within the program. Under my guidance, YTN teaching artists, myself included, began meeting with classroom teachers and developing individual projects to serve each grade level: one project per class group, all of which culminated in performances. For the first year, programmatic instruction times were twice a week for 40-45 minutes over a five-week period. The program proved a success, funding and additional class time was freed up to support program expansion. By the early 2000's, Bertschi made a commitment to hiring a permanent drama teacher to continue to oversee growth and development of the program. I was invited to apply for the position and still hold this job today.

Taking the job at Bertschi resulted in my needing to refine how I engaged and instructed early-childhood and elementary learners through theatre. The ten years I had spent working as a theatre teaching artist had primarily focused on working in theater settings. I had written an untold number of short and full length scripts for and with kids, working in gymnasiums, community centers, and on stages of all manner and means. I was a believer in and practitioner of Peter Brooks' quote "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged."[1] I had

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[1] Brook, Peter. "One/The Deadly Theatre." *The Empty Space.* (London: Penguin, 2008), 7

generated theatre with kids as young as 3 and as old as 18, both directing and teaching

them within a theatre-based model. Some students had started their study with me at 4,

graduated from high school and gone on to start their college theatre and professional

careers. One thing that almost all of those students had in common was that they, or

their parents, had identified a specific interest or desire to participate in a theatre-based

experience. At Bertschi I faced the challenge of teaching the same groups of students

one year after the next for 7 years in succession, all of whom had applied to attend

Bertschi school, but had not necessarily signed up for a theatre experience. I had never

tested my methodology in relationship to or as part of a learning environment that was

non-theatre centered. Although a theatre partnership had been established, my joining

the Bertschi faculty meant rethinking my technique. My work became about embedding

the approach I had developed inside of an established elementary school structure. I

began working to retain the program viability while reconfiguring it to conform to the

overarching needs and schedules of my colleagues and their classrooms. Bertschi's

existing program was not going to conform to the drama program, but rather it would be

my responsibility to mold the drama program around the schools existing practices and

curricula.

　　I began to work to find the ways to connect the dots between my approach to

working with young children in theatre and the established pedagogical practices at

Bertschi School. Early in the process two obvious commonalities emerged; educational

scaffolding[2] and differentiation[3], also known as differentiated instruction. The Glossary

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Internationalcita.com. Web. 26 June 2017. <http://internationalcita.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Brook-Peter-The-Empty-Space.pdf>.

[2] Concepts, Liberty. "Scaffolding Definition." *The Glossary of Education Reform.* Great Schools Partnership, 06 Apr. 2015. Web. 26 June 2017. <http://edglossary.org/scaffolding/>.

of Education Reform on scaffolding says; "In education, scaffolding refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process". The same source defines differentiation as: "a wide variety of teaching techniques and lesson adaptations that educators use to instruct a diverse group of students, with diverse learning needs, in the same course, classroom, or learning environment". Both of these instructional methods were already inherent practice within the theatre-education approach I had developed. Soon, these commonalities became the way to address how to sequence working year after year, repetitively with the same class groups and individual students as they progressed through seven grade levels.

In seating the program at Bertschi, working to accommodate the necessary interface, I began to focus on how to expand opportunities for scaffolding and differentiation within the program. This as a way to allow a foundational pre-kindergarten experience to provide a specific framework for the skills and ideas that would again be introduced in kindergarten, and to make kindergarten a foundation for what students were to build in first grade and so on. A specific example of this would be to identify within the Pre-K class group students who displayed the skills, such as confidence and motivation, to be cast in primary roles as opposed to those students whose success in this new endeavor depended on the safety and security of performing as part of a group. The expectation was that a percentage of those students who found success within the group character structure in Pre-K would, without overt adult prompting, push themselves to increase their risk taking independently in kindergarten.

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[3] Ibid.

Moreover, another percentage of students would follow this pattern in first grade, and second grade and so on. Each year students choosing to identify for themselves the challenges and risks they felt driven to face and overcome as part of their annual opportunity onstage and as they matured from year to year.

As was the original vision of the head of school, I began working with my colleagues, the classroom teachers, to tailor the program to align with specific criteria, themes of study, and learning benchmarks prioritized for each grade level. This integration of a theatre component, and the pre-existing developmentally-ready curricula defined by classroom teachers, gave credence to the addition of a drama specialist to an elementary school faculty. The partnering of classroom teachers with the drama specialist minimized the strain of adding another resource class into an already hectic schedule. The teacher/artist partner element built into the model gave classroom teachers opportunity to identify subject matter they already planned to teach to their students and allowed them the option to use theatre as a vessel for instruction. Teachers also appreciated that within this curriculum/theatre integration model they could suggest themes or subjects which might be more successfully introduced through kinesthetic learning.

The integrated model made the installation of a theatre program, which may otherwise have been a questionable and mysterious subject matter to this pre-established community, a tool to serve each teacher and class group in whatever way would be most successful. There are some historic overarching themes which have served the integrated theatre/education model well. For example, the interface allows classroom teachers to introduce students to a project-based learning model, replete

with opportunities that depend on students working toward both independent and group goals to effect success. The rehearsal and performance opportunities of each project, at every grade level, also provide opportunity for students to experience an opportunity for a demonstration of mastery of skills. In an attempt to define the relationship between and definition of competency, mastery and proficiency, I turned to the organization *Building21,* whose mission statement is: *"Empowering networks of learners to connect with their passions and build agency to impact their world".* A brief article posted by Sandra Moumoutjis offered the following observations:[4]

> Here is the way I am thinking about it. The term Competency-based Education, for me, is not about "being competent." It is bigger than that. It is about this fundamental shift in teaching and learning that measures individual learning rather than measuring seat time. Competencies are created to define sets of knowledge, skills, concepts and mindsets that learners need to know and be able to do. Learners progress once they have demonstrated mastery of competencies, not after a set amount of time in a course.
>
> Mastery and proficiency then are about assessing and achieving competencies. Learners must demonstrate their proficiency in a competency and multiple demonstrations of proficiency lead to mastery of that competency.

Moumoutjis goes on to explain that as part of a process of certification:

> ... students progress toward a degree or certification based on their ability to demonstrate mastery of a comprehensive set of skills, knowledge, behaviors and mindsets at multiple times in multiple ways.

That idea, the act of a child having an opportunity to independently "demonstrate mastery...at multiple times in multiple ways" happens every year within this program model. In the Key Observer Interviews several of the interviewees referenced a "culture of performance" existing within our school community, noting this as part of each

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[4] Moumoutjis, Sandra. "Competency vs. Mastery vs. Proficiency." *Building 21.* Building 21, 21 Feb. 2014. Web. 03 July 2017. <http://building21.org/2014/02/competency-vs-mastery-vs-proficiency/>.

student's "normal" school experience. This normalcy is partially derived from the fact that every participant expects and experiences this pattern, consisting of two opportunities to perform and reflect, then a final opportunity to perform for family, every year. Students begin this rhythm in Pre-Kindergarten and then repeat it every year over the seven year elementary school time span.

Act I, Scene III: How It All Works---

Details of the Drama Program in its Current Form

Every student who attends Bertschi School performs in one play during the school year, September through early June. The drama program is designed as a project based learning experience. Generally, most classes participate in two one hour classes weekly, over a ten to fourteen-week period. Exceptions to this are the PK students who meet weekly for 30 minutes and who have an extended project timeline which begins in September and hosts performances in February, for a total of 21 weeks.

To schedule performances, the year is divided into seven Performance Blocks. This model accommodates two grade levels performing in the fall, three in the winter and two in the spring. Each class group, including PK, performs the work they have developed three times in total. The first and second performances are referred to as "dress rehearsals." This moniker affords students the understanding that, although there will be an audience present and the expectation of excellence associated with performing remains intact, and despite a young performer's best efforts, mistakes are likely. What's more, dress rehearsals are considered valuable to student growth, a

development of resilience, and self-awareness within the overall learning process. As identified on the *Scholastic* Website, students need to feel safe within the classroom environment if they are to do their best learning, Dr. Perry writes:

> Every September, thousands of young children enter a classroom for the first time and swim in novelty. Indeed, for these children, the first days of school are filled with more new experiences than any other time aside from birth. There will be new sights, sounds, schedules; new children, adults, challenges, and expectations. How can we help our children find pleasure in these first classroom experiences that will lead to a lifelong hunger for knowledge? The key is safety.

Dr. Perry goes on to describe circumstances for optimal learning. In doing so, he calls out many of the elements inherent in the drama program. From the generation of curiosity in students as they watch other performances and anticipate what play they will do, to the curiosity of how the audience will react upon seeing their work on the stage. He goes on to speak of a "demonstration of mastery" and its importance in the learning process:

> Optimal learning is a driven by curiosity, which leads to exploration, discovery, practice, and mastery. In turn, mastery leads to pleasure, satisfaction, and confidence to once again explore. The more a child experiences this cycle of wonder, the more she can create a lifelong excitement and love of learning. The cycle of wonder, however, can be stopped by fear.

What's more, Dr. Perry then addresses specific experiences that can cause an ingrained "fear" response, the likes of which, if they were to happen to the students in the drama program, could prevent them from ever feeling comfortable or successful onstage and or taking risks in a classroom setting;

> The fear response is deeply ingrained in the human brain. Under threat of any kind — hunger, thirst, pain, shame, confusion, or too much, too new or too fast — we respond in ways to keep us safe. Our minds will focus only on the information that is, at that moment, important for survival. Fear kills curiosity and inhibits exploration.

Therefore, much like a child learning to ride a bicycle, by referring to these first two

performances as "dress rehearsals" we are providing them a form of emotional training-wheels, a kind of safeguard, for these young performers. This structure allows students an opportunity to allay what might otherwise be overwhelming feelings of pressure associated with the emotional complexities of performing for a live audience. In particular, helping them to avoid issues which might arise from a model offering only one opportunity for performance, easing the pressure associated with having a singular opportunity to "get it right", after working so hard to build and perfect their performances. This "dress rehearsal" construct is another intersection between education and performance theory. Professional theatre companies make a practice of hosting dress rehearsals as a way to acclimate performers to audiences, and their undeniable effect on live performance.

Allowing for a three performance model lessens the pressure for "perfection" which might otherwise accompany a singular performance opportunity. The purposeful repetition helps young performers process and overcome the conflicted emotions that can come, regardless of age, from performing for a live audience. Scheduling is such that the initial performance, or First Dress Rehearsal, takes place the week prior to the Second Dress Rehearsal and Final Parent Performance. This schedule also affords students opportunity to develop motivation to improve, as well as the time and space to receive and process feedback or reflect on intrinsic goals which can allow for individual improvements between the First and Second Dress Rehearsals.

