

**Drama-based Pedagogy in the Visual Arts: A
Visual Arts Teacher's Action Research
Journey**

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Abstract

This article tells the story of Jenny Harrison, a visual arts middle school teacher who became an Action Research Teacher (ART) fellow in *Drama for Schools*, a professional development program in drama-based pedagogy. Through an action research model of teacher training and her own line of inquiry, Jenny investigated how drama-based pedagogy impacted her teaching and her students' articulation of visual arts concepts. Artifacts from this project include interview transcripts, teacher reflections, student work-products, and lesson plans. The integration of drama-based pedagogy into Jenny's visual arts curriculum paved the way for in-depth, intentional learning for students, for herself, and for the *Drama for Schools* program.

Drama-based pedagogy in the visual arts: A visual arts teacher's action research journey

Introduction

This article tells the story of Jenny Harrison [pseudonym], a middle school visual arts teacher who used arts integration to engage her students and herself in the learning process. Jenny participated in the *Drama for Schools* (DFS) professional development program for two years. In her second year of DFS, Jenny served as an Action Research Teacher (ART) Fellow where she investigated how the integration of drama into visual art education impacted her students' articulation of visual arts concepts. The goal of this article is to present Jenny's action research project as a bounded, unique case study of a visual arts educator's experience within a drama-based professional learning model (Merriam, 1998; Smith, 1978) and to provide perspectives on the implications of a pedagogical integration of one art form into another.

Project Context

Drama for Schools and Drama-Based Pedagogy

Drama for Schools provides teachers with drama-based strategies as tools to use across the curriculum. Drama-based pedagogy (DBP) describes a collection of curated and codified drama/theatre¹ teaching strategies (including activating dialogue, theatre games, image work and role play). DBP uses "active and dramatic strategies to engage students in academic, affective, and aesthetic learning through dialogic meaning-making, across all areas of the curriculum" (Dawson & Lee, 2018, p. 9)². DBP uses the body and its experiences, alongside the mind, as a key laboratory for learning and understanding. Through DBP's multi-modal emphasis on dialogic meaning-making, students develop a stronger, more robust sense of understanding when engaging with new ideas or perspectives (Auckerman, 2013). Additionally, DBP uses aspects of dramatic inquiry (Edmiston, 2014), a problem-posing approach to role play that invites teachers and students to engage in a sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1978) and critical pedagogical approach to learning and knowledge development (Boal, 1992; Freire, 2000; hooks, 1994).

For example, a science teacher participating in the *Drama for Schools* professional learning model wants to deepen her students' knowledge and understanding of the scientific method. The teacher uses DBP strategies to create a dramatic dilemma (Dawson & Lee, 2018) that enables her students to explore and extend their skills and understanding of the scientific method. The teacher enrolls students as "junior detectives" asked to solve the case of a mysterious disappearance of a teenage student using "evidence" from her locker. The teacher groups students in "detective teams" who observe and interpret a series of artifacts (or objects) from the locker. Finally, she invites her students to synthesize their inferences and share their hypothesis of what might have happened to the missing teen, through the

¹ Theatre emphasizes the practice, the *what* of the art form, with a focus on the *how* of the product. In this article, we use the US spelling of *theater* (-er) to reference the space where theatre happens. We use the UK spelling of *theatre* (-re) to reference the practice.

² Between 2006-2014, Drama for Schools used the term Drama-based Instruction to describe adapted drama/theatre practices for use by generalist classroom teachers in K-12th grade learning environments. DFS shifted to the term drama-based pedagogy in 2015, in an effort acknowledge the further codification of the methodological aspects of the approach.

creation and performance of three sequenced body images. Using a dramatic frame, role play, and multi-modal representations of inferencing and meaning-making, the integration of DBP into the science curriculum engages students in a rich, drama-based inquiry that brings the scientific method to life.

