

STAGING CHARACTER EDUCATION:  
INVESTIGATING THE POSSIBLE  
LINK BETWEEN THE THEATRE  
ARTS CURRICULUM AND  
CHARACTER  
EDUCATION

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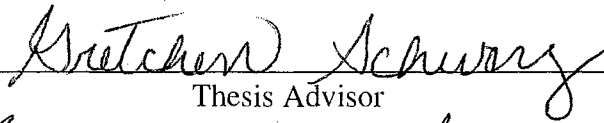
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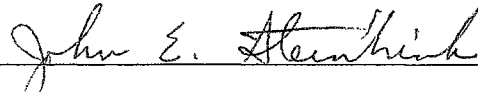
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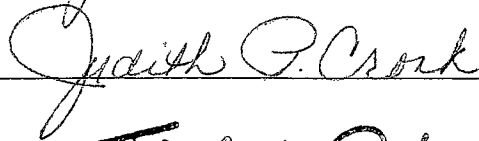
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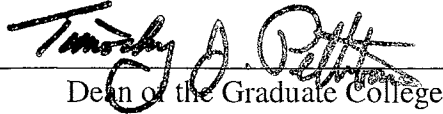
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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Context for the Problem

##### *The Need for Character Education*

For almost two decades, the media have consistently reported the criminal and immoral acts of America's youth. Brooks and Goble (1997) cite a 1981 *U.S. News and World Report* article, entitled "Troubled Teenagers." The article describes them as being, "...deeply troubled, unable to cope with the pressures of growing up in what they perceive as a world that is hostile or indifferent to them" (p. 2). Lickona (1991) reports that our youth are making bad decisions and choices in living their lives. The United States murder rate for 15 – 24 year old males is seven times higher than Canada's and 40 times higher than Japan's. Shoplifting, as well as stealing books or articles from libraries, is on the rise. Students are not only cheating on exams and assignments, the majority of them now think it is an acceptable and necessary thing to do. Our youth engage in peer cruelty and bigotry. There is an increase in self-centered behavior, and declining commitment to civic responsibility. Perhaps, most alarming is the rise in self-destructive behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse (pgs. 13-19). These behaviors indicate that students are losing respect for themselves and others, and as they lose respect, they are feeling less and less responsible for themselves, their country, their community, or each other.

American society has responded to such reports by demanding action from the public school system. According to Wynne and Ryan (1997), annual Gallup polls have consistently ranked "pupil discipline" as a major problem facing education. Lickona

(1988) states, "Gallup polls indicate that more than 80% of parents want schools to teach moral values-and make respect and responsibility the fourth and fifth Rs" (Cited in Tyree, Vance, and McJunkin, 1997, p. 216). More recently, the school shootings in Kentucky, Arkansas, and Colorado have prompted renewed and urgent cries from the public for educational intervention. The traumatic events shocked and frightened both the adults and the school children of America. The horror of the tragedies forced character education onto the front pages of our national awareness, and all are watching to see how the politicians and the educators will address the issue.

While many Americans are concerned about dramatic and tragic events like the Columbine and Arkansas school shootings, others like Lickona (1991) and Ryan (1997, 1999) are disturbed by the small erosions in character development that can be seen in the ordinary, every day existence of our youth. Davis (1996) maintains, "Lesser violations of others' rights and self-destructive behaviors-rudeness, disruptiveness, petty theft, vandalism, wastefulness...., and dropping out of school-do not make the news" (p. 6). Yet, these "lesser" types of behaviors disturb educators and parents who are most involved with America's young people. It is the lesser types of behavior that most character education attempts to address. If students can learn to understand and respect the common decencies of society, then the greater crimes against that society may be lessened. While character education programs do exist for the purpose of preventing violence and crime, many of the character education theorists promote the idea of early intervention in character training as the best tool of prevention.



### *Character Education Theories and the Curriculum*

In the midst of societal and educational concerns, many educators have stepped forth to investigate theories and ideas for developing character in our young people through the public schools of America. Many agree that it is the responsibility of the school to teach some form of character education (Brooks and Goble, 1997; Davis, 1996; Heslep, 1995; Kirschenbaum, 1995; Lickona, 1991; Sizer and Sizer, 1999; and Wynne and Ryan, 1997). Heslep (1995), Lickona (1991), and Wynne and Ryan (1997) maintain that character education should be built into the curriculum of academic subject matter. Many of the books written by character education theorists (Davis, 1996; Kirschenbaum, 1995; Lickona, 1991; Wynne and Ryan, 1997; and others) offer ideas and suggestions concerning the curriculum in character education.

One area of the curriculum is the arts. Eisner (1992) states, "...the arts can help students find their individual capacity to feel and imagine" (p.597). Eisner maintains that the arts enhance human development by allowing us to express our personal discoveries about our world and our life. Greene (1995) reflects, "Art is life; it offers hope; it offers the prospect of discovery; it offers light" (p. 133). As we think about incidents like Columbine, is it not clear that our young people need hope, need light to embrace life? The arts can offer opportunities for students to discover and embrace life.

Even though support for the arts is growing with the recent establishment of national standards, most people still consider the arts to be a frill. Eisner (1992) suggests that the amount of time spent on a particular subject in school indicates the importance of that subject to society. Time also indicates the amount of opportunity given to cultural growth in our schools. Eisner (1992) states, "A school in which the arts are absent or poorly

taught is unlikely to provide the genuine opportunities children need to use the arts in the service of their own development" (p. 591). While Kirschenbaum, (1995), and Wynne and Ryan, (1997) briefly mention the arts as important to character education curriculum, *the arts as a possible resource in character education have not been sufficiently studied.*

Theatre arts are one important curriculum included in the new standards movement for arts education. However, many of the arts including theatre are adapted in American culture to meet the demands of our society in other ways than simply teaching the curriculum in the public schools. Aspects of theatre arts education are widely used in the area of process drama as a means to help troubled youth. Process drama refers to using the conventions of drama including improvisation, character analysis, role-playing, and dramatic literature to stimulate discussions about certain subjects, ideas, and even, personal struggles and challenges. Process drama is not, however, a study of the performing art form, theatre. Researchers, Wolf and Heath (1999), spent two years observing youth groups participating in theatre and observed that students gain an understanding of conflict resolution through the rehearsal and performance of a play. Catron (1992), a professor in theatre, compiled his views on the benefits of theatre. Catron believes that students gain self-confidence, self-discipline, and the ability to work with others while participating in theatre. Respect and responsibility are essential in learning to work with others. He supports the value and importance of dramatic literature. He states, "Theatre students have the opportunity to gain not only an awareness of a vast range of human concerns, but to discover the concrete realities of the philosophies and histories of each of them by 'living' the lives of the characters in plays" (p. 9). "Living" these lives helps students to grow in empathy and understanding of others. Wolf and