Perhaps not surprising, students have reported that while they wait backstage for the show to begin, or for their character to take to the stage, they experience a full and varied range of complicated emotions. Feedback received directly from students reveals

that they are experiencing feelings ranging from excitement to nervousness, fear and/or

a general feeling of self-doubt or lack of confidence. The following methods are used in

supporting early-childhood and elementary performers in developing skills for

processing and self-managing the surge in energy and emotion related to live

performance:

- Ongoing inquiry-based conversations with student performers, more frequent for the youngest performers in PK-2 and diminishing in grades 3-5, throughout the rehearsal process supports a positive growth mindset related to the resilience needed for live performance.
- The youngest performers, PK and Kindergarten, attend between 4-6 in-house performances as observers before they take to the stage themselves, giving them an opportunity to see students not much older than themselves, who are part of their "community", take to the stage and succeed. Often these younger students have older siblings, or "buddies" they can watch onstage, helping create a desire to "have a turn" on the stage too.
- While backstage, performers listen to pre-show conversation asking the audience about their feeling prior to performing. This allows those backstage to compare and contrast their own feeling with others who have been in their place. This avenue of open discussion provides opportunities for PK students in an audience to inspire third grade students before they perform and vice versa. By sharing their experiences of being nervous or scared at the beginning of the play, and then comparing it to feeling proud and successful following the play, the students about to perform are reminded of the greater common experience and support inherent in the program.
- Guided post-show conversations between performers and observers (audiences made up of teachers and students both younger and older) provide an opportunity for all students to model and practice sharing and receiving compliments and constructive criticisms. The audience is asked to share ensemble-directed compliments with the cast. Feedback guidelines ask the audience to share; something that surprised them, something that made them think, something that they will remember or something that they felt was exceptionally executed. Actors receive these compliments and are able to use these as building blocks between their first, second and third performance opportunities. Following this, the audience is given an opportunity to share out compassionately phrased, thoughtful criticism to help the cast in their goal setting for forthcoming performances. We seek a total of one specific improvement for PK through Kindergarten, and up to three suggested offers for 1st through 4th grade depending on the resiliency of the overall group. The execution of

this interactive exercise allows for much flexibility. For example, a class group with more students identified as being of a self-critical or sensitive nature may only receive two suggested considerations for improvement, despite being in the upper school cluster.

Though referred to as "dress rehearsals", in actuality every performance is fully realized, meaning actors work upon the stage in front of an audience using costumes, lights and all other technical elements necessary to the production. However, the "rehearsal" terminology allows young students to see the pending experience in a more manageable light. For PK students, an adult narrator is present onstage throughout the production, providing support with lines, blocking and modeling physical and vocal character animation. For kindergarten that adult narrator moves to the side-stage but contributes to the production similarly to that of the onstage narrator in pre-kindergarten. For first grade and beyond the classroom teacher remains seated on the side-stage and performs the duties of a side-coach/prompter. Although memorization is requested of pre-k and kindergarten students, and required beyond kindergarten, the presence of a side-coach/prompter alleviates possible obstacles presented by the ongoing development of retention and memory in young students.

In an effort to share out some details of what students experience as they move through the program year to year, here are highlights of how the program unfolds thematically at each grade level:

- Pre-kindergarten through first grade uses existing stories or books which best align with themes defined collaboratively by classroom and drama teachers. Each year scripts are adapted to the emerging skill-sets in the class group.
- Second graders are the upper-threshold of the lower school, they engage in a unique project that centers on the study of the Well-Made Play. Each second grade class, with guidance from the drama teacher, undertakes the generation of an original script based on their ideas and collaborative efforts. An element of "design thinking" is introduced as students design and build their own costumes.
- Third grade performs original scripts based in ancient mythology. Projects rotate

between Greece, Ireland and India. As part of the project, classroom teachers oversee an expanded country study, students do research and present power points on the county's economy, geography, cultural practices, language and so on. A pen-pal project with students in the origin countries has been established and when time zones allow, the class groups set up a Skype meeting for questions and answers with their buddy class.

- Fourth grade performs truncated works of Shakespeare. Students work with the original language and story lines, but scripts are cut to an hour in length. Currently, we rotate between *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. We partner with the Seattle Shakespeare Company, a highly recognized Seattle theatre entity, to frontload the experience for students with workshops in iambic-pentameter, stage combat, and text and language exploration.
- Both fifth-grade classes are combined and move off campus to perform at a professional theatre in a one hour *performance-art* piece that is less based in plot and story, but which incorporates dance and vocal work as well as a text component.
- All class groups are provided opportunities to attend their choice of performances throughout the school year with an opportunity to see up to twelve productions a year. A guided post show discussion which allows students to share compliments as well as constructive criticisms with the performing class takes place after every performance.

Like the ever-changing kinesthetic nature of live performance, over the 20 years I have been teaching at Bertschi School, the drama programs growth points have shifted between fine-tuning the curricular challenges which related to its theatre component and/or the program revisions driven by shifts and changes in classroom curriculum. The full description of the program curriculum as shared with parents in the Bertschi School Curriculum Guide is found in the Appendix. (Appendix A). It highlights in more detail the unique projects that have been scaffolded to support each grade level.

Act II, Scene I:

Pioneers and Major Movements in Drama-Education

In all of the time I had been working as a theatre teaching artist, I had never

thought to explore how others had adapted theatre into an educational model. All of the

work I had manifested came without prior knowledge of the TIE Movement in Britain, of

its effect on the Drama Education movement in the United States, or of the

inexhaustible writings on the subject from scholars and artists. I was working completely

unaware of how much of what I was introducing, practicing, and executing in the drama

program could be linked to previously discovered and debated drama educational

practices and methodology.

A good seventy-plus years prior to my efforts to generate my own theatre-

immersion projects in elementary school, research into the field of creative dramatics

and drama in education had begun in both the United States and the UK. As Gavin

Bolton notes in his article "Changes in Thinking About Drama Education," drama

education emerged in both countries as a result of a major shift toward child-centered

education, a foundational element of the approach I developed at Bertschi. Major shifts

in the recognition of drama education's value in the United States showed spark in

1900's, noted a discussion point in what was originally a set of three lectures translated

into text by John Dewey. These lectures, when captured in written form, were combined

under the title of The School and Society, Being Three Lectures. In a section entitled

The School and the Life of the Child, Dewey speaks to a major shift in educational

theory: "Now the change which is coming into our education is shifting the center of

gravity . . . the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve;

he is the center about which they are organized" (51). It is important to note, however,

that Dewey's writing came after that of the United Kingdom's Harriet Finlay-Johnson.

Finlay-Johnson, Bolton notes, gave us "the earliest example of the kind of classroom

drama in which the irrelevance of an audience was stressed" (152). He ascertains that

the UK's shift from the "empty pitcher" model to the child-centered "flowering seed"

model was a key driver in the inclusion of drama-education in UK public schools. As a

result, Bolton writes, as early as the 1870's:

> In the eyes of the progressives, drama was seen as "the play way
>
> to education...Teachers with a flair for drama thus found themselves as banner
>
> carriers for the new education movement and drama was introduced into schools
>
> under the shibboleths of "child-centeredness," "activity-method," and "self-
>
> expression." (152)

 In both of these cases, the incorporation of drama education in the classroom was a

byproduct of a shift in methodology in education at an institutional level. This shift saw

educators embracing a model that included the incorporation and application of "make-

believe play" as a tool for classroom learning. Although drama may have been the

subject matter, Bolton shares that with Finlay-Johnson's methods, "The primary focus of

attention was not on the child's opportunity for self-expression, but on a body of

knowledge dictated by the school curriculum. Dramatic activity was seen as a vehicle

for the acquisition of knowledge" (152).

Hence, we have the inclusion of drama education, but it has now become the

filter through which facts and data are being introduced, explored and adopted by the

students. The focus on the "aesthetics" and or the value and importance of drama in its

pure form, as a generative art form, were not prioritized in this model. Bolton highlights

that what often went "unnoticed" about Finlay-Johnson's work was "the very real

innovation" that "dramatic method had little to do with getting pupils ready for a public

performance", with Finlay-Johnson seeing her incorporation of drama rather as a "dynamic way of illumination knowledge" (p153).

The UK saw the next major shift in the institutionalization of drama education come as an outgrowth of the "speech and drama" movement, during the 1920's–1950's. Bolton highlights a conflict with the application of drama education instruction as he notes;

> What the movement offered was some sense of standard. The view of drama as a "progressive" subject gained government support as early as 1905. However, official enthusiasm was somewhat tempered by the government inspectors' concerns about the need for teachers to be more specific about what they were actually teaching through drama. (153)

Perhaps a most notable impact to the field came as a result of instructors shifting the way they "employed" drama education as a result of the speech and drama movement. Drama-education now became the focus of the instruction rather than just an avenue to teach random and desired subjects of choice, as it had been for Findlay-Johnson. Bolton highlights that, as a result of the speech and drama movement, over time:

> Other skills related to the art of acting crept in. Play productions became the teacher's goal; the subject of speech and drama became a vehicle for training children to act. To cater to this philosophy schools needed to be staffed by specialists. (153)

For the first time, the students' confidence and communication methods are mentioned as instructional foci and goals are set around these aspects.

During the 1930's and 40's Peter Slade (UK) swung the pendulum back the other direction. Bolton details, "[Slade] deplored public performances, the proscenium arch, the use of scripts and the training of children to act, and, above all, teacher intervention in children's playing. Rather, he encouraged spontaneity of expression" (p153). Bolton goes on to say, educators interested in incorporating an element of drama education into their curriculum were faced with making a choice between the two styles. And, perhaps even more difficult for them, as a result of the introduction of Slade's practicum, it appeared that "the school play and child play were seen as incompatible" (p153).

In 1967, Brian Way, through the creation of a series of exercises and techniques born from early Stanislavski methodology, presented the notion that "drama was concerned with the 'individuality of the individual,' a phrase which echoed the philosophy of progressive education in the 1960's" (154). Bolton expresses opposition with this thinking:

> I suggest that to see drama in this way is to misunderstand drama. Of all the arts, drama is a collective experience, celebrating, or commenting, not on how we are different from each other, but on what we share, on the ways we are alike. (154)

Further, Bolton asserts:

> Drama is not self-expression; it is a form of group symbolism seeking universal, not individual truths. Progressive educators throughout the century have been mistaken in their view of drama as child-centered and self-expressive and drama teachers have been foolish to believe them!