Professional learning in DBP and the ART Fellows initiative

The goal of professional development is to change the attitudes and beliefs of teachers, affect classroom practices, and transform teacher knowledge to improve student learning (Avalos, 2011; Guskey, 1986; Guskey, 2002). Effective professional learning invites participants to consider where, how, and why they will use their new learning in their practice and what specific student outcomes they hope to address through their efforts. Additionally, pedagogically focused professional development in drama integration—that focuses on the problem-posing, dialogic aspects of drama/theatre—has proven to be particularly effective when teachers engage in planning, action, evaluation, and reflection within the professional development sequence (Cawthon et al., 2009; Webster-Wright 2009).

The ART Fellow initiative began in the context of a multi-year professional learning project with the Valley Independent School District (VISD) in Valley, Texas [pseudonym]. At the time of the ART Fellow program, DFS had been in VISD for five years – a partnership that included over 85 training and residency days for over 200 teachers across all subject areas³. The ART Fellow initiative began in response to DFS teacher alumni in VISD who: (a) desired a continued relationship with DFS staff as teachers implemented what they had learned into their classrooms, and (b) desired to know more about the impact of DFS strategies on student learning and classroom culture. At the same time, DFS was looking to expand their own inquiry (from teacher-centered to student-centered outcomes) and to deepen the level of inquiry and reflection in its veteran teachers.

The ART Fellow initiative used action research to support teachers' construction of a systematic inquiry about research within their own practice. It was designed to shift the power and control over the DFS research agenda away from the university and toward the teachers in the project (White, Deegan, & Alleksaht-Snyder, 1997). Instead of being a passive participant, 'researched' by the DFS team, teachers in the ART Fellow initiative were positioned as agents for change, ready and able to design and implement research tied to their own practice (Kemmis & Mervyn, 1998; Riel, 2010; Winter, 1989).

Methods

ART Fellows Research Design and Context

The DFS team and the VISD district administration launched the inaugural ART Fellows cadre for participation in the program at the end of the 2007–08 school year. All nominees had participated in DFS for at least a year and had shown an interest in deepening their experience in the program. Each ART Fellow was given access to a university research specialist, a small stipend, and the option to attend DFS workshops in the district. All activities were to occur primarily in the fall of 2008, with possible follow-up as needed in the spring of 2009. Four middle school teachers agreed to participate in the inaugural ART Fellow program. Three of the teachers taught non-arts subjects and one teacher taught an arts subject (visual arts).⁴ This article focus on Jenny, the visual arts teacher in this cadre.

The research topic and study design process followed a collaborative participatory

3 For further information about the five year DFS training and research project in VISD see Authors & Baker, 2011; Authors & Ihorn, 2011; Authors, 2009.

4 For further information on the three non-arts subject teachers in the ART Fellows project see Authors, et al., 2012.

action research approach. The ART Fellows brainstormed issues and ideas that drew from their own experiences and narrowed down a topic area that would be interesting and useful to their teaching. The focus was on how their use of the drama-based pedagogy had an impact on student learning, engagement, and behavior within their classes. The DFS research team then gave an overview of potentially useful measurement techniques for the ART Fellows to use in their projects, such as curriculum-based measures, standardized test scores, classroom observation, class surveys, and student focus groups. The ART Fellows, as a group, discussed the viability of each approach within their classrooms. The DFS staff then helped the individual ART Fellows consider the logistics of implementing their chosen measurement strategies and identify areas for needed support. Finally, each ART Fellow and DFS team member articulated a research hypothesis and laid out the next steps in their project. Each ART Fellow was asked to complete an online weekly form. They also received support through telephone calls, emails, and on-site visits—approximately once each month—from a research specialist on the DFS team.

Most *Drama for Schools* teacher participants are non-arts content teachers interested in learning about how to infuse drama-based teaching and learning into non-arts content areas. As a visual arts educator, Jenny’s context within the DFS program model was unique; she desired to understand the impact of integrating the teaching and learning strategies of one art form into another (i.e., drama pedagogy integration into visual arts education). Jenny was highly motivated and deeply invested in furthering her own practice through professional development. She was a few years out of college, with an inclination toward graduate level work and hoped one day to return to school for an advanced degree. Jenny had been a part of the *Drama for Schools* training program for a year before transitioning into her role as an ART Fellow. Jenny’s project was a unique scenario in terms of the intersection of the purpose of ART Fellows and her own style and interest. In addition to her identity and capacity as an artist from which to build, she had an emerging skill set in DBP and sought ways to apply the strategies into her visual arts curriculum. It is from this context that Jenny planned her year-long ART Fellow project.