Heath (1999) and Catron (1992) provide examples and opinions concerning the influence of theatre on character when the student is involved in theatre as a performing art. *Yet, little research has been done to investigate the effects of high school theatre curricula on the character of high school students.*

## **Statement of the Problem**

### *The Curriculum*

Character education experts maintain the importance of the curriculum in teaching character education. Since arts advocates maintain that the arts are an important link to understanding humanity, the role of the arts as a potential resource for character education is of interest in any investigation in public high schools. Specifically, evidence suggests that theatre arts education be investigated since there is little formal research into drama as a character education resource in schools. While process drama has been investigated in various settings, the theatre arts curriculum that provides the student with the necessary skills and knowledge for performance has been neglected. Secondly, the successful use of theatre arts components to treat troubled youths argue for it to be studied in a high school situation where all students have access to taking theatre. Kohl's (1998) perceptions about what was happening in his classroom when he used drama are significant to understanding the implementation of character education within a given curriculum. Kohl discusses the change in his students' attitudes about their school once they were involved in their school in a meaningful way through creating theatre. He found that they understood how to respect and be responsible for their school. Both Wilson (1999) and Wagner (1999) suggest that more studies need to be conducted if a relationship between drama and character education is to be clarified.

## Purpose of the Study

One theme in the literature surrounding theories of character education suggests that students need to be involved in building and maintaining learning communities where they can practice the ideals of democracy ( Brooks and Goble, 1997; Fain, 1999; Kirschenbaum, 1995; Noblit and Dempsey, 1996; and Sizer and Sizer, 1999). Fain (1999) offers, "...character education is focused on values, and these values are inextricably joined to the community, and the community has the responsibility of passing on those values that are central to the advancement of a democratic community..." (p. 53). Lickona (1991) speaks of another type of community called a moral community. He defines the moral community as a place where three basic conditions are met. Those three conditions are: "students know each other; students respect, affirm, and care about each other; and students feel membership in, and responsibility to, the group" (p.91). Respect and responsibility are central to the establishment of a democratic and moral community. Kohl (1998) adds depth to the idea of community in the classroom when he says, "I have found that theater creates a model of communal work that often leads to a vision of a convivial learning community" (p.197). Schools are in the business of teaching; therefore, learning is one of the central activities of any classroom community. In that classroom, learners united in a moral and democratic community can acquire and practice respect and responsibility. The nature of student involvement and engagement with the theatre arts curriculum requires a moral and democratic community if it is to be effective in producing theatre, or providing opportunities for students to understand theatre as an art form. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the role of the theatre arts

curriculum in establishing a democratic and moral learning community where respect and responsibility are practiced.

The teacher's perceptions of the curriculum as a potential source for character education are instrumental. The intent is to describe the perceptions of theatre arts teachers as they implement the theatre arts curriculum with their students in their classrooms and programs. It is also important to give a voice to the students of theatre arts programs concerning their ideas about the impact of the theatre arts curriculum. Farris and Parke (1993) include in their study of middle school drama students, comments from the students themselves about the impact of the curriculum. Exploring the aspects and the benefits of differing curricula in America's schools is key to understanding how a specific curriculum can be a vehicle for character education.

#### *Research Questions*

1. Do theatre arts teachers perceive that the theatre arts curriculum impacts the character growth of their students? If so, how?
2. More specifically, what aspects of the curriculum do theatre arts teachers perceive as creating a democratic and moral learning community in the theatre arts classroom or program?
3. What aspects of the curriculum do theatre arts teachers perceive as creating acts of respect and responsibility in their students?
4. Finally, what are the perceptions of students and former students of the theatre arts concerning the impact of the curriculum on their own personal growth?

## **Background and Significance of the Study**

### *A Brief History of Character Education*

Realizing that smart and good are not the same, wise societies since the time of Plato have made moral education a deliberate aim of schooling. They have educated for character as well as intellect, decency as well as literacy, virtue as well as knowledge. They have tried to form citizens who will use their intelligence to benefit others as well as themselves, who will try to build a better world. (Lickona, 1991)

Lickona's quote illustrates a belief in the importance and validity of character education and a belief that it has been an important component in the education systems of civilized societies. Lickona argues further that the founders of the United States believed that character education was essential if a democracy was to function effectively. He supports his reasoning by reminding readers that Thomas Jefferson argued for the teaching of character education to begin with children at an early age. Both Lickona (1991) and Kirschenbaum (1995) include histories of character education in America in their books. These histories help explain the current situation in American schools regarding character education and contemporary curriculum.

Lickona and Kirschenbaum feel that the decline of character education during the last 100 years began because of several important events influencing American society's thinking about education and character. Kirschenbaum details the "Children's Morality Code" as a key component of character education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Children were inculcated by precept and example to possess ten important character traits including: self-control, good health, kindness, sportsmanship, self-reliance, duty, reliability, truth,

good workmanship, and teamwork. In the late 1920's, however, a study conducted by Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May, Yale University psychologists, indicated that traditional methods of character education were not working as students in these "precept and example" groups were behaving no more honestly than other students. Kirschenbaum (1995) believes this encouraged the progressive movement, which called for increased teamwork, and group problem solving as means to teach "respect, responsibility, tolerance, and concern for the common good..." (p. 5). Kirschenbaum argues that the movement showed some positive results, but since implementation was sporadic, the progressive education movement faded from existence.

Lickona (1991) argues that the initial research of Hartshorne and May prompted people to believe character did not exist because behavior including honesty or dishonesty was highly variable and situation sensitive. If "character" did not exist, there was no need for character education. Although other researchers later analyzed the data provided by Harshorne's and May's study and reported that some children were actually more honest or dishonest regardless of the situation, the earlier findings had already shaped beliefs. Character education was on the decline in American schools.