Perhaps as a result of the conflict in opinion and application, or perhaps due to new theories and educational methodologies, the interest and fascination with drama

education fell off during the 1970's.

It was not until Dorothy Heathcote came on the scene in the 1980's that drama education, and the controversy of how and why it should hold a place in the classroom, reemerged. Bolton credits Heathcote with representing a "Herculean attempt to bring dramatic form back to classroom drama, to redefine the relationship between drama and education, and to recast the role of the teacher"(154). Heathcote believed that children should work toward autonomy, and that power was not something to be handed to children, but rather something earned from them through their actions and engagements. Much like my own development of the technique I use with the youngest early-childhood students I work with, her approach included the teacher playing a "role" in relation to the children.

In his conclusion, Bolton addresses that he sees as common to all the drama-education pioneers throughout history the assumption that "when pupils are involved in drama some kind of learning occurs" (155). He highlights that teachers who employ drama-education feel it has growth potential and a myriad of positive influences on things like:

- Self-esteem
- Confidence
- The ability to be a member of a group
- Improve communication skills
- Improve problem-solving skills
- Establish skills in drama

Bolton concludes "Changes in Thinking About Drama Education" by noting about

drama-education:

> The need is urgent. We are not teaching pupils to cope with the complexities of
> relationships in a modern society; in future year's drama may become one of the
> important means of dealing with this pressing concern. (156)

<center>Act II, Scene II: The Final Creative Project Presents Itself</center>

As a full time elementary school drama teacher who has a classroom that doubles as a fifty-seat black box theatre, I am like a unicorn in the theatre-education world. The singularity of what I do is both glorious and isolating. At times my job is like running a micro-theatre with a season to plan and shows to budget, design, construct and produce. Without an artistic staff, I oversee and am responsible for the generation and execution of everything from scripts to costumes and backdrops, overseeing each of these elements from design through to construction. All with a primary emphasis on process while pushing for a visually intriguing and captivating theatre product.

Beyond all of the creative and organizational work imbedded in running the "theatre," I am also a teacher. I teach students how to navigate in the world beyond their classrooms by exposing them to the world of theatre. I teach what is expected of them backstage and onstage. I work with them to learn how to take direction, work as a team, take risks, explore options, and to understand and represent a story and the characters within it. Younger students learn how to take turns, share the spotlight, and understand what self-advocacy is as they learn how to find their voice.

I produce a thirteen-show season in nine months, casting two hundred and forty-five children in roles that will teach them a little about who they are, how art relates to them, and how to become confident in who they are in the story of their own lives. A

unicorn. When researching this paper, I had difficulty finding national data from comparative programs that worked within pre-k through 5th grade, putting every participant onstage in front of an audience in a full-scale production. Although I did find evidence of limited comparable programs which included the integration of theatre within education settings, and that incorporated developmentally ready curricula, the bulk of that work exists outside of the early and primary education realm. I could not find evidence of a program that spans the full 7 year sequence linking pre-k to fifth grade. As part of my Final Creative Project, I knew that I wanted to identify similar program models and through comparison, examine how I might elevate technique and processes developed while at Bertschi School. However, in working to this end, it soon became clear that what I was doing was unique. Although I did find articles and data looking at theatre education through a pedagogical lens, evidence or specific data to a program such as mine eluded me.

Unable to access data associated with a program of its magnitude, my FCP became about securing my own data. The project became about researching and establishing the important long-term effects perpetuated by the drama program for the purpose of sharing that data in efforts to advocate for theatre-based programing with early childhood and elementary learners.

METHODS

Act III: Establishing Anchor Changes

Scene I: In Search of Credible, Relevant, and Timely Evidence

This paper seeks to answer the question, how can I use my professional

experience developing a theatre-based curriculum for early-childhood and elementary students as a platform to advocate for the importance of theatre-based curricula in early and elementary education? In order to become an advocate, I needed a foundation from which to advocate. I needed proof of the programs efficacy and value within its early-childhood and elementary setting.

I had unlimited anecdotal evidence of the drama programs popularity from years worth of letters and thank you notes received from parents and students. I also had access to limited survey feedback from bi-annual parent and student exit surveys distributed by school administration. In order to realize my goal, the centerpiece of this research paper would be the collection of credible, relevant, and timely evidence of its lasting effects on alumni. This evidence could then be made available to other educators, administrators and theatre artists in hopes it might support arguments for perpetuating the retention and or implementation of theatre-based programming in other schools and communities.

Knowing nothing about data collection, I reached out to Veronica Smith, MSEE, Data Scientist & Principal at the data science firm data2insight[5], located in Seattle Washington. After spending 2 hours on the phone with Smith describing the program and my reasons for reaching out to her, she invited me to meet with her at the data2insight offices in Seattle Washington to learn about Strategic Evaluation. In our first meeting Ms. Smith introduced me to the four steps of Strategic Evaluation, and suggested I use the Theory of Change (TOC) method to gather data for my project. Center for The Theory of Change defines TOC processes as:

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[5] http://data2insight.com

Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or "filling in" what has been described as the "missing middle" between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to occur.

Through the Harvard Family Research Project, the Harvard Graduate School of

Education offers further insight into TOC[6]:

A theory of change (TOC) is a tool for developing solutions to complex social problems. A basic TOC explains how a group of early and intermediate accomplishments sets the stage for producing long-range results. A more complete TOC articulates the assumptions about the process through which change will occur and specifies the ways in which all of the required early and intermediate outcomes related to achieving the desired long-term change will be brought about and documented as they occur.

Over the next several months I continued to attend bi-weekly meetings and learn from

Ms. Smith, who, when speaking of the "desired long-term change" above, began using

the term, "Anchor Changes." Within the TOC evaluative process Anchor Changes are

the internalized and permanent effects or outcomes of an experience which remain

even after the experience ends. In this case, the Anchor Changes are the long term

changes and or effects of participation in a theatre-based drama program spanning pre-

kindergarten through to 5th grade.

The Theory of Change (TOC) is a four-step process: Map, Focus, Gather, and

Share and Learn. I used these four TOC steps to identify the primary Anchor Changes[7]

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[6] Anderson, Andrea. "An Introduction To Theory of Change." *Harvard Graduate School of Education*. Harvard Family Research Project, Summer 2005. Web. 24 June 2017. <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/evaluation-methodology/an-introduction-to-theory-of-change>. Volume XI, Number 2, Summer 2005 Issue Topic: Evaluation Methodology

[7] *Anchor Changes* are the long-term and lasting effects one wants to see as a result of optimal success in the application of an experience or product.

of the theatre-based program on its participants:

1. Map: Develop program of Theory of Action and Theory of Change

2. Focus: Formulate and prioritize evaluation questions

3. Gather: Collect and analyze data using the most rigorous methods possible

4. Share and learn: Communicate and reflect on the answer to the questions.

Our meetings progressed and Smith began to tutor my application of the TOC model to the drama program. As I learned about TOC it became clear that the kind of data I needed would come from two sources; professional educators and administrators who could speak to the effects of the program they had witnessed, and program alumni and their families who could speak to evidence of ongoing behaviors attributed to the Anchor Changes associated with the program. I needed access to students and parents who had moved beyond the program who could reflect on their observations of its ongoing effects. The project became about obtaining data through the execution of interviews with a cross section of administrators and colleagues, and to somehow secure data from alumni through a survey. Oddly enough, much like scheduling a theater performance, in order to start the TOC process of Strategic Evaluation, one must start at the outcome and work backwards. To generate the survey, I needed to identify and define for myself a clear set of Anchor Changes which I could work backwards from.

Optimally, I would have like to identify a larger set of Anchor Changes, say 4-6, providing evidence of as many possible benefits from the program as possible. However, given the time constraints of the project, I decided instead to gather more detail on a limited number of Anchor Changes. In the case of the Bertschi Drama

Program, I was hoping to see evidence of the following three Anchor Changes in my program participants:

1. *Evidence of increased willingness to engage in healthy risk-taking*

   For example, a child or students self-motivated effort to explore and or engage in new experiences such as trying out for a club or team they have no experience with, offering to run for student government, and/or act as a speaker or leader in a new capacity

2. *Evidence of increased empathy for the human condition*

   For example, showing care or understanding for others who differ from them, and/or who are in need, or their ability to recognize and express their own emotions and feelings within family and peer relationships

3. *Evidence of exposure to vocabulary in an applied format*

   For example, a student's continued understanding or use of words or phrases initially introduced through the act of memorization, recitation and/or observation while working in a repetitive rehearsal format with the text of a play script

Readers may question why I did not include "evidence of growth in confidence" as one of the Anchor Changes. That seems like an obvious outcome of a program which requires children to perform in front of an audience. As I launched the survey and conducted the Key Observer Interviews, I did include questions about the evidence of increased confidence as a result of program participation. However, for the purpose of the primary research points, Ms. Smith pointed out that "if a student were engaged in the act of ongoing healthy risk-taking, that in itself would indicate a presence of confidence and self-assurance" (Personal Interview, Mar 17, 2017). Therefore, the use

of "evidence of healthy risk taking" instead of "evidence of confidence" as an Anchor Change, seemed a more informative way of capturing evidence of the presence of confidence.

With the Anchor Changes defined, I began the process of working backwards to identify *short-term* and *long-term* goals within the program, think catalysts, which were the cause of the Anchor Changes. With Mrs. Smith's help, I identified early elementary (Pre-K to 2nd grade) as a student's time of short term change and the 3rd through 5th grade years as those years students engage in instruction which would generate long-term change. With the short and long term change categories defined, I began working backwards from the three Anchor Changes listed above to define how both the short and long term changes could culminate in a permanent, lasting change in the program participants. The details of the short and long term changes can be found in a series of graphic organizers (Appendix B) in the appendix of the paper. By having identified both the Anchor Changes and the short and long term pathways to achieve those changes, it was time to begin surveying alumni students and parents as to what, if any, evidence they could provide which would speak to the three Anchor Changes I had identified. The Anchor Changes highlighted above became the center pieces of both the questions asked in the Key Observer Interviews, as well as those constructed for the survey.