Jenny’s ART Fellow Inquiry

During her initial year participating in the *Drama for Schools* professional development program with a cohort of middle school teacher colleagues, Jenny realized that DBP could be used to help develop her students’ understanding of the art criticism process – an ongoing instructional goal for which she struggled to find solutions. During her first year of training with DFS, prior to her participation in the ART Fellows initiative, Jenny asked her art education students to look at handwriting samples and interpret information about the writer based on the characteristics of the writing to practice the skills of interpretation based on shape and line. An excerpt from her reflection on her work shows her thoughts on how to use DBP to shift this lesson:

Student work was suffering from a lack of precision and effort...I gave students fake examples of job applications that exhibited various handwriting samples. Students analyzed the handwriting to make judgments about the character of the applicant. The way in which handwriting is connected to people’s impressions was compared to how people view artwork as an extension of the artist... I now wish I would have played it up a bit more. I would have liked to have created a “Forensics Team” and had them analyze the handwriting in groups. I could have claimed that a major corporation has hired us to discover who would be more likely to have stolen a piece of artwork. I could have compared the style of art with the “criminal.” This way they would be analyzing the stolen art for visual

properties that match that of the thief. Jenny's interest in pedagogical interventions on her work as a visual art educator was evident from her first exploratory year in the DFS training program in VISD. Her initial training reflections provide evidence of her interests to create authentic, problem-posing engagement within the visual art curriculum. Because of this, Jenny joined the ART Fellows program, because she wondered if and how DBP improved her students' ability to talk about artwork, both their own art and that of others. Specifically, she wondered if there was a correlation between students' ability to rigorously describe and critique their artwork and the artwork of others and to make meaningful work.

Jenny's Data Collection and Classroom Context

All participants in the ART Fellow project were encouraged to design a process of data collection that best suited their research interests and contexts. Jenny focused her research on her seventh grade art class, which consisted of 17 students (6 males and 11 females). Of these, 14 were Hispanic, two were Caucasian, and one was black⁵. Jenny's goal was to create multiple DBP/Visual Art learning units across the seventh grade curriculum and to design full rubric evaluations for each unit during the fall semester.

Perhaps what was most striking about Jenny's ART Fellow process was the level of detail and quantity of her work. The three other (non-arts) ART Fellow teachers used simple surveys, developed by the university research assistant, to gather data that focused primarily on student outcomes on tests and measurements of student engagement. (See Cawthon et al., 2012 for a full description.) In contrast, Jenny used qualitative research methods and took a collaborative approach to the research process. Jenny opted to document her research journey with her students through thick description and images of each instructional unit where drama-based instruction was integrated. She also chose to return to her notes after the project was completed to offer additional written commentary and reflection on her work within each of her unit narratives.

In addition to their summative research design, each ART Fellow was asked to engage in formative reflection about how the experience of creating an Action Research project impacted their teaching. Through a series of interviews and check-ins with the university research team, Jenny explained the origins of her project, its development over the course of the year, and what she discovered about how her Action Research project changed the way she taught. The summative and formative data collection will be presented as part of the larger "case" analysis and discussion of our findings, below.

Results

Integration of DBP into Visual Arts Instruction

What follows now are excerpts from Jenny's report of ART Fellow activities for the year, which show the quality of and level of detail in her reflections. First, we share examples of her reflective-practitioner notes on three units where drama was integrated into visual art instruction. The excerpts represent key ways that Jenny used DBP to facilitate meaning-making at various points within the visual art unit instructional cycle. The first example is of DBP as a tool for visual and verbal meaning-making. This unit utilized role play as a tool for expressive representation of ideas in a unit that focused on creating masks. The second unit is of DBP as tool for embodied meaning-making. This example showed how Jenny integrated movement within a unit that asked students to create a physical "flip book" of their ideas. The third and final example presented here is how Jenny utilized DBP as tool for visual and verbal meaning making, this time in a