With the advent of "logical positivism", truths and facts that could be documented began to take precedence over morals or values because these were considered mere emotional expressions. Lickona (1991) maintains that during this time in American history, morality became a public choice rather than a responsibility of citizenship (p. 8). By the mid-1950's science was the dominant subject in schools, and character education began to disappear.

Kirschenbaum and Lickona agree that the decades of the sixties and seventies brought about great changes in the traditional value systems of the United States. Lickona (1991) coined the term "personalism" to define the era. He stated, "Personalism celebrated the worth, dignity, and autonomy of the individual person, including the subjective self or inner life of the person. It emphasized rights more than responsibility, freedom more than commitment" (p. 9). Kirschenbaum reflected on the sixties and seventies as a time of turbulent social change when minorities as well as individuals gained greater freedom and power through their own choices and voices. He saw these decades, as did most historians, as decades when traditional roles and values were challenged. These challenges were reflected in the schools.

"Values clarification" and "moral reasoning" became the new jargon for character education. In light of the changes taking place in our society concerning the rights of individuals, teachers were encouraged to help students clarify their own value systems. The student's personal moral reasoning took precedence over any character instruction. The teacher and the school were cautioned about influencing the students with particular values. The schools were instead to teach students to find their own personal and socially responsible values. While both Lickona and Kirschenbaum argue that there is some merit in these systems, both report that neither worked to provide satisfactory character education in the schools.

During the decades of the eighties and the nineties, as America began to witness what many have called a "moral decline," a revolt against the ideas of the sixties and seventies called for a return to the traditional values of the past. According to Brooks and Goble (1997), in 1981, then Chief Justice Berger addressed the American Bar Association



concerning the escalation of crime among America's teenagers. He stated, "...part of the problem stems from the fact that we have virtually eliminated from the public schools and higher education any effort to teach values" (p.6). As the decade of the eighties progressed into nineties, Berger appeared to be speaking for the majority of Americans.

Ryan and Bohlin(1999) speak to the attitudes of the American public in the late nineties when they state:

By 1998, there had been six White House-congressional conferences on character education in this decade. The term character education, coupled with appeals for schools to reengage this mission, has become prominent in the president's annual State of the Union address to the nation. Educators, who have become accustomed to harsh criticism about students' low test scores, are now also being blamed for the moral failings of their students and urged to "do something." (p.xiv)

Clearly, the call for education to intervene in the character development of young people has been made.

### *The Arts and Character Education*

Arts advocates (Eisner, 1998; Fowler, 1996; and Gardner, 1973,1994) view the teaching of the arts as one very crucial method of helping our students understand their own humanity and that of others. Fowler (1996) says of moral development through the arts, "Although the arts do not necessarily make us more moral, they can help us to learn to be empathetic toward others. The arts can teach us to feel and to care" (p.42). Feeling and caring are central to developing empathy towards others, and empathy is central to the ability to develop respect for and responsibility to others. Goodlad (2000) suggests that plans for renewal and reform in schools must include the arts. He believes that the

mission of education in today's world must encompass the whole of humankind and its differing cultures. He argues that the arts have the capability of fulfilling this mission because of the many languages represented in the many art forms in our world. He states clearly, "In reality, the arts are a powerful medium for the advancement of an educational mission focused on developing democratic character in the young" (p. 14). Fain (1999) argues for the importance of democratic character to building responsible and respectful citizens. As our world becomes increasingly connected, democratic character in our youth is a requirement if we are to maintain citizenship in the global community. The arts can enhance our understanding of others in this global community. Spearman (2000) states, "Certainly arts education has a vital role to play in the drama of American life and in efforts to achieve cultural democracy" (p.10).

Clearly, the arts appear to play an important role in developing citizens who can understand and care for one another despite their cultural differences. Each culture contributes to the arts, and the student's awareness of these different and unique contributions can serve as a bridge to understanding those who appear different on the surface. The arts, in fact, represent the humanities. Understanding our own humanity and the humanity of others is key to participating in a healthy and fulfilling existence. The arts can enable individuals to discover their own talents, dreams, and visions. The arts can aid us in respecting our own human dignity as well as the dignity of others.

Many current character education theorists offer concrete methods for implementing character education into the curricula of the schools (Brooks and Goble, 1997; Davis, 1996; Kirschenbaum, 1995; Lickona, 1991; Ryan and Bohlin, 1999; and Wynne and Ryan, 1997). Ryan (1996) suggests that one of the most difficult aspects of character

education is capturing how it is taught. He maintains that there are many avenues that schools can take to teach character education. However, little research has been done to investigate the aspects of character education in one specific arts curriculum. *The investigation of one specific arts curriculum could prove beneficial for discovering the full potential of the arts as a possible source for character education. One arts curriculum as a possible resource for character education is theatre arts education.*

#### *Theatre Arts Education and Character Education*

Interestingly, Winston (1999) submits that there is a widespread assumption that there is a connection between drama and moral education. Winston believes that the keys to using drama in character education lie in drama's power as enacted narrative, as a communal art form, as well as in role-playing and dialogue. Winston also believes that much power exists in drama's ability to help us understand our emotions and our reasoning abilities through moral engagement in drama. *Yet, he recognizes as well that very little research or scholarship addresses this connection in the schools. Wagner (1999) does not believe that enough studies have been completed to generalize about drama's ability to influence moral reasoning.* However she does state, "As drama participants struggle to reconcile their own views of the world with those of the character they are playing, they grow in moral reasoning" (p. 148). Wagner maintains that empathy grows through the portrayal of other people as you experience their lives.