Act III, Scene II: Key Observer Interview and Survey Detail

I identified 10 individuals to participate in the Key Observer interviews using the following criteria: three school administrators, two lower and one upper school classroom teacher, two current students, two current parents. I conducted these

interviews myself and also oversaw the transcription of the interviews. With ongoing guidance and advisement from Mrs. Smith at Data2insight, I learned how to code and process the interviews in such a way as to identify quotations that support or contradict the presence of any or all defined Anchor Changes. The interview data is framed in the Discussion section and although complete interviews are not detailed within the paper, they are archived and available for review upon request.

I then generated and distributed two separate surveys. One survey distributed to the parents and the other to the students of the 2014-2016 graduating class groups. There were approximately 40 students in each of the graduating classes, and two separate surveys were sent to each "family" address. I distributed one survey to be completed by the parent(s), and one to be completed by the alumni/graduate of the program. I used SurveyMonkey to disseminate the survey, with support and guidance in its generation from Ms. Smith of Data2Insight, who I continued to meet with on a weekly basis while preparing the survey for launch. I collected the addresses to which I sent the survey, with the permission and consent of our head of school, from the Bertschi Advancement and Marketing office, who use the addresses to communicate with families about Alumni and other special events hosted by the school. Participants had four weeks to contribute to the survey, which was launched on Thursday, April 27th and left open until Sunday, May 29th. During the time the surveys were open, I issued two general reminders promoting participation to each of the survey groups. On the second to last weekend of the 4 week survey period I sent personalized reminder emails to 40 individual alumni families to improve response rates in an effort to improve data credibility. Complete survey results and analysis can be made available upon request.

RESULTS

Act III, Scene III: The Survey Says

With support from Mrs. Smith, I have isolated and installed comparative tables highlighting responses from only those questions directly related to evidence of the three Anchor Changes. The process for constructing these Figures consisted of isolating the three questions directly related to my forecast Anchor Changes and overlaying both the Parent and Student responses into the three comparative tables below.

Figure A. Over 70% of drama program alumni (n=27) and over 60% of parents (n=51) reported that the program contributed to a great or very great extent to an increase in students' healthy risk taking.
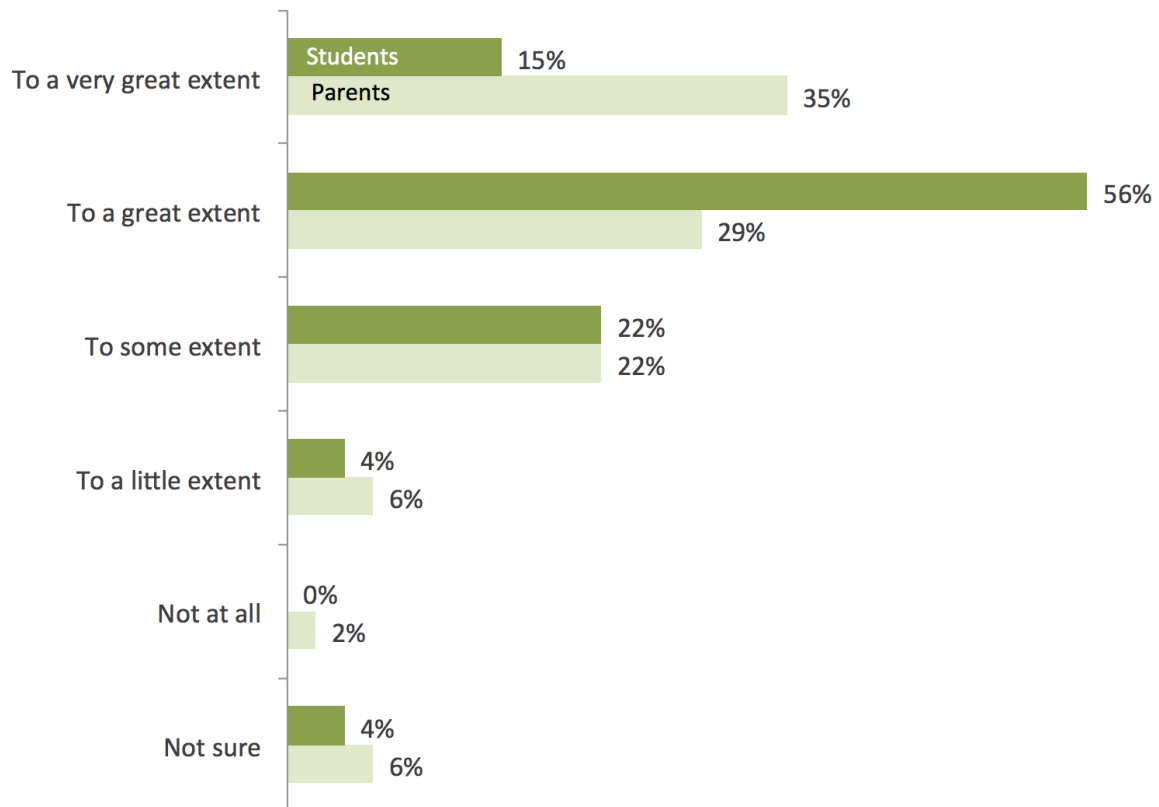
Figure B. Nearly half of drama program alumni (n=27) and 30% of parents (n=51) reported that the program contributed to a great or very great extent to an increase in students' understanding of or empathy for others.

To a very great extent
- Students: 15%
- Parents: 16%

To a great extent
- 33%
- 14%

To some extent
- 37%
- 45%

To a little extent
- 11%
- 10%

Not at all
- 4%
- 4%

Not sure
- 0%
- 12%
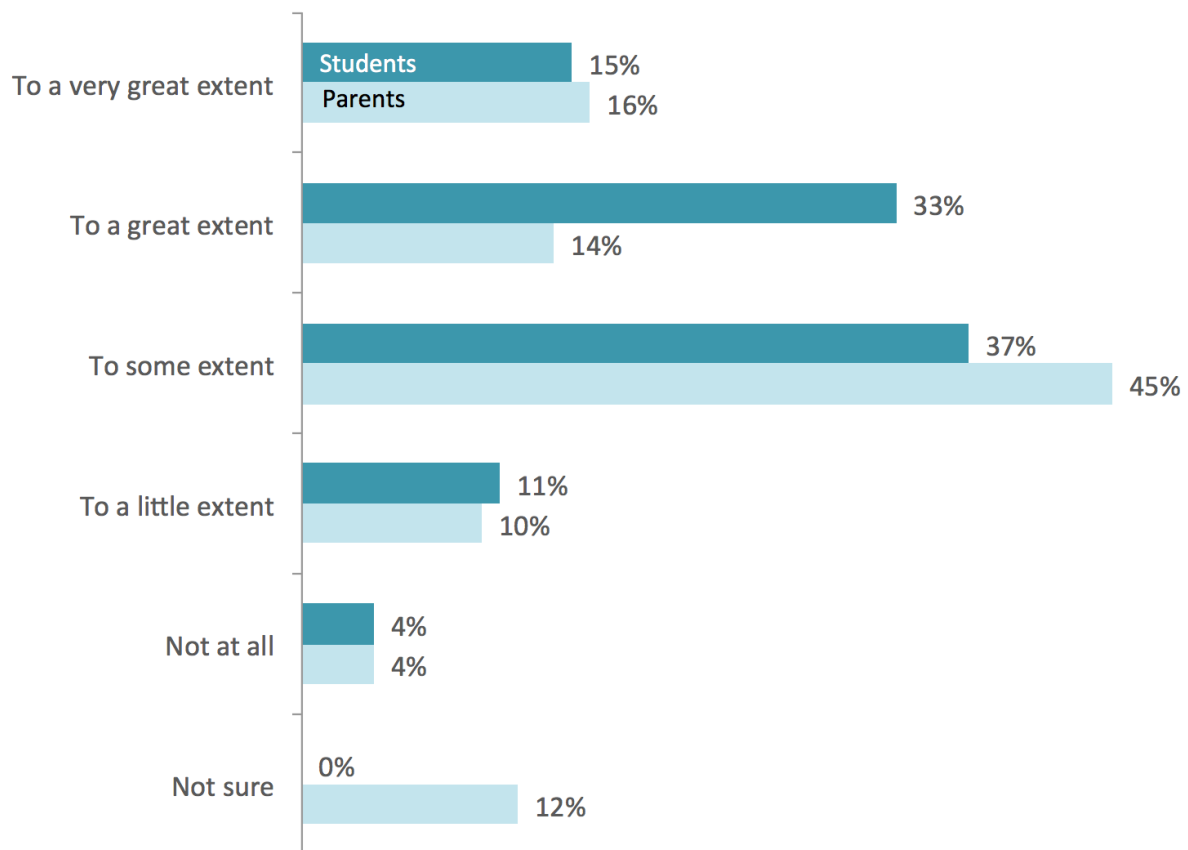
Figure C. Nearly half of drama program alumni (n=27) and parents (n=51) reported that the program contributed to a great or very great extent to an increase in students exposure, understanding and/or use of vocabulary.
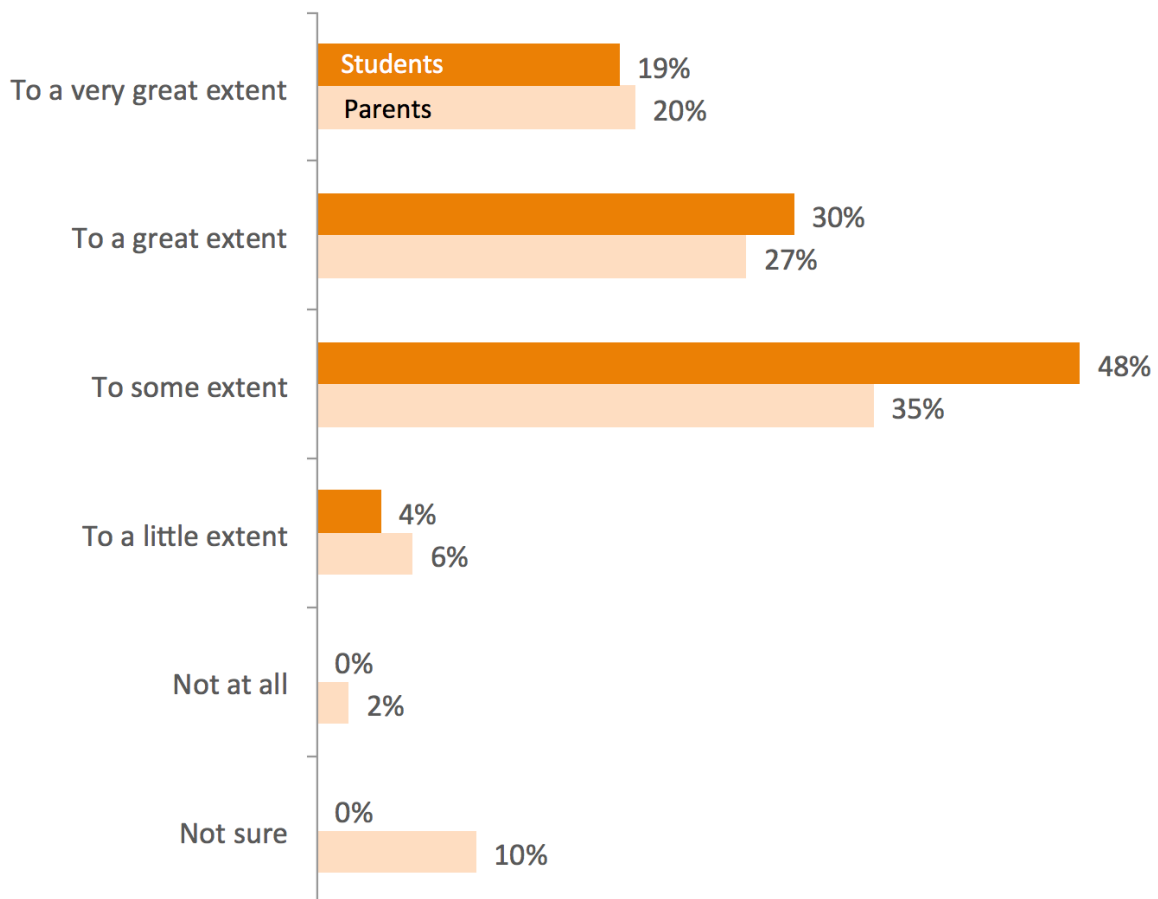
DISCUSSION