⁵ All demographic descriptions and numbers were provided by Jenny as a way to consistently privilege her voice throughout the reporting of the research.

sculpture unit. The excerpts below include artifacts that Jenny collected and her written narrative as she documented the planning, implementation, and reflection process. To help distinguish between these phases, we present Jenny’s original plans and artifacts in single spaced regular type; sections in single spaced italics represent additional reflections that Jenny embedded into her notes after the end of the year to further expand on her thinking about the project. Following the three excerpts from her documentation we provide her overall reflections on the ART Fellow process.

Excerpt One: Role Play and Mask Making. Some of Jenny’s work included her decision to use DBP strategies to “hook” students into the learning inquiry through a story or problem to be solved. In this first brief excerpt of her summative documentation, seen below, Jenny references a popular movie character, “Indiana Jones.” Within the excerpt, Jenny invites students to step into role as “mask experts” who must use the principles and elements of visual art to visually analyze and verbally share their discoveries about a set of masks (or artifacts) to solve a problem within an imagined set of circumstances.

Indiana Jones’ Artifact

Brought decorative box “Property of Dr. Jones - 9906573” containing paper mache masks from other art class. Shared the story that Dr. Jones had sent us a set of artifacts to analyze for him. Students for the most part really enjoyed it.



Figure 1. Four photographs included in Jenny’s “Indiana Jones” Documentation

Post Activity Reflection: In retrospect, I wish I would have limited the number of masks we analyzed. I felt like they could have gotten deeper descriptions in

smaller groups with one mask. Then we could have switched. I could have placed the tape recorder in one group or rotated it with the same mask.

I also think it might be neat to show clips from the TV show, Lie to Me. This series is based on visual recognition of certain features, body language, etc that conveys an emotion and promotes looking at the motivation behind these movements etc. This would have been perfect before they created their own masks. I am debating whether or not to do it before artifact or after. It could help them look for certain aspects within the mask, but it could also change how the artifact activity plays out.

I would also like to get my hands on professionally made masks. It would be great to connect this with a play or story they read in another class. Maybe have them study a famous person with whom they relate and create a mask related to his/her personality. I could have them choose an artist and develop a mask in his/her artistic style.

The first excerpt of Jenny's teaching documentation (shown in regular type) suggests that her integration of *Artifact* and *Role Play* strategies at the beginning of her unit on mask-making increased student engagement. (Students, for the most part, enjoyed it.) Jenny's end of the year reflection on the unit (shown in *italicized* type) provided more substantial insights as she reflected on depth over breadth in her instructional tasks (e.g., *I felt like they could have gotten deeper descriptions in smaller groups with one mask*). Her reflection also shows her continued interest in ways to situate techniques associated with a mask-making unit (e.g. *visual recognition of certain features...that conveys an emotion and promotes the motivation behind these movements*) into pop culture examples from movies and television, such as *Indiana Jones* and *Lie to Me*) to make learning feel relevant and interesting. Jenny also expresses insights into how she might effectively engage her students in the use of master works within her unit both as high quality examples to research (*I would also like to get my hands on professionally made masks*) or as thematic inspiration (*I could have them choose an artist and develop a mask in his/her artistic style*), amongst other discoveries. Jenny concluded her mask-making unit documentation with brief information about how her students completed the unit along with images as seen below.



Figure 2. Two photographs included in Jenny's "Indiana Jones" Documentation.

Jenny description of the photographs stated: *Students proceeded to make masks either on a balloon or from a mold of their faces*

Excerpt Two: Embodied Learning and Flip Books. Another area that Jenny chose to explore in her DBP research was an exploration of the movement of hand-drawn figures and composition in a flipbook unit. Jenny adapted and integrated the *Connecting Images* strategy (Author & Lee, 2018) to provide an active way for her students to generate ideas for their flipbook projects. In the past, Jenny found that students would struggle to land on an idea and to get started with their project. DBP strategies provided a playful way for students to get inspired and excited about their work, as seen in this second excerpt from Jenny’s summative documentation of her action research below.