Wagner offers many studies of drama and its correlation to improved social behavior. Respect and responsibility are aspects of social behavior which must be encouraged in our students. While most of these studies showed improved social behavior in the research subjects, it is important to realize that all of these studies involved only partial

aspects of the theatre arts curriculum. Most involved process drama, and very little research was conducted into the effects of producing theatre as an art form. It is also crucial to note that the majority of these studies were quantitative studies rather than qualitative. A qualitative study can provide for a more in depth study of the theatre arts curriculum. *Again, it would be of value to see the possible effects of drama on character education in a theatre arts classroom where the chief aim of instruction is to understand and appreciate the art form.*

For the past few decades, process drama, one component of theatre arts curricula, has been utilized in areas of therapy and rehabilitation. Studies documenting the effects of process drama on people troubled with social ills or psychological problems have shown successful results in helping people to understand their own emotions and motivations. Rohd (1998) detailed a study he did with his high school theatre students as they engaged in dramatic activities with a group of HIV patients. Smagorinsky (1995) studied the effects of dramatic interaction on young people in alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs. Kohl (1998) reports that his experiences in using drama with troubled students led him to recognize the power of drama to help students cope with sensitive social and personal issues. These studies illustrate that process drama works to stimulate awareness, discussion, and growth in the lives of young people. *Again, however, these studies suggest little evidence that a theatre arts curriculum focused on the art form can be effective in character education.*

### **Design of the Study**

Chapter two presents the literature review concerning character education and its relationship to adolescent development, arts education, and theatre arts education. The

review includes several areas including theories surrounding adolescent development, character education, and its implementation into American schools. The review also explores theories about arts education and theatre arts education. The review of theatre arts education will look most specifically at process drama, rehearsal and performance, and dramatic literature.

Chapter three describes the design and methods which were used to collect the data for this study. The design for this study is a qualitative case study involving five teachers and their students currently involved in the theatre arts curriculum of Texas. Additional data was gathered from former theatre arts students of the five teachers in the study. Crabtree and Miller (1992) define a case study according to the definition of Merriam (1988) and Yin (1989). A case study examines most or all of the potential aspects of a topic or problem through a particular entity or entities called cases. Merriam (1998) refers to this type of study as comparative case studies (p. 40). In this study, the comparative case studies examine the characteristics of the five different entities for commonalities, differences, and themes concerning character education in the theatre arts classroom. Specific methods for data collection include semi-structured interviews with the five teachers and two of their former students. In addition, the researcher analyzed journal entries made by the five teachers, examined artifacts collected by the teachers, and studied narrative surveys completed by the current students of the five teachers. Students completing the surveys were assured anonymity.

Chapter four is the presentation of the data collected through the semi-structured interviews, teacher journals, artifacts, and student surveys. This chapter includes an analysis of the themes and patterns concerning theatre arts and character education as

identified by the researcher. This analysis also examines any connections of themes in the data to the theories of community, respect, and responsibility identified in the purpose of the study.

Chapter five includes a summary of the findings and conclusions drawn from the data. This chapter also includes personal observations about theatre education and its possible relationship to theories of character education. Any recommendations for future research are also included in this final chapter.

#### *Limitations:*

1. Participants in this study are limited to five theatre arts teachers in the Texas public school system. Although the Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge (TEKS) criteria are somewhat based on the National Standards for Theatre Arts, the TEKS are more detailed and inclusive. Therefore, some differences in curricula and teaching philosophy between Texas teachers and teachers across the United States may exist.
2. Purposive sampling, sampling based on the knowledge and experience of the researcher, is being used to select criteria for choosing subjects. The researcher's knowledge of the teachers and the curriculum may suggest some possibility for bias.
3. Qualitative research is interpretative. The researcher is the key instrument for data collection. The interpretations of the researcher provide the analysis of the data. There is no attempt to generalize to a large population. The intent is to gain an understanding of the research topic through in-depth study.

#### *Definitions of Terms:*

Character education: The researcher developed the following definition from the writings of Davis (1996); Kirschenbaum (1995); Lickona (1991); and Wynne and Ryan (1997).

Character education is concerned with teaching the traditional and secular values associated with developing caring, responsible, and productive citizens. Those traditional values include respect and responsibility. Other values linked to respect and responsibility include traits such as compassion, loyalty, self-discipline, self-esteem, and empathy.

Theatre arts education and drama: Historically, drama often refers to dramatic literature only. The researcher is choosing to use both words to describe a curriculum where dramatic literature, historical contexts, acting techniques, improvisation skills, as well as production and rehearsal conventions, and directing techniques are studied.

Process drama: Process drama is using the conventions of the theatrical process including improvisation, character analysis, and dramatic literature to stimulate discussions about certain subjects, ideas, or even personal problems. In many cases the discussions are conceived as methods to move human subjects toward behavioral changes.

Democratic community: The researcher has chosen to use precepts suggested by Fain (1999) for the focus of character education as a definition for democracy in the community: 1.) students must understand what deserves respect; 2.) students must understand the responsibilities of citizenship; 3.) students must understand how responsible citizens ought to act on their morals and values, and 4.) students must understand the context created by the history, traditions, and contemporary issues which collectively define their community (p. 51).

Moral community: Lickona (1991) states that three basic conditions are necessary for creating a moral community in the classroom. Those three conditions are: 1.) students

know each other; 2.) students respect, affirm, and care about each other; and 3.) students feel membership in, and responsibility to, the group (p.91).

Learning Community: Based on the ideas of Ayers (1993) and Kohl (1998), the researcher developed the following definition for a learning community. Learning takes place in a safe and supportive environment, the students have ownership in their learning through choice and personal discovery, the knowledge of students is recognized as valid, and the teacher as guide learns with the students.

Respect: Lickona (1991) defines respect as showing regard for the worth of someone or something. He states, "It includes respect for self, respect for the rights and dignity of all persons, and respect for the environment that sustains all life. Respect is the restraining side of morality; it keeps us from hurting what we ought to value" (p.67).

Responsibility: Lickona (1991) holds that responsibility is the active side of morality. He states, "It includes taking care of self and others, fulfilling our obligations, contributing to our communities, alleviating suffering, and building a better world" (p.68).



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The review of the literature investigates several areas which concern the adolescent, the arts, and character education. Examining theories about adolescent development is relevant to the study because understanding the relationship of the arts and character education to the adolescent is vital to the integrity of the study. The thoughts and ideas of contemporary experts in all these fields are examined in this chapter.

#### **Adolescent Development**

Understanding aspects of the development of the adolescent is important to understanding the role of character education in the secondary curricula. While much of the character education research done in the past twenty years has concentrated on elementary students, recent violent events in our nation's high schools prompt us to investigate theories surrounding the development of the teen-ager. Bringing into focus the thoughts, struggles, and challenges adolescents face in their world clarifies the need for character education today.