Post-Show Discussion; Discussing Anchor Change Subtext

I received 51 (N=51) parent responses and 27 (N=27) student responses. Aside from the Parent/Student Alumni Surveys I conducted Key Observer Interviews. I conducted 10 interviews with a cross section of people familiar with the program. This group included classroom teachers who have participated first hand in the program with their class groups, school administrators, and exiting parent and students duos. Given that both of the Survey's were geared at school alumni and family, I wanted to get some data from exiting families as well. None of the interview participants were given the questions in advance; all were introduced to them at the time of the interview. I have put more comparative information about this interview group in the Appendix. (Appendix C)

For purposes of this discussion, I will make reference the data percentages in the three Figures found in the Results section of the paper. Much of the data I collected during the execution of the project came in the form of written feedback, either taken from the comment section of the survey, or as text transcribed from the interviews. I will discuss major trends represented in the data results and link them to examples from both the survey commentary section and the interview text. In an effort to represent and discuss the varying and complex responses offered through these two forms of data collection, I will break the discussion into three sections. One section to address each of the major Anchor Changes, and a final section to share and address overt trends and or unexpected responses present in the data.

Evidence of increased willingness to engage in healthy risk-taking.

This may present as a child or students self-motivated effort to explore and or engage in new experiences such as; trying out for a club or team they have no experience with, offering to run for student government and or act as a speaker or leader in a new or increased capacity. The data from Figure A confirms that over 70% of drama program alumni (n=27) reported that the program contributed to a great or very great extent to an increase in students' healthy risk taking. Overall, nineteen students out of the twenty-seven respondents shared detail in the commentary section to offer examples of evidence of willingness to engage in healthy risk-taking. In one of the more comprehensive responses, a 2014 program graduate identified a correlation between experiencing and being supported through the feelings and pressures associated with performing in front of an audience and developing the skill to remain confident in uncomfortable situations :

> I feel that the drama program had a really big influence on me. It was a consistent (positive) pressure throughout my elementary school experience that pushed me to perform and be confident in putting myself out there. It really helped me be comfortable being uncomfortable and also helped me be less shy (when I started at Bertschi I was VERY shy). I've been able to draw on my experience with the drama program (and therefore my experience with slightly uncomfortable situations) to help me be more confident in other parts of my life. Specifically, this year I auditioned for Vocal and Dance classes, which is something I never really thought I'd be able/willing to do.

A student who graduated in 2015 alluded to mitigating the casting aspect of the program and how that became a risk-taking experience for them. They noted that having to step outside their comfort zone when not getting the part they wanted in a play became their

pathway to growth:

> I learned that playing any character was fun, not just my favorite one or two, and that I learned most when I stepped out of my comfort zone.

Yet another 2014 graduate went into detail about the experience of developing confidence and becoming comfortable onstage. They identified the importance of the presence of a "community that pushes you to try something new." Citing this as a foundational confidence building element which, in retrospect, gave them confidence to trust in themselves as they joined a dance program at their middle school and to sing in front of their peers:

> The Bertschi Drama program helped me become comfortable on stage and speaking in public. Growing up in a community that pushes you try something new is one of the most important things I learned from Tina. I joined a dance program in middle school and feel very confident on stage. I also feel confident talking to people I don't know. Most recently, I sang in front of my peers. The first time I did I was shaking and extremely nervous. But, the second time I thought back to all of the times I performed at Bertschi and how that was such an accepting community.

Finally, in a short statement a student sums up the healthy-risk taking link by commenting on self-advocacy skills when trying out for a new sport in middle school:

> I'm trying to get a new ultimate Frisbee team at my school and I'm not afraid to ask.

The parent response to this question was also very informative. Much like the students, a majority of parents also drew a link between evidence of healthy risk taking and their child participation in the drama program. The data from Figure A confirms that over 60% of parents (n=51) reported that the program contributed to a great or very great extent to an increase in students' healthy risk taking. The comments ranged from simple

observations about their child taking the risk to join an "interest group" alongside upperclassmen, stating that within the group he "contributes his ideas freely". Another parent, describing his son as "naturally tentative", expounds on what he observes of his child's transition into middle school:

> My son, who is naturally tentative, has been able to try new activities with ease including trying out two new sports. Being on stage through the Bertschi Drama Program undoubtedly has been a factor in his confidence in middle school and his willingness to try new things.

Here, a parent speaks of how a once very shy child grew and blossomed as a result of the opportunities available to her in the drama program and how she continues to show signs of healthy risk-taking. It is interesting to note here that the parent also mentions the programs cumulative effect:

> My very shy daughter began at Bertschi in 1st grade. She was deathly afraid of the stage and refused an individual speaking part. Tina said that was OK, and worked with our daughter over the next couple of years. In third grade our daughter was willing to (excited to I should say) take on one of the lead parts and did very well. She did a great job, was very proud of it, and I believe it was a turning point in her life where she became confident enough to stand in front of lots of people she didn't know well and perform. Now that she is in middle school I have seen her perform and present many times with much confidence and poise. I really doubt she would have been able to do so as well as she has without the Bertschi drama program. Not only was this specific example an important confidence builder, so was the cumulative experience of working with others to practice and perform, year after year.

A majority of parent responders spoke to the acts and actions of their children as showing "confidence" and acknowledge a link to the drama program. Some of the evidence they cite is specific to showing risk-taking when asked to present in front of an audience not as a character, but as themselves. Here is an example:

> It's tough to sort out influences of course, but our son stood tall and tackled a controversial topic at his Bar Mitzvah. He delivered the message with sincerity, and seemed uncomfortable in front of all those people, but I think he was more confident because of the Bertschi experience in drama. Overall the curriculum

teaches kids to stand and deliver. The drama program is a KEY piece of that.

One of the most thoughtful responses comes from a parent of two program alumni, a

2016 and a 2013 (a year not included in the survey group) graduate, who each had a

very different experience in the program. They are very honest about one of the children

showing a lack of willingness to participate in drama when he came to Bertschi as a

third grader. The respondent goes on to address his son's growth in the program as it

relates to differentiation, making the point that a shift from introversion to extroversion is

not necessarily how to measure the effects of the drama program on healthy risk-taking.

Here is his somewhat long response, but with a thoughtful, well articulated point:

> Upon arriving at Bertschi in the third grade, my son would be considered "very unwilling" to get in front of a crowd for any reason, so the breaking down of that fear with real experience in the classroom and in performance settings at Bertschi has meaningfully helped him with his anxiety about these activities. He is still not great at it, but I would say this improved him from "very unwilling" to "not-psyched about it, but able to do it." My older Bertschi child (2013) is more comfortable getting in front of groups and this shows up regularly in her activities and abilities and classroom engagement. She used her Bertschi witches monologue during an audition for a Broadway Bound play and earned a part. During middle school, she was able to sing full-song solos on stage in front of large groups and performed a song and played the guitar at her graduation ceremony. In her first year of high school, she had a meaningful acting role in a recent play. And pretty soon, she will be (doing a) performing at a coffee house. My daughter is actually an introvert and performing does make her nervous, but she is able to get up and do these things in front of folks with good results in part because she has had practice in a safe environment along the way. The contrast in kids is important because not every kid will become confident achievers in every way. The transition of a kid from "totally not confident" to "somewhat confident" is as valuable as the transition of a kid from "somewhat confident" to "totally confident." Another way that the drama program helps prepare kids for middle school is that it is a team-based activity, and middle school tends to rely more heavily on group projects, group work. So being able to work collaboratively with others who may not all want to put in the same effort, may not always be on the same page, or as committed - those are real life skills that require practice and effort to get good at.

And finally, although all of the commentary represented affirmation in relation to the

question relating the drama program to evidence of ongoing healthy risk-taking, this final comment captures many of the aspects of the approach used in the drama program as evidentiary to her child's experience as related to her child's ability to self-advocate:

> For our daughter, drama and the school performance were the primary reasons she was able to become a strong advocate for herself and others. The roles she played demanded a wide range of emotions and expressing these emotions with realism required a level of uncomfortness that was reduced by practice. The entire drama classroom was a safe area where students were expected to embrace the role given and "make it their own" without judgment or expectation.

Finally, although not evidence from years of development like the comments above, this comment from the Key Observer Interview of a colleague with 10 years of experience teaching in early-childhood who worked within the program with her class, speaks to evidence of healthy risk-taking she observes in her young students as they first begin working in the program:

> I think the fact that they're exposed to it at that age, when their thinking is still also fluid and they are open to new experiences, just because of where they are developmentally, and they don't necessarily know it's something to be nervous about or fearful of, that they definitely are more willing to get up there and to take those risks in a healthy, safe setting and then it just becomes natural for them.