Flipbook



Figure 3. One photograph included in Jenny’s “Flipbook Unit” Documentation.

Jenny’s description of this photograph stated: *This picture illustrates how students showed movement across picture by entering from both sides. According to student comments, the group was attempting to show two flying objects (bird and airplane) as they collided.*

I cut out a giant frame out of insulation board. Students were instructed to work as a group to create a movement within the frame. They could create an upward movement or sideways movement. The object or scene had to change over time. They were able to have a stationary object that items moved around, or they could have the item move across the frame. Students really had fun with this one. They were laughing and excited about the project. The previous year, it was like pulling teeth after the first day! With the Drama for Schools activity as an opener, students immediately returned to their desks and began drawing. I noticed I didn’t have students sitting around “thinking” about what to do for two or three days. Their creative ideas were already flowing from the activity.

Post Activity Reflection: Unfortunately, several of them choose very simple ideas. Originally, I had required that they use one of their comic strip characters which had been developed with more detail. I caved when several of them requested to do something different. I should have said...with approval. Once they were able to pick a simpler object, they did. They didn’t want to have to recreate a detailed

image so many times. There [sic] work could have been more impressive, but the majority of them did get the concepts at hand and did complete the work in relative time. Most of the students in this class work at a snails [sic] pace, but this project went very fast.

Image work was structurally a challenge for me last year, but the frame really helped establish the stage or boundaries. With this frame, I believe I could teach a lot of compositional elements easily. The frame sets up cropping and edges for discussion of visual properties.

I needed to stress for them to pause the frames. It moved too fast like a motion picture. I think we could have had slow motion that paused for analysis. I had a couple of them reenact it multiple times and I would freeze them, but I think this should have been built in. I also would have liked to have them take turns acting out their own flipbook over the course of the assignment. Maybe pick a student at the beginning of each class. If I had the equipment, it would have been nice to have them video each other and us print the images for further discussion. Then we could put them up like a storyboard in the room.

The second excerpt of Jenny’s teaching documentation suggests that the integration of an embodied DBP meaning-making strategy, *Connecting Images*, into her flipbook unit positively impacted student engagement and participation in comparison to instruction in the unit during prior years. Specifically, she noted the impact on student engagement: “Students really had fun with this one. They were laughing and excited about the project.” Also on student participation: “The previous year, it was like pulling teeth after the first day! With the Drama for School activity as an opener, students immediately returned to their desks and began drawing.” Finally, on students’ access to creative expression: “I didn’t have students sitting around ‘thinking’ about what to do for two or three days. Their creative ideas were already flowing from the activity.”

Jenny’s end of the year reflection on the flipbook project demonstrates a maturing of her skills with DBP; she was more aware of the complexities of the approach. For example, she suggested that, although there were positive results. “The majority of them did get the concepts at hand and did complete the work in relative time.” She recognized the need to make sure that her students’ work with visual art remains emphasized: “Unfortunately, several of them choose very simple ideas [for their connecting images]. Originally, I had required that they use one of their comic strip characters which had been developed with more detail. I caved when several of them requested to do something different.” She also acknowledged her own growth in the practice from the prior year: “Image work was structurally a challenge for me last year, but the frame really helped establish the stage or boundaries.” Additionally, she acknowledged the need to continue to refine and revise her approach in the future. For example, she suggested that she could have students use *slow motion* when staging their characters in the frame and return to *acting out their flipbook* throughout the assignment; she could also use video to capture, print and *storyboard* images of students’ embodied, creative meaning-making to use as reference in their flipbook.

Excerpt Three: DBP within a Sculpture Unit. Our final excerpt from Jenny’s DBP research documentation—seen below—focuses on Jenny’s use of a role play activity

at the end of a sculpture unit. In this excerpt, Jenny uses an *Art Auction* role play to create an authentic context in which to assess her students' ability to use the Art Elements of Design to reflect on their own work and the work of others.