According to Kagan (1978), adolescents are examining their belief systems and struggling with inconsistencies that they cannot seem to argue logically. Questions, observations, and emotions seem to overwhelm them as they try to match what they know about living with what they are seeing, hearing, and feeling. With the onset of puberty, they have feelings and power they have not known before, yet, in many cases, they do not have the knowledge to manage their new feelings or their new powers. Kagan (1978) suggests that students are caught in "a strangling web of apathy" (p. 107). The past and the future intersect in such a way as to make them almost timid about moving

forward or making decisions. Yet, it is also a time when the school and society are demanding that they make decisions. The combination of the timidity and the demands creates a dilemma for the adolescent. Kagan (1978) describes the dilemma when he states:

The preoccupying motives for most American adolescents revolve around resolving uncertainty over sexual adequacy, interpersonal power, autonomy of belief and action, and acceptability to peers. The urgency of these questions dominates the weaker desire to acquire competence at mathematics, history, or English composition. Hence, the school halls exude combinations of apathy and hostility. (p. 110)

Coles (1997) alludes to this dilemma as well. Adolescents find themselves in a place where independence is both encouraged and discouraged by a society, which includes teachers and parents. Adolescents are confused and defiant in the face of this incongruity. They do not yet know the parameters of their independence. Coles (1997) believes that independence is the defining goal of adolescents, but he also maintains that teenagers struggle with letting go of the ideas of parents and teachers. His explanation of this struggle is very similar to Kagan's (1978) "web of apathy." Coles (1997) states, "The result of the struggle can often be a moral paralysis, a sense of moral drifting, unnerving, hard to shake" (p. 136). Adolescents find themselves with more questions than answers about decisions that have consequences for their lives. It is a precarious time for them.

Kohlberg (1981) provides intriguing questions with his belief that adolescents normally fall into stage two and stage three of his stages of moral development theory. These stages assert that development has reached a point where fairness in human relations is

reciprocal and moves toward and into a stage where conforming to the expected behavior is desirable (P.17-18). The idea of conformity conflicts with the ideas presented by both Coles (1997) and Kagan (1978). Yet, Kohlberg's assertions that during these stages, moral development is controlled by the adolescent's desire to meet his/her own needs through pleasing others are similar to Coles' and Kagan's beliefs. All three seem to suggest that this is a period when the adolescent is recognizing his/her need for others, yet rejecting that need as he or she struggles for his/her own independence. Character is influenced by the decisions and choices made during this struggle for independence.

Elkind (1998) speaks to the problems of today's teenagers in his book, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go*. The title describes Elkind's observations. Elkind argues that in our postmodern society, we (adults) have abdicated our responsibility to guide and mentor our youth. Adults are struggling with their own problems and issues, and consequently, project a competency and sophistication onto teenagers that they do not possess. It is far easier to assume that adolescents can handle the stresses of life in our present society than it is to provide for the needs of our teenagers. Teens are given no place to explore and cope with these stresses, and they are given little, if any, guidance for doing so.

Elkind (1998) argues further that adolescents are unable to form a personal identity or what he calls an integrated self. He describes the process of integration below:

The sense of personal identity is constructed by one of two means. One of these is the process of *differentiation* (the process of discriminating or separating out concepts, feelings, and emotions) and *integration* (putting the separated parts together into a high-ordered whole). The other path to identity formation is the process of *substitution* (merely replacing one set of concepts, feelings, or

emotions for another). In general, a healthy sense of identity is achieved when growth by differentiation and integration takes precedence over growth by substitution. (p.18)

Elkind's arguments relate to Kagan's and Coles' in the theory that adolescents are struggling for their own independent identity. It is a precarious and vulnerable time for them, and educators, as well as the other significant adults in their lives, are responsible for finding methods to help them with the stresses they face.

Chen and Dornbusch (1998) argue that parental support is important to a healthy self-esteem. They further argue that achievement in school is related to support from the family; however, self-esteem can actually increase in adolescents who are detached from the parents if they participate in deviant behaviors which are applauded by their peers. The Chen and Dornbusch study supports the idea of both Coles and Kagan that many adolescents find themselves caught in the middle between family support systems and peer approval. In this day and age, when the family system appears to be faltering in many homes, the peer support systems grow in importance. This need for peer support may instigate increased deviant behavior if the peer influence is negative.

Kasen, et al (1998) state, "Outside the family, the school is the most proximal socializing agent available to convey societal norms and prohibitions" (p. 49). When this argument is placed against the ideas that adolescents are struggling to break their bonds with parental influences and that deviant behavior can increase with negative peer influence, the role of the school in guiding adolescent development increases in stature. The Kasen, et al. study concludes with others (Cauce, Felner, and Primavera, 1982; Dubois et al., 1992; Rowlison and Felner, 1988), ". . .the development of supportive ties

in the school setting can serve to counteract the negative effects of exposure to high-risk situations in the family and in other contexts" (p. 70).

"Supportive ties" in the school can refer to efforts of teachers and programs to provide avenues for character growth in students. Students caught in what Kagan calls a "web of apathy" and what Coles refers to as "moral paralysis" need guidance and parameters to help them in making decisions about behavior. Elkind (1998) maintains that our schools offer little in the way of "teacher-organized" activities, which would give needed guidance and directions to today's students (p.3). School programs can provide guidance and parameters where students can escape from apathy and move forward toward common goals. Students are able to exercise their independence within the haven of these programs. They are able to interact with their peers in a guided atmosphere. Students discover that they are able to explore their own growth as human beings without rejecting their continued need for guidance. Character education theorists who argue for the inclusion of character education within the curricula of the school are aware of the strength of the influence of these school programs. These arguments are clarified when they discuss the need for character education in America's schools.

### **The Need for Character Education**

When discussing the need for character education, violence, crime, cheating, disrespect, and irresponsibility are words that come to mind. Certainly, a detailed look at the statistics of deviant behavior in our nation's youth is crucial to seeing the need for character education, but many theorists also point to the decline of character education in the schools as partially to blame. Brooks and Goble (1997) maintain that the decline in character education over the past three decades corresponds to the increased incidents of

inappropriate youth behavior. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) argue that educators' fear of indoctrinating children has resulted in schools ignoring the need for direct character instruction in their classrooms. Wynne and Ryan (1997) do not blame the schools entirely, but they do maintain that deviant adolescent conduct is partially due to deficient school policies concerning discipline and character education. Esther F. Schaeffer is the executive director and CEO of the Character Education Partnership, an institution dedicated to aiding all institutions including the home and school to work together to develop healthy and productive citizens of our youth. Schaeffer (1998) states,

Schools cannot erect walls and 'put the monkey on the back' of other institutions to assume responsibility for building the ethical values of our democratic society. Children spend six or more hours at school each day. To conclude that schools should avoid intentional efforts to instill fundamental universal values in their children is nonsensical on its face. (p.17)

These character education theorists clearly believe that the school must be responsible for establishing character education curricula in the schools. They also believe that the schools' previous failure to do so is at least partially responsible for the current overwhelming need for character education.