Anchor Change #2

Evidence of increased empathy for the human condition

Showing care or understanding for others who differ from them, and or who are in need, or their ability to recognize and express their own emotions and feelings within family and peer relationships. As depicted in Figure B., nearly half of drama program alumni (n=27) reported that the program contributed to a great or very great extent to an increase in their understanding of or empathy for others.

A number of students surveyed identified recognizing how the drama program influenced and affected their empathetic systems. This 2014 program graduate shared that although the drama program could not be singularly be credited with deepening their empathetic systems, involvement in the program was a factor:

> I wouldn't say it is the only thing that helped me find compassion for others, but it definitely taught me to ignore other people's mistakes. It taught me that it isn't the end of the world if someone messed up a line, but just another way to take the script in another direction.

While this 2014 graduate did not think participating in the program had any effects on their empathetic systems or in helping them develop understanding for others, saying:

> It hasn't really contributed at all. While I am understanding and empathetic, it is not because of the Bertschi drama program.

The response of this 2016 graduate identifies some of the ways I have pictured the program to support this Anchor Change in the programs graduates:

> When we rehearse, we talk about the story and how those people in the story are feeling. Also, when we practice we see other people maybe do things that they don't usually do and that helps you support other people and understand how they are feeling.

While another 2016 alumni highlighted how the themes and stories which became the basis for plays they participated in where the key to how they learned about diversity and developed an understanding for diversity and individuality of others:

> Having lots of plays from all over the world and sometimes based off of books. It helped me understand all of the characters had their own different and exciting lives to share. By learning that it opened a lot of new connections with my new friends.

The comments above are a sample of 17 comments that were offered in response to this question. I have tried to represent the spectrum of responses from the survey.

Figure B. highlights that although 45% of parents surveyed believed that the drama

program effected an increase in their child's understanding of and empathy for others

"*to some extent*", only 30% of parents (n=51) reported that the program contributed to

this Anchor Change "*to a great"* or "*to a very great"* extent. Fifteen (n=51) parents

shared details in the form of comments, including this parent who spoke to how acting

as a character other than himself helped their son become more empathetic:

> Drama in elementary school has helped my child empathize and think about the
> perspective of others while acting in the role of characters different from him.

Another parent went into detail as to how the experience of working to support

classmates during the rehearsal and performance process developed empathy in their

son which they define as having stayed with him as he began middle school:

> My son and his classmates really supported each other throughout the drama
> program. With the direction of the teacher they learned to be there for each other
> and lift each other up. They definitely developed a sense of "we are in this
> together." This has definitely carried over into middle school.

Making reference to the team-like bond that can be a part of a performance ensemble,

this parent also identifies the presence of empathy as related to understanding

difference within the construct of the experience for their daughter:

> Drama and performance is a team sport. And when you are on a team, you have
> to be aware of all team members' strengths, weaknesses, personalities and
> inhibitions. Our daughter is empathetic in general (not always) and I think being a
> team member for each play helped her figure out how to be a part of a team
> where everyone does things differently, but all members have to work together to
> pull off the performance. I think working with the team several weeks each of the
> five years helped reinforce how important empathy is when working with
> someone on a long term project.

Perhaps not surprising, some of the Key Observer Interviews expanded on how they

see the presence of the drama program teaching to empathy in ways many other areas

of study are not equipped to do. This comment came as a response from an

administrator with 30 years of experience in education. The response was to the

question about evidence of empathy:

> Taking on another character and the way it's done here, with such attention to what is developmentally appropriate, is the road toward empathy, right? You're, you're literally walking in another person's shoes, or another character shoes, and costume, and that allows you to feel another skin, and then, to kind of sense, "wow, this must be what it's like to be this person", or this type of person. And while the little ones may not be completely aware of that, again it's, it's developing those habits, right- habits over time?

The last comment I want to share is again from the early-childhood teacher. I find this

comment important to include as theatre based programing which asks early-childhood

students to engage in the emotional and risk based act of performing in front of an

audience can be considered to complex of an experience for these pre-kindergarten

learners. However, this work can be not only developmentally appropriate, but it can be

an opportunity to normalize the experience of theatre, acting and build an understand of

the complexities of their emotional selves by exploring empathy through story and

theatre. Here is what she responded to the questions of the program's ability to increase

empathy for others through the use of story as a model:

> I think that is something that is evident throughout the drama process. Firstly, it comes in with, you know, when you are deciding on the story. And talking about, "What will the different characters feel"? You know, for younger children, it often is easier for them to identify emotion or feeling in characters versus in themselves or their friends. So it's good practice for kids just to have that language. And that experience of, "Oh, well this character would be really mad at this part of the story because the wolf ate the cake", or whatever the story is. So there's the opportunity for children, just through the story, and plus to sort of engage in, you know, emotions and feelings.

Recognizing that the introduction of story can happen independently of theatre or performance, this teacher goes on to specifically address the elements of performance that could shy teachers away from moving these young students onto the stage to experience what it takes to support one another in a performance ensemble:

> But then also, the more relatable piece, like supporting your friends. So, you know, as they are up on stage, "Well, how can you support the actors on stage"? You know, we can give them our full attention, and we can laugh at appropriate parts, and we can clap to show appreciation for the hard work. And, just be able to talk with kids about, everybody has those feelings of nervousness. So like, how do we get through that together as a group, to put on this amazing play for parents? So, I think throughout the process of the drama program there's a lot of different ways for kids to engage in emotion and feeling, and the expression of that.

My colleague suggests here that by experiencing this kind of teacher guided opportunity to explore emotion in self and others, early-learners have a testing ground to not just experience emotions but to witness and learn to identify feelings, then to go beyond this and learn how to put words to feeling and advocate or empathize with how they or others are feeling.

Anchor Change #3

Evidence of exposure to vocabulary in an applied format

Examples being: a student's continued understanding or use of vocabulary, words or phrases, initially introduced through memorization, recitation and/or observation while working in a repetitive rehearsal format with the text of a play script. I often call this the "car radio effect." As you drive and your favorite radio station repetitiously plays the songs it knows it listeners expect, without purposefully committing those songs to memory, somehow we come to know them by heart. Over the 10-14 week rehearsal period, individual students are working to memorize words, but as the ensemble

rehearses with one another over that extended period, every student in that class group is exposed to the vocabulary embedded in the script, over and over and over again. As all of the scripts we use, with the exception of Shakespeare, are written in house, we have the power to identify the vocabulary we want imbedded into each script at every grade-level. If we are working with cultural or historical themes, students are exposed to unique words and pronunciations that they might not otherwise encounter in an elementary setting. I will often purposefully make a choice to include a few unique words in any given script, so as to have an opportunity to push students to another level in their early exposure to the beauty and power of language. We take time to stop and talk about the power of word choice, and how certain words can create feeling in the audience, affecting their suspension of disbelief and investment in the character or the world of the play. I will often include poetry in the early-childhood scripts. Interweaving the words of Langston Hughes or other classic poets into the fabric of the production. The use of poetry or rhyming language in a script can help simplify the act of memorization for younger students, and/or students working to deepen retention skills, the results of which can result in increased confidence in recitation. This is because the rhythm and sound-relationships in poetry can make it easier to remember. The value going beyond just exposing young learners to the genre of poetry, as poetic text can also result in rich and emotional moments in a live performance. In terms of its application onstage, there is a great emotion and beauty to a very young person speaking poetic story.

In response to the question about exposure to vocabulary, nine (n=27) respondents referenced the fourth-grade Shakespeare project as an example of

evidence of exposure to vocabulary in an applied format. A 2016 graduate commented: "When doing a play we usually come across a word we don't know or don't use. A good example was when we did the Shakespeare play." Yet another 2016 graduate offered: "I learned so many different words in the drama program. I now know how to speak in iambic pentameter from when we did Macbeth". While a student who graduated in 2014 noted it was difficult to ascertain if his "wide vocabulary" was due to involvement in the drama program, or a love of reading: "I have a very wide vocabulary (if I do say so myself) but I think most of that is due to my early (and continued) obsession with reading. It may be due somewhat to the Drama program".

However a 2015 graduate offered:

> My grammar has always been poor but I believe the Bertschi drama program definitely increased my vocabulary. I definitely improved my vocabulary, especially when we performed Shakespeare. One word that particularly stood out was "chanticleer", which is a rooster. I don't remember the occasion especially well, but I used that word recently in conversation.

Similar to results from question number one, parent and student feedback had many similarities. Forty-five (N=51) responded that they believed involvement in the drama program contributed to increased exposure, understanding and/or use of vocabulary. With three participants answering *"to a little extent,"* eighteen respondents citing "*to some extent*", fourteen responding *"to a great extent,"* and ten answering "*to a very great extent.*" Of the six participants who did not note any evidence of a correlation, one respondent answered *"not at all,"* and the other five replied "*not sure.*" And, as with some of the students, some parent comments identified a consideration of their child's interest in reading as a source of expanded knowledge of vocabulary, stating: They are

great readers. It's hard to know if drama expanded their vocabulary as they spent more time with books than in the drama lab". Still another parent suggested growth in this area was due to a combination of reading and drama, and also cites the drama programs fourth grade Shakespeare experience a notable: "I think that a large volume of reading for pleasure and for school also contributes to vocabulary, but certainly the drama productions add to this as well. Shakespeare comes to mind." Another parent respondent took a broader view of how, over the many years their child participated in drama, the use of "language as a means of expression," could be credited with a greater understanding of vocabulary: "I think that narrative of different plays leads to a greater understanding of language as a means of expression. The year the students performed a Shakespeare play was particularly insightful into understanding language and vocabulary as a means for powerful expression." Also noted were parent references to exposure to heightened language in the Shakespeare unit. Yet another speaks more specifically to how working on so many different plays affected their child:

> Each play was rich with new and relevant vocabulary. Use of this vocabulary carried over into my son's everyday life outside of school. Also his interest mythology increased after performing in Pandora's box!

And finally, an eye-witness account from parent who had a first-hand opportunity to see students through the process of rehearsing and memorizing the complex and mostly unfamiliar old-English language within a Shakespeare script:

> The 4th grade Shakespeare play was incredibly valuable. I volunteered in the classroom over the month or two that the students were learning their lines. I watched the students say words without understanding them, and then slowly but surely as they practiced their lines, the meaning would slowly dawn on them - sometimes after a couple weeks. I would notice when it really sunk in; they would begin to deliver their lines in a different way, with meaning - they would inhabit the character more deeply. They learned new words, and learned other

meanings of everyday words they already knew.