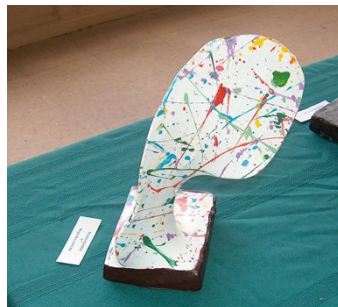
Silent Art Auction

Upon the completion of a wire, panty hose, and acrylic painted sculpture and a plaster sculpture for a few students, we held a mock silent art auction. Students were given Monopoly money. They each had six bills: 5 - \$10,000 and 1 - \$50,000. Each student walked around the room looking at the artwork. When they found a piece they liked, they would contribute to the bid. With each contribution, the student had to write a statement that expresses something successful about the piece. Their answers were instructed to use one of the following Art Elements of Design: line, color, shape, texture, space, or value. They were told to use the \$50,000 bill on the piece they liked the best. This gave me an idea of which pieces they were truly drawn to. The other 5 bills made it possible for every student to have money and therefore a compliment with their piece. The bills challenged them to find pieces to talk about. Every student had to respond versus a class critique where they may or may not have a chance to talk.

Figure 4. One photograph included in Jenny's "Sculpture Unit" documentation

Additional information: Two other class critiques had been conducted by this time. One was at the completion of their first project at the beginning of the year. Students were instructed to give compliments using the phrasing, "I really like the way..." They also had an in progress critique of their Face/Vase project. This was an eye opener for me.

Students recognized their own shortcomings in their pieces and were **motivated** for the first time to improve their own pieces without my instructions to do so. I don't think this counted as a Schools strategy, exactly, but it was helpful and a turning point for my



The third and documentation—an

making strategy, *Townhall Meeting*—at the end of a sculpture unit offered a productive assessment of students' knowledge and skills during a class critique. Jenny found that pairing the kinesthetic activity of bidding with physical money (albeit fake money) with the sharing of a specific compliment "challenged" students to critically compare the items, determine worth and to actively recall and apply discipline vocabulary. (Their answers

were instructed to use one of the following Art Elements of Design: line, color, shape, texture, space, or value.) She found the mock art auction strategy also increased levels of participation. (Every student had to respond versus a class critique where they may or may not have a chance to talk.) Jenny's final excerpt also offered generalized evidence of her increased awareness of the ways that structured verbal meaning-making, such as, "I really like the way..." as a feedback method to offer "in progress critique," can invite students to take time for close observation, reflection and feedback throughout a creative process.

Jenny's Reflection on the ART Fellow Program

Though the ART Fellow program was originally intended to end in December, at the end of the fall semester Jenny's project had taken on such a wide scope that she requested more time to collect data on her students' progress. Because of Jenny's commitment to understanding how DBP impacted the work that she and her students did in her classroom, along with her excitement about Action Research, *Drama for Schools* agreed to continue to support her work through the spring semester. Periodically throughout her time as an ART Fellow, and in particular at the end of the school year, Jenny was asked to reflect on how the experience of creating an Action Research project impacted her teaching. Through a series of interviews and check-ins with university researchers, Jenny explained the origins of her project, its development over the course of the year, and what she discovered about how her Action Research project changed the way she taught.

Over the course of her year as an ART Fellow, Jenny developed a better understanding of how DBP changed the way that her students engaged in her classroom, particularly as they improved students' ability to understand and articulate artistic criticism:

I think that as far as the students, some of the things I've noticed with them is they're more motivated when it comes to starting a project because it gets their brain really going and they come up with ideas a lot easier, rather than sitting for two or three days trying to figure out what they want to do. They like that they get to see other students' work on a regular basis because we're doing more class critiques, but in a creative way where they're not sitting being bored. They're actually able to talk about it and give their feedback in, like, you know with Monopoly money and things like that. Where they feel like it's giving some sort of value to their work, beyond just "Oh, well, they said they liked it." They're actually defining and giving specifics. Because when they give answers now, they're getting better at saying, "well, I like it because. . ." and filling in more of a justification for their answers.