In addition to the decline of character instruction in schools, the need for character education is illustrated through overviews of current problem behaviors among America's youth. Lickona's (1991) report from Chapter One of this study indicated some of those problem behaviors. Others have detailed problem behaviors as well. Kilpatrick (1992) assembled several disturbing statistics about the behaviors of our youth:

An estimated 525,000 attacks, shakedowns, and robberies occur in public high schools each month (Stephens, 1988).

Each year nearly three million crimes are committed on or near school property- 16,000 per school day (Stephens, 1992).

About 135, 000 students carry guns to school daily (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1990).

Twenty-one percent of all secondary school students avoid using the rest rooms out of fear of being harmed or intimidated (Zinsmeister, 1990).

Almost one third of public school teachers indicate that they have seriously considered leaving teaching because of student misbehavior (Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education, 1987).

(Cited in Kilpatrick, 1992, p. 14).

Kirschenbaum (1995) offers further evidence of the problems currently facing America's youth. He relates the following incidents and statistics:

Two dozen suburban high school athletes scored points for their sexual conquests, running up winning totals of 50 and 66 through seduction, date rape, group rape, and even having sex with a 10-year-old girl.

Sixty-five percent of high school students reported they would cheat on an important exam if they had the opportunity (Coles, 1999).

Forty-eight percent of the high school class of 1990 admitted having taken illegal drugs at some time in their lives. One out of four 12- to 17-year olds used alcohol within the past month (Wallace, 1991).

Racism, anti-Semitism, intolerance, and hate-related violence are on the rise among youth. In 1992, hate-inspired vandalism by all age groups rose 49 percent (Dees, 1993) (As cited in Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. xi).

Michael Josephson, founder and president of the Josephson Institute of Ethics and the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition reports on the ethics of young people. This information is preliminary data gathered by the Josephson Institute of Ethics through a comprehensive national survey entitled, "Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth." In a press statement released from the Institute dated October 16, 2000, the following results of the survey of 8,600 high school students are highlighted:

**Cheating.** 71% of all high school students admit they cheated on an exam at least once in the past 12 months (45% said they did so two or more times).

**Lying.** 92% lied to their parents in the past 12 months (79% said they did so two or more times); 78% lied to a teacher (58% two or more times); more than one in four (27%) said they would lie to get a job.

**Stealing.** 40% of males and 30% of females say they stole something from a store in the past 12 months.

**Drunk at School.** Nearly one in six (16%) say they have been drunk in school during the past year (9% said they were drunk two or more times).

**Propensity Toward Violence.** 68% say they hit someone because they were angry in the past year (46% did so at least twice), and nearly half (47%) said they could get a gun if they wanted to (for males: 60% say they could get a gun) (p.2).

These statistics and incidents provide a picture of adolescent behaviors for the past fifteen years or so. These behaviors indicate that students are losing respect for themselves and



others, and as they lose respect, they are feeling less and less responsible for themselves, their country, or each other. Perceptions concerning deviant youth behavior continue to be negative because of the news coverage of major incidents of violence in places like Columbine and Paducah, Kentucky. Negative perceptions do not mean, however, that negative behavior does not exist. Clearly, the facts represented in the reports above show that there is a need for character education. These behaviors have prompted character education theorists to investigate means for encouraging character education in the public schools of America.

### **Character Education Theories**

Schaeffer (1998) shares principles for effective character education developed by the Character for Education Partnership. They are listed here in their entirety:

#### 11 Principles for Effective Character Education

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. "Character" must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
4. The school must be a caring community. For character to take root in the heart of the child, it has to be a part of the daily experience of school.
5. To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.

6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed. Character and learning are inseparable.
7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation to do what's right and should minimize rewards and punishments that distract attention from the reasons to behave responsibly.
8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
9. Character education requires champions from both staff and students who can lead the effort.
10. Parents and community members must be full partners in the character-building effort.
11. Character education efforts are measured, evaluated, and improved on an ongoing basis. (p. 16)

Some of Schaeffer's principles correspond to the theories of several character education theorists. The idea of community in schools is recognized by many theorists as crucial to character education (Fain, 1999; Heslep, 1995; Kirschenbaum, 1995; Lickona, 1991; Ryan and Bohlin, 1999; and Wynne and Ryan, 1997). Heslep (1995) believes that the institutions of a society are responsible for communicating the goals and commonalities of a community to the citizens of that given community. Fain (1999) and Heslep (1995) agree that democracy is best served through instruction of democratic goals to students in the schools. Kirschenbaum (1995) describes the community meeting

where students, teachers, and all school staff function together much in the same format as a town meeting. Decisions are made together, but teachers and administrators are urged to walk a line that Kirschenbaum calls, "participating without dominating" (p. 202). This line allows adults to caution and advise when necessary such as disallowing a decision based on legalities. Kirschenbaum bases this idea on the "just community" which grew out of Kohlberg's ideas on moral development. These ideas of community focus on teaching democratic principles of citizenship, one aspect of character education.

Lickona's (1991) idea of a moral community is included in the list of defined terms for this study. Lickona sees the moral community as a method for developing caring and affirming relationships among the students in the community. Wynne and Ryan (1997) describe a community that is similar to Lickona's moral community and the democracy building communities of Heslep, Kirschenbaum, and Fain. Wynne and Ryan (1997) argue that a community exists within boundaries where the members share common goals, cooperate, and serve one another in an effort to achieve these common goals. Democracy is practiced through the establishment of a hierarchy of leadership. The responsibility of leadership is to guide and implement decisions made in the community. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) call their idea of community a "community of virtue" (p. 58). This community exists to meet the needs of the common good, to set high goals, to serve one another, and to commit to model virtue. Students should build close relationships and be heavily involved in the decisions made about and for their community. They should have ownership in the community. Students should be open to correction as a means for growing and understanding virtue. The community itself should define virtue (p. 84).