This last example detailing the kind of assimilation I see occurring consistently in rehearsals, regardless of grade level. It speaks clearly to the relationship of the repetitive process of rehearsal and memorization and how that process impacts both individual and group exposure to and ownership of expanded vocabulary in an applied format.

When asked this question in the Key Observer Interview, one of the third grade teachers, who has worked for 15 years as a teacher and has worked together with me in supporting her third grade class project for 10 years, highlighted the many ways opportunity for increased vocabulary is present in the project we partner to produce:

> Oh, yeah! I mean, that's right. Tina and I have worked together to develop vocabulary for each of the country studies that we do. Because in 3rd grade we study four different countries every fourth year I guess. Like it rotates through the 4 years. And, because we're doing ancient mythology for each of these countries, a lot of the vocabulary is different and sometimes you have to speak in a different way, like ancient Greek mythology! There's a lot of vocabulary in there and understanding of words, they might be able to say the word, but I don't that they are understand the word at the start. So there is a lot of vocabulary development involved, not just at the beginning but during as well. But I do know at the beginning Tina will even expose them to the vocabulary of ancient languages or ancient ways of saying things by showing them the history of civilization.

This comment helps highlight how inexhaustible the opportunities for the embedding vocabulary and literature elements are as students move through the 7 years of reading, memorizing and reciting not just individual's words, but words used in context of story, emotion and or culture.

I have one more unique and insightful perspective to share on this point. The following response is from a colleague who works in the administrative strata of our school, but her focus of instruction is as a Learning Specialist. She had been teaching

for 25 years and is in her 7th year at Bertschi. She works as and oversees the

development of differentiated instruction for programming to serve both accelerated and

emerging learners in primary subjects like reading and math. This was her response to

the question about vocabulary:

> I mean I think that we know that, that kind of repeated exposure to vocabulary words and different storytelling is, is, is the way you learn words right? Like you learn words by using them. And so, obviously, in a play there's going to be words they haven't seen before. I actually love the Shakespeare in the 4th grade. I think it's really cool, and I think the idea that those kids kind of have to translate those words into their meaning. You know? Figure out what they mean? I think it's a great exercise for them and I think it improves their vocabulary.

From the same interviewee's Key Observer Interview, in response to the more general

question, *Have you observed any of the students being influenced by this program in*

any other negative or positive ways? Are there things that I may not have asked you

about with specificity?

> Well yeah, because I think, I actually think the story work. I think understanding the story arc is really related to reading comprehension as well as written expression. You know, that you, that you introduced your characters then you have a problem and the problem gets worse and worse and worse and then the problem gets solved or something happens with that problem, and then there's the end. Like I actually see that whole idea of a play. And that's a core concept for kids in comprehension and in their writing ability.

Again, the idea that the true understanding and incorporation of new words into a

student's vocabulary depends not just on understanding the definition of individual

words, but the repetitious use of the words, the exposure to opportunities to speak

and/or hear those words in context repetitively, over weeks of developing a production

can make the difference in a child's long term use of those words.

Beyond The Primary Anchor Changes

The following are a sample of the comments culled from both the survey series as well as the Key Observer Interviews that highlight other life-skills, learning points, important attributes or observations shared about how the drama program effects it's participants.

A sample of student responses to the question: *What other ways, negative or positive, do you feel your participation in the Bertschi Drama program has impacted or affected you?*

- It helped my confidence and patience

- It's made me become a stronger actor as well as more comfortable with taking risks

- I have found some of my best friends though our mutual love for the theater and I have learned that I always want theater to be part of my life

- It has given me and understanding of different cultures

- The most dramatic thing has been my confidence. I feel that I am a very confidant person, and a large part of that (especially when it comes to performances, both in theater and other types of performance) I've traced back to the Drama program.

A sample of parent responses to the question: *What other ways (negative or positive), have you observed the Bertschi Drama program having an impact on your child while at Bertschi?* I include these as a certain number of them speak in a more generalized way to the 3 primary Anchor Changes. Again, I have tried to include a balanced sample of the overall responses to this question:

- the consistency really helped over the years to give the more hesitant performers a chance to step up

- Only positive! Even when my child got a chorus part in the 5th grade play and

was very disappointed. She gave it her best even though her role was small. She learned that sometimes you get the lead and sometimes you don't. For some kids, disappointment is hard to come by these days and so it was great that she managed her disappointment through theatre.

- Self advocacy, confidence, and willingness to take appropriate risk.

- He has remained actively engaged with Drama in Middle school and was selected to attend a couple on international middle school drama festivals. He attended those and had a wonderful experience.

- Since our kid has some anxiety issues, it wasn't a simple, easy process for the family, but ultimately, it worked out, and it's better for him to have this opportunity to practice and perform and get more comfortable dealing with 'fear of failure'.

- Beyond the individual experience, there was always an element of empathy for my daughter's friends/classmates. Understanding that a friend or classmate was doing something outside of their specific comfort zone and playing a small part in supporting them was a great benefit of the program. I noticed that the children were "in it together" and supported each other, celebrating together and enjoying everyone's contribution.

- Getting to dress in spectacular costumes, perform on a real stage with lighting, backdrops, a trap door and special effects is a truly amazing experience. Each production is amazing and, most wonderful, is watching the kids' confidence grow with each successive year's performance.

- The kids start out at a young age, so they don't develop that fear of being on stage.

- It was a challenge, an opportunity and a safe space all at the same time.

To support an opportunity for growth based feedback and or constructive criticisms, I also provided both students and parents an opportunity to share a response to the question; "Do you have any suggestions as to ways the program can be improved?" A majority of the comments were an affirmation of the program's effectiveness and popularity among both students and parents, offering further support or praise of the program. The following are responses from this section of the survey that did identify suggested consideration for changes or adaptation to the program. Responses have

been divided between a Student and a Parent section.

<p style="text-align:center">Student Responses</p>

- I think for second grade, there should be more of a guideline when we are choosing the characters, because some people random characters that felt out of place.

- There is literally nothing I would change about the drama program

- It's hard to control, but students making fun of other students for getting nervous.

- I think it would be nice for there to be an option to help with sound or lighting for kids who have public speaking issues or extreme stage fright.

<p style="text-align:center">Parent Responses</p>

- Maybe have a child be the "guest" director for 1 or 2 scenes.

- Sometimes two children sharing one role (on stage together) helps build confidence/fun (they do that at middle school).

- Tina's energy, enthusiasm and support are a great model and having others exemplify that. Could have students try a hand at directing portions of a show?

- Offer an afterschool program for kids that want to peruse the arts.

- Give bigger roles to different children each performance. I sometimes felt like the same kids got the bigger roles year to year.

Finally, I want to share a response that came as a part of the student survey commentary. Although I did not seek to receive responses from students outside of the 2014-2016 graduation window, I somehow receive one completed survey from a student who identified as being 18 years of age and having participated in the program from third through fifth grade. My assumption is that this student was a sibling of one of the 2014-2016 graduates and as the survey was being completed by others within the household, it was shared with them and they had the interest in sharing their viewpoint

as well. I share this response here as I find it unique in that it is not only singular in the

subject matter it addresses, but it provides an individual example of the possibility of

response that may have come from an expanded sample group with more maturity and

perspective to offer. I believe it highlights, in the student's own words, how participation

in a program such as this can be life changing. This response was found in the

commentary section in response to the Anchor Change question about healthy risk

taking:

> I'm actually 18 now, but Bertschi drama program really opened me up to taking
> risks. I was a very strange and quirky child, but rarely willing to take risks.
> Bertschi is where my love of theater started, and it prompted me to be more
> outgoing in trying to actively be a part of the school community middle through
> high school. I auditioned for many more school plays as well as ones at Seattle
> Children's Theater and Broadway Bound. Being active in the theater community
> lead to joining QSA (Queer Straight Alliance) and then senior year creating and
> co-running a QSA. Before Bertschi I could not, and would not do any form of
> public speaking and have since then presented many presentations to
> classrooms and entire school bodies on topics I'm passionate about.

Conclusion

The Curtain Falls; Post-show Considerations

I have struggled to find a way to represent how valuable this project has been for

me and my growth as a teaching artist. The act of discovering and examining what, up

until this point, had been a hidden through line in my life and my life's work, will prove a

new foundation for my future as both a teacher and an artist. As I struggled to define

what my Final Creative Project would be, and worked to find my way as it continued to

shift and change, the link between the research I was engaged in and the Creative

Pulse was not lost on me. In looking at the overlay between the defined Anchor

Changes of the drama program as applied to the Creative Pulse, the comparatives are numerous. In the Pulse I encountered teaches who did not believe themselves to be artists, but learned through the opportunity for exploring healthy risk-taking within the Pulse that teaching itself is an art form, teaching is theatre, it is performance and that in just being teachers, each of them was indeed an artist. The Pulse, through its very existence, proves that no matter what the subject matter, teachers benefit from exploring the endless opportunity for the integration of theatre, music, dance and visual art into their classrooms. The wide range of lens' the Pulse provides exposes its participants to multiple opportunities for the manner and means to learn directly from professionals in these artistic genres. Exposing participants first hand to experiences that include new vocabulary, primary theory, and unlimited possibilities for the integration of the arts in any classroom. And finally, perhaps most significant, through uniquely developed personal-performance opportunities, it provides participants a supportive and authentic framework for complex self-reflection and unlimited first-hand experiences with the complexities of the human condition and development of empathic systems.

Other graduate school programs would have had me reading, and writing and proving my knowledge and mastery. But because the Pulse is about self-identifying, a kind of pathway to "professional soul searching", it became the catalyst to go beyond being satisfied with my success, and inspired me to quantify that success so as to find a way to stretch myself personally and professionally. Much like the opportunities I created for myself in my youth, the Pulse has provided me an avenue to learn and grow through the marriage of art and education while providing me a platform to advocate for

the value and importance of theatre-education with early-childhood and elementary ages children.

Much like teachers who come to the Pulse, not all of the students who come to my class see themselves as artists, actors or even extraverts. Yet, what I am asking them to do forces them to experience and explore what it is to "be" and or "think" as theatre artists. Many times my Pulse classmates would start conversations with qualifiers like, "Well, I am not an artist," or "I hope we don't have to dance, I am not a dancer," and so on. One could interchange "paint," "sing," "write," or many other of the "out my comfort zone" tasks that are the true drivers of learning within the Creative Pulse. For so many years, I have been putting my students in similar situations: taking each brain, personality, and individual where they are and working to expose them to new experience that guide them in the development of personal and artistic confidences. I do this work with the objective of supporting them in deepening beliefs and confidences within themselves. Working to create safe, fun, and inviting situations that allow students to relax, explore, and develop their own relationship with creativity, vision, and art. I know that these students, with very few exceptions, will not grow up to be actors, or work in the field of theatre. But, I believe deeply that, as with the Creative Pulse and how it serves its students, both the Anchor Changes as well as the overall experiential nature of this theatre-based program will help its participants find those things within themselves that they may not otherwise have opportunity to discover. Hoping it will forever change the way they know themselves and the world around them, influencing the way they move through life and illuminating the importance of their place within the worlds in which they live, learn and create.