The scope of Jenny's project expanded as the year progressed, which was much of the reason she requested more time to complete her project. This expansion was, in part, because Jenny found that participating in the ART Fellow program increased her engagement with, and reflection on, DBP, which consequently increased the opportunities she saw to integrate DBP into her lessons. Jenny noted, "*As I'm reflecting [on how Drama for Schools has changed my teaching], I come up with more and more strategies. It's like as soon as you start to live and breathe it, you can really figure out a lot of different ways to incorporate it.*" The ART Fellow program itself provided a structure for Jenny to respond to questions about her teaching, create a report that illustrates her practice, and have a line of inquiry that was closely tied to her own pedagogical approach. Through the embedded model of professional development, the DBP strategies themselves became a part of a larger project that deepened her understanding and appreciation of how DBP

could be a tool for furthering student comprehension. The ART Fellows project required Jenny to consider where, how, and why she could use DBP in her practice and the specific student outcomes that resulted from her efforts.

While participation as an ART Fellow created inspiration and momentum for change in her classroom, Jenny also came up against the challenges of time, energy, and resources, such as extra compensated time allocated for lesson planning and further documentation of her work that had required a change in the magnitude she had envisioned. Her desired changes also required a substantial overhaul of most of her lessons. Jenny was excited about the growth she had in her students' learning, but also experienced some disappointment and frustration when she was unable to fully implement her vision of the project. As Jenny stated:

Initially, I think I had kind of envisioned a more cohesive approach, but just based on the dynamics of the school system and, like I said, my health and everything, it wasn't always convenient to get the materials ready because I feel like [DBP] strategies require a little bit more prep time, and when it wasn't at that point, I think I would opt not to do it instead of try to do it and it not be successful.

Jenny had high standards for both herself and for her students, yet also was saddled with the reality of working as the lone arts educator in the ART Fellows cadre of four. She had support from her administration to participate but she lacked on-the-ground collaborators and a larger support system. In the end, Jenny was unable to complete her goal of a multiple units and a full rubric evaluation for all of her students across the academic year.

Discussion

Data analysis for this article focused on the artifacts that Jenny provided as a part of her action research project. As an exploratory case study, we used a qualitative, thematic content analysis approach to guide the findings and implications of this study. Two project researchers together developed a framework for analyzing Jenny's work products, drawing upon the principles of drama-based pedagogy as well as the articulated reflections from Jenny's ART Fellow report, which align to the *Drama for Schools* professional learning approach. For example, many of the DBP strategies are geared toward a multi-model meaning-making process (visual, verbal, and embodied) between the group of students and the teachers. We specifically noted where Jenny contributed her own unique approach to the integration of drama into a visual arts education instructional cycle. Themes were identified jointly via a consensus process. In looking across the artifacts she provided as part of this project, we found that Jenny's integration of drama-based pedagogy into her visual arts classes and her ART Fellow project could be framed along a three-step process: Planning, Reflection, and Assessment.

Planning

Jenny's extensively detailed report focused heavily on the creation of research and learning objectives. Jenny created a fully developed lesson plan for each activity, reflecting on how to use a drama-based approach to reach her goals as a visual arts instructor. By using her ART Fellow research design and objectives as an anchor for her teaching approach, the process appeared to assist her in clear and targeted lesson preparation. For example, she began with identification of an area for improvement in her teaching (i.e., what she wanted students to be able to do, or an area in which she felt she wasn't teaching well enough). She then used a DBP strategy to help her meet a specific

goal and worked to measure those outcomes. Jenny was deliberate in her choices and thought through how the strategy would help both her and her students reach their goals. Although we have found that the use of the drama-based instructional approach often does improve a teachers' ability to design intentional, effective lessons (Dawson & Lee, 2018), Jenny seemed to specifically benefit from the action research process embedded into her learning design documentation. The additional documentation processes, both in the report and in her interviews, provided a place for her to articulate, refine, and revise her goals for students and consider how she used DBP to meet those goals.