While these definitions of community may differ, the similarities suggest that learning to function with others within a group is a key aspect of character education.

The traits of respect and responsibility are terms deemed central to character education by many theorists ( Brooks and Goble, 1997; Davis, 1996; Fain, 1999; Kirschenbaum, 1995; Lickona, 1991; and Ryan and Bohlin, 1999). Schaeffer (1998) states, "Children who are a part of schools that instill character develop a sense of mutual respect, caring and responsibility" (p.17). Fain (1999) in his discussion on the necessity of character education to instill the importance of community in our students, establishes what he calls four points of understanding. Three of those points incorporate respect and responsibility. Heslep (1995), Lickona (1991), and Noddings (1992) share ideas concerning the interaction of students with those around them. All feel that these interactions are important in molding and shaping character in our youth. Heslep (1995) states, "Much of what children learn concerns themselves, and something about themselves that they need to know is that their actions have consequences, and that these consequences involve other people as well as those performing the actions" (p. 83). Heslep introduces the idea here that character education must help the student to understand that he or she has a responsibility to learn how to respect other people. Heslep (1995) and Lickona (1991) both agree that moral agency is an important concept for students to comprehend. Heslep defines a moral agent as, "... a person who reasons; more specifically he or she evaluates purposes and deliberates about courses of action" (p. 129).

These deliberations about courses of action influence our behavior toward other people. Both Lickona (1991) and Noddings (1992) agree that in learning to respect other people, empathy is key. Lickona (1991) states, "One of our tasks as moral educators is

developing generalized empathy, the kind that sees beneath differences and responds to our common humanity” (P. 59). Nodding (1992) agrees and maintains, “What children need to learn is how to sympathize and empathize with other people...” (P. 55).

Heslep (1995), Lickona (1991), and Noddings (1992) all agree that relationships with people mold our understanding of character. All acts of disrespect and irresponsibility eventually touch and harm the lives of human beings. Our students must be taught that they have a responsibility to respect the rights and feelings of others.

Do the feelings that students have about themselves influence their ability to respect others? Lickona (1991) suggests the answer is yes. He states, “When we have positive regard for ourselves, we’re more likely to treat others in positive ways” (p. 58-59).

Educators have stressed the importance of building self-esteem in our students for many years, but Lickona (1991) and Wynne and Ryan (1997) caution that the term self-esteem be more clearly defined if it is to be a goal of character education. Wynne and Ryan (1997) state:

The self-esteem movement puts a false and infectious pressure on teachers. They are more and more expected to keep students feeling good about themselves. In other eras, teachers were expected to provide pupils with an environment and educational opportunity to grow and achieve. As a result of that growth and achievement, pupils were entitled to earn self-esteem. (p. 115)

Wynne and Ryan maintain that teachers should be teaching diligence so that students earn their self-esteem and truly understand what it is to meet a challenge and succeed. Lickona (1991) agrees with this concept of self-esteem. He points out that many people have high self-esteem based on possessions, good looks, or popularity rather than

character. He states, "Part of our challenge as educators is helping young people develop positive self-regard based on values such as responsibility, honesty, and kindness on faith in their own capacity for goodness" (P. 59). Heslep (1995), Lickona (1991), Noddings (1992), and Wynne and Ryan (1997) all agree that respect and responsibility are by-products of teaching students diligence and empathy. Character education is connected to teaching our youth to respect themselves and others as well as being responsible for themselves and to others.

Ryan and Bohlin (1999) and Lickona (1991) argue, as does the Character Education Partnership, for "character" to be defined as a someone who thinks, feels, and behaves morally. Both Ryan and Bohlin (1999) and Lickona (1991) refer to the "good" or the "good character." Their meanings and theories concerning character are extremely similar. Lickona states, "Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good" (p. 51). Ryan and Bohlin (1999) use the term loving the good instead of desiring. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) define the term, good, as "...a cross-cultural composite of moral imperatives and ideas that hold us together both as individuals and as societies" (p. 7). Both theories support the ideas of the Character Education Partnership in that knowledge about what is good is a necessary component to character education. However, simple training is not enough. To establish truly "good character", students must come to the place where they love to do the good. Students have emotions based on their knowledge about good, which guides their actions in situations where "good character" is required. The three interrelated parts, thinking, feeling, and behaving must work together as habit in the character of the person. These traits must be a part of the

student who practices "good character." Practicing this "good character" is a possibility in a well-developed learning community.

Respect, responsibility, and community are important elements in character building education. Opportunities are needed to understand and to practice these traits in community situations within the school. The question becomes, "How do educators establish communities where respect and responsibility are taught"? Ideas for the implementation of character education into the curriculum of our schools are key to understanding the current character education movement.

### **Character Education – Curriculum**

Most character education experts believe that character education must be incorporated into the curriculum of the school. Brooks and Goble (1997), Davis (1996), Heslep (1995), Kirschenbaum (1995), Lickona (1991), and Wynne and Ryan (1997) all agree that character education is the responsibility of the school's curriculum. Using the academic curriculum is a powerful tool for integrating character education into the school. Heslep (1995), Kirschenbaum (1995), Lickona (1991), and Wynne and Ryan (1997) all support this idea of integration. Brooks and Goble (1997) agree that character education can be integrated into the academic curriculum. They insist, however, that the importance of character education to our culture require it to stand alone as a curricular subject within our schools.