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APPENDIX A

Bertschi Drama Curriculum Guide

Bertschi School Curriculum Guide: Drama Curriculum

- Prekindergarten

  - o In Drama, Pre-K students are introduced to the actor's tools: face, voice, mask and imagination. They learn how these tools are used onstage and in life, to tell stories. They learn in small groups and pairs, through games and dramatic exercises, how to work together both onstage and off. Skills taught include: listening, following directions, communication, working supportively within a peer group, body control, character animation, and memorization.
  - o Students then work together to develop an original production based on a familiar children's book, fairy tale or nursery rhyme. The students participate in the improvised scripting of the story, work with teachers to choose characters and then, following several weeks of rehearsal, perform the piece for fellow students and parents. Most costumes, sets, and properties created are built from recycled materials. These are reused or sent home for further use by students after the production closes.

- Kindergarten

  - o Kindergarten students receive an introduction to basic acting theory, along with general theater vocabulary, all with a strong emphasis on storytelling. Students are introduced to the actor's tools: voice, body, mask, and imagination and how these tools are used on stage, and in life, to tell stories. Emphasis is placed on achieving individual and group focus to achieve a common goal of performing one story together as an ensemble.
  - o Stories and performance subject matter are typically chosen from literature. Stories may be fictional, mythical or cultural in nature. Students develop characters in small groups or pairs, with most characters based on animals or other non-human persona. Most costumes, sets and properties created are built from recycled materials, and reused or sent home for further use by students after production closes. In addition, limited music and movement components are explored as well as the elements listed below:

- First Grade

  - o First graders experience a review of previously introduced themes and

theory, with an increased emphasis on physical and vocal character development, using gesture and expression as well as vocal detailing. Students are given more responsibility in working in smaller groups, or just with partners, with expanded text and story elements.

o Additional keen focus elements are introduced, such as the idea of the "fourth wall," the invisible boundary that separates the audience from the world of the play, and the concept of "suspension of disbelief." Most costumes, sets, and properties created are built from recycled materials, and reused or sent home for further use by students after production closes. Sound design is used to support the story and characters.

- Second Grade

    o In addition to a review and deepened study of previously introduced elements and theory, second grade marks an introduction to the study of dramatic story structure, or The Well Made Play. The following seven elements are introduced and explored: introduction, inciting incident, rising action, obstacles, climax, falling action, resolution, and dramatic question.

    o These elements are used to guide students through collaborative processes as the group works toward the development of their own original play. Students decide the environment, the problem, identify an antagonist and protagonist and vote upon a problem that the story can center around, establishing a "dramatic question." With the support of an adult dramatist and scribe, an original work is developed in which students represent individual characters.

    o Another important set of skills second graders learn is how to record and track their own blocking and stage direction in their scripts. In addition, students are asked to design and build their own costumes at home, using recycled materials or used clothing.

- Third Grade

    o Third grade drama includes a detailed review and reincorporation of ideas presented from pre-k through second grade.

    o In their third grade drama studies, students will explore themes from ancient cultural mythology or folklore. Students are asked to take an active role in researching character, historical periods and more, through the use of the Internet and historical, mythical or folkloric literature. Often the plays include stories of creation myth, and character ranging from human to mythological monsters.

    o Expanded use of physical storytelling, and vocal expression are required to bring these myths and monsters to life.

    o Sound and slides can be used to create story or environment. Most costumes, sets and properties created are built from recycled materials, and reused or sent home for further use by students after production closes.

- Fourth Grade

    o Fourth grade drama studies entails a detailed review and reincorporation of ideas presented from pre-k through third grade, including a deeper exploration of realism, and representation of human characters in historical, cultural or classical dramatic story occur.
    o Often a classical work of literature, such as an adapted work of Shakespeare, is chosen for students to study and perform.
    o Characters increase in complexity and script length expands. An expanded study of detailed use of actor's tools, the incorporation of rhythm, and a deepened study of tactics and objectives, as well as character relationships, plot and tension occur.
    o In addition, performances expand to 50–60 minutes, and scripts contain expanded vocabulary, often written in prose Shakespearean language.
    o Sound, slides or other technical elements may be added for story or effect.
    o Most costumes, sets and properties created are built from recycled materials, and are reused or sent home for further use by students after production closes.

- Fifth Grade

    o Fifth graders experience a detailed review of all previous theory and ideas. Increased involvement in script development, and dramatically heightened production values are incorporated into the curriculum.
    o The fifth grade project, hosted off campus, typically consists of an hour-long performance including elements of drama, music and dance and highlighting a theme of study taken from the fifth grade curriculum.
    o The installation of the project in a traditional theater setting allows for a maximum exploration of both onstage and off stage etiquette, self-motivation and group commitment. In addition, all of the traditional technical elements used in the genre are incorporated into the production.
    o Most costumes, sets and properties created are built from recycled materials, and are reused or sent home for further use by students after production closes.

APPENDIX B

Theory of Change: Anchor Change
Graphic Organizers

Theory of Change Detail

Long-term Outcomes 2017-18


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┌──────────────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Create and maintain a safe│    │ Prioritize casting and│
│ environment for students to│   │ role assignments to   │
│ explore and succeed       │     │ challenge and inspire  │
└──────────────────────────┘     │ individual intrinsic   │
            │                     │ growth                 │
            ▼                     └──────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Secure family support in  │          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ rehearsing, memorizing    │          │ Provide increased     │
│ outside of class          │          │ singular performance  │
└──────────────────────────┘          │ opportunities         │
                                       └──────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Provide ample opportunity │
│ for students to run lines │
│ and practice onstage      │
└──────────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Offer honest and          │   │ Encourage growth-     │
│ encouraging feedback and  │   │ mind-set interactions │
│ direction in rehearsal    │   │ within a class group  │
└──────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Work in an ensemble       │          │ Provide individualized│
│ format, allowing students │          │ instruction for each  │
│ to learn and grow together│          │ student               │
└──────────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Pre-show audience Q&A     │   │ Encourage growth      │
│ focused on common         │   │ mind-set interactions │
│ emotional learning points │   │ within the            │
└──────────────────────────┘   │ community and         │
                               │ audience base         │
                               └──────────────────────┘
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IMPACT

2018+

Increased willingness to engage in healthy risk-taking

March 24, 2017

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Theory of Change Detail

Long-term Outcomes 2017-18

Create and maintain a safe environment for students to explore and succeed	Prioritize casting and role assignments to challenge and inspire individual intrinsic growth	Provide increased singular performance opportunities	**IMPACT** 2018+	
Secure family support in rehearsing, memorizing outside of class				
Provide ample opportunity for students to run lines and practice onstage	Encourage growth-mind-set interactions within a class group	Provide individualized instruction for each student	Increase exposure to vocabulary in an applied format	
Offer honest and encouraging feedback and direction in rehearsal				
Work in an ensemble format, allowing students to learn and grow together	Encourage growth mind-set interactions within the community and audience base			
Pre-show audience Q&A focused on common emotional learning points				

March 24, 2017

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Theory of Change Detail

Long-term Outcomes 2017-18

Create and maintain a safe environment for students to explore and succeed	Increase in modeling highlighting supportive listening within the peer group			
Secure family support in rehearsing, memorizing outside of class		Interaction between grade-levels as audience and performer	**IMPACT** 2018+	
Adapt stories which allow an exploration and embodiment of diverse human conditions	Guided post-performance conversation with audience, compliments and constructive-suggestions for goal setting addressed to the ensemble		Increased empathy for the human condition	
Offer honest and encouraging feedback and direction in rehearsal		Home classroom country and or thematic study to foster broad exposure to the "world" of the play		
Work in an ensemble format, allowing students to learn and grow together	Encourage growth mind-set interactions within the community and audience base			
Pre-show audience Q&A focused on common emotional learning points				

March 24, 2017

APPENDIX C

Key Observer Interview Question Outline

Interview Introduction:
- Thank participant
- Open recorded interview with statement of permission to record.
- Ask permission to quote their interview within the paper, and or assure them that their name will not be used but rather they will be identified as a "parent" or "teacher" or "former student".
- Provide them a brief outline of the paper to look at which includes an outline of my 5 main anchor points.
- Overstate that the intent of interviewing them is to obtain honest reflection and information. Encourage them to share both things they felt were beneficial and the elements or parts of the program that they feel were/are not working or perhaps even are unclear. Reinforce that the constructive criticisms of the program carry as much value and weight as the compliments.
- Request they provide candid and honest answers to the questions, even if they are hard for me to hear.
- Offer to share out the paper with them once it is finished if they wish to read it.
- One of the things I see about conducting this research and interviews is it is an opportunity to collect research that can make the program even better, it is important.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:
- How, if at all, do you see the Bertschi Drama Program influencing and/or increasing the likelihood a student/child's willingness to take healthy risks? Can you provide examples as to what you witnessed as related to healthy risk taking?

- How have you observed, if at all, a student/child's confidence being influenced or affected by their participation in the Bertschi Drama Program? What are some examples? During and after their participation in the program?

- How much, if at all, did the Bertschi Drama Program contribute to students/child's understanding or empathy for others? Can you describe a situation where you recognized this outcome of the program as related to your child's empathy for others?

- How, if at all, has participating in the Bertschi drama program lead to a broader exposure to, understanding of or use of vocabulary for the student/child?

- Have you witnessed any effects from a student/child's participation in the Bertschi Drama program related to increased skills and or willingness to work constructively within a group or a team?

- In witnessing the productions from year to year, do you feel your child (students) was given opportunity to engage in a demonstration of mastery of skills specifically related to the acting skills introduced in the Bertschi Drama Program?

- Have you observed students/children being influenced by this program in any other negative or positive ways while at Bertschi?

- Have you seen any other outcomes of participation in the Bertschi Drama Program carry on as they have graduated from Bertschi School and moved beyond participation within the program?

- Is there anything else you want to share about the how you see the program impacting on student/children, families and or our larger community?

- Do you have any suggestions as to ways the program can be improved?