Reflection. Parallel to planning before a lesson, the ART Fellow research framework appeared to increase Jenny's opportunities for structured reflection about her teaching. Part of this was due to the reflection embedded into DBI strategies and highlighted in the *Drama for Schools* program. When learning a new DBP strategy, teachers are encouraged to first describe what happens in the activity, then analyze what that might represent, and finally relate the activity to their specific student population or subject area. The nature of the activities Jenny chose meant that students were often reflecting on their own visual arts skills and knowledge both with her and with each other. In her report, Jenny created additional written reflections of activities, reflections that went beyond a description of the arts integration activities and began a reiterative cycle of improvement that is an integral part of the action research process. The report process itself created a reason to record new ideas for the following year: she identified what worked with the strategies and the level of her students' engagement and learning, and what didn't. In her interview responses, Jenny noted that her students liked to have a creative way to provide their opinions and thoughts about each other's work. Through a range of meaning-making strategies embedded within a dramatic frame, students were able to provide critical feedback to each other in a way that is scaffolded, safe, and contextualized for the recipient. As a further parallel, perhaps the ART Fellow project gave Jenny that same structure and safety to reflect deeply and critically upon her teaching because, as an action researcher, she was the one who was in control of the process.

Assessment. The final process that was fundamental to this project was that of assessment. In the past, we have found that teachers who use DBP are better able to assess their students' level of engagement than before DBP training. (Cawthon et al., 2011). Jenny frequently asked herself: "How will I assess whether change has happened in my classroom in a way that I can measure?" She created a rubric and put into operation a number of learning objectives that she hoped to see her students develop over the course of the year. Jenny was excited about her students' growing capacity to be specific in their observations and to provide justification for their interpretations. It appears that, for Jenny, DBP strategies allowed her to change the way she assessed her students' progress. With higher levels of engagement from the students, they were better able to express to her their understanding, because of the mode they were using, i.e. more embodied, more verbal, more contextualized, less written product. As a result, Jenny was able to break down the assessment process, make operational the various aspects of it more concretely, and gain a more comprehensive understanding of how her students met the lesson's objectives.

Implications

Albeit a small study within a very specific context, findings from this project can inform the field at a number of levels. The first way is in how it emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between visual arts and drama/theatre education. When visual arts teachers participate in a drama-based arts integration professional development program, such as

Drama for Schools, what role is there for visual arts education teachers? Jenny found that DBP gave her ways to frame the learning experience for her students and created moments of engagement that allowed them to “hook” into an idea, creating a need to know and resulting in more creativity across modalities, such as role play and inferring meaning from a painting or visual medium). She found that the specific learning objectives in her visual arts content area could be reached using the framework and tools from a drama-based perspective.

Second, even in a fine arts classroom with a focus on visual representations of knowledge, Jenny’s students had difficulties in articulating and expressing their learning processes. Jenny had specific goals as to how the drama-based approach could assist her in designing lessons that provided opportunities for students to use their content knowledge *within a dialogic and interactive context*. Jenny then often based her assessment of student learning on performance aspects of the drama-based activities, creating a formal mechanism for her to evaluate her students’ progress. Furthermore, because of the transparent nature of the drama-based activities, Jenny used these opportunities to help students “see” their own growth and areas for continued improvement. Jenny’s ART Fellow project illustrated how both students and teachers can benefit from the deepened reflection on their practice that will help lay further groundwork for refinement and achievement.

Finally, Jenny’s participation in the ART Fellow process was an example of how professional learning models might expand upon teacher capacities developed in earlier phases of a program. How does a program offer an intermediate or advanced participant a concrete way to understand how new pedagogy works for their students? The format of the ART Fellow process, rooted in action research, provided a useful structure for Jenny to reflect and revise her teaching approach. This project was engaging enough for Jenny to maintain her interest over time and gave her an accountability mechanism, such as her report of findings and interviews, to structure her process. This aligns with the effective professional learning literature that suggests that teachers need relevant, embedded tools for sustainable classroom change (Avalos, 2011; Guskey, 1986; Guskey, 2002), and that they need time to plan, enact, evaluate, and reflect on their work throughout a professional development sequence (Cawthon & Dawson, 2009; Webster-Wright 2009). *Drama for Schools* is excited about the potential for action research as a professional development model to provide transformative, agentic experiences for teachers.

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