Ideas following the theories of Kohlberg (1976) suggest that students be given opportunities to discuss choices and decisions concerning moral or character issues. Davis (1996) maintains that students be encouraged to think about their value systems. He believes that using Kohlberg's idea that children practice discussing and making

decisions in moral issues is a viable method for teaching character education. Davis (1996) maintains that students learn specific values through discussion. He does not advocate values clarification or choice, but he does help students to understand values through their own discussions. He suggests the following routine, "...begin by raising awareness of a values problem; then elicit responses related to the value; then help children understand and accept the value; and finally, encourage children to make a commitment to the value" (P.14). Brooks and Goble (1997) believe in the direct approach to character education, but they also advocate using a program called STAR. The letters are an acronym for Stop, Think, Act, and Review. STAR is an ethical problem solving routine, which helps students to consider possible actions and choose the best alternatives. Discussion and awareness of choices in choosing values has been an important concept in our schools for the past twenty-five years, but most character education experts are now agreeing that discussion without direct instruction is not working. Brooks and Goble (1997) state, "We believe that accumulated wisdom of the ages and life experiences provide adults with the rights and responsibility to be more directive in assisting youth in their formation of ethical core values" (p. 37). Many character education theorists advocate instruction in core values rather than allowing students to develop their own values through choice or situational ethics (Brooks and Goble, 1997; Davis, 1996; Kirschenbaum, 1995; Lickona, 1991; Ryan and Bohlin, 1999; and Wynne and Ryan, 1997). Each supports the concept that specific traits are required in productive citizens in a democratic society. Character education is an attempt to directly teach and or aid students in developing those traits.



Cooperative learning and conflict resolution as methods in the academic curriculum are ideas suggested by the literature. Teaching about historical figures as role models for character and discussing the decisions and choices made by these figures is key to giving students models for character. Another suggestion is to make students aware of everyday heroes in their own lives and to examine what makes these people heroes. Literature as a means to foster discussions about character is deemed an important method for teaching character education in the classroom. Methods used within a given curriculum can and will vary, but experts agree that finding ways to integrate character education into that curriculum is crucial.

### **Character Education in Action**

Many of the leading theorists in character education support current programs in character education that are being used in schools across America. These programs use a variety of methods, but all advocate the identification of certain central values or traits to signify character. Many of the programs are aimed at the elementary child, but a few are concerned with the adolescent. These programs exist as national units with training and resources available to educational institutions for purchase.

The Character Education Partnership (CEP) is a national nonprofit coalition based in Washington D.C. that provides leadership and advocacy for character education. Karen Bohlin of Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character (CAEC) is one of the character education theorists who supports the work of this organization. CEP serves as a flagship for several other programs, which are used in schools across the nation.

In 1994, the U.S. Department of Education announced an opportunity for schools interested in character education to apply for a grant. The grant program was entitled, "Partnerships in Character Education Pilot Projects." The California State Board of Education applied and received a grant, which helped them implement their idea of a comprehensive character education program. According to Diane Brooks (1998), former project director for the California Department of Education, the California schools outlined a curriculum-embedded model for character education. The belief existed that teachers in history-social science and literature were already including character education in their lessons. Brooks (1998) adds that teachers in science, the visual and performing arts, as well as health and physical education, were integrating character education into their lessons through ethical situations. Therefore, the board felt that emphasizing a curriculum-embedded model for character education was the direction of the grant proposal.

Once this approach was chosen and the grant received, the five pilot schools in five different districts began to develop professional development. This professional development was designed to answer questions concerning the school and community philosophy toward character education, the strategies to be used in embedding character education into the curriculum, and the methods of evaluating the program once it was established. Initial findings demonstrate that the California schools and the California Board of Education believe in a program of implementation that includes the type of commitment where character education permeates every area of the curriculum and the culture of the school and community.

The California schools program is only one of many schools receiving support and praise from the Character Education Partnership. CEP has also established an annual awards program recognizing K-12 schools and districts demonstrating outstanding character education initiatives and yielding positive results in student behavior, school climate and academic performance (CEP, 2000). The John Templeton Foundation and the UAW/GM Center for Human resources support the program.

According to Grenadier, The 2000 National Schools of Characters were announced in a press conference in Philadelphia in October of 2000. Karen E. Bohlin, CAEC director stated, "The schools are preparing students for life beyond the classroom, and the National Schools of Character program is a way to honor these models of excellence. Our award-winning schools help their students develop the habits of mind and character that guide both academic and personal flourishing. These schools provide all-important leadership to others in developing their own character education efforts" (CEP, 2000). The winners use original programs as well as professionally prepared programs like the one promoted by the Heartwood Institute. STAR is another program used in these National Schools of Character. STAR is a program supported by the Jefferson Center for Character Education. Both are established as reputable character education programs.

The only school district winner listed in the 2000 National Schools of Character is the Mt. Lebanon School District (K-12) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mt. Lebanon has been involved in fostering ethical behavior in its students for over ten years. In the elementary school, Mt. Lebanon employs the values, methods, and curriculum of the Heartwood Institute. The middle schools and high schools build on the core attributes established in the elementary school and encourage community service and leadership in

these older students. One form of service and leadership requires older students to serve as tutors for younger students and those students with special needs.

The Heartwood Institute created an ethics curriculum for children from preschool to grade six. Logan (1995) interviewed Eleanor Childs, the founder of the Heartwood Institute, who had this to say about the development of the Heartwood Program:

We studied Lawrence Kohlberg, Jean Piaget, Carol Gilligan, and all the experts.

We knew our curriculum should use fine multicultural literature. We read mountains of children's stories and commentaries on character education. For years we met every week around a kitchen table and tried to figure out which values on our list of 58 were universal. We settled on seven: courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty, and love. The program we piloted in the Pittsburgh school system has grown from there. (p.79)

The curriculum involves the use of multicultural children's literature to foster literacy, good judgement, and moral imagination. Methods include read aloud stories, discussions, and activities to promote Heartwood's universal core attributes identified by Childs.

Martha Harty, Managing Director of the Heartwood Institute, prepared a statement for the Heartwood Institute Website, which includes a partial listing of the findings made by Dr. James Leming of the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale. Leming offered these evaluations in a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, March 28, 1997. Lemmings found that program students at all grades demonstrated higher levels of ethical understanding than comparison students. The program, according to Lemming, was effective in decreasing prejudice in students in grades one through three. In terms of ethical conduct, the

Lemmings study noted that program teachers in grades four to six noticed improved student conduct (Lemmings, et al., 1997 as cited online Heartwood Institute).

Claudia Logan (1995) shares the story of Penny Levy, a reading, language arts teacher in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who uses the Heartwood program. Levy's story details more of the methods and ideas developed by the Heartwood Institute to incorporate character education into the curriculum. According to Levy, the Heartwood program approach teaches children to use the core attributes of the program to describe character traits and behaviors of the characters in the stories they read. They connect the attributes to a specific set of behavior or behaviors, and make connections between the values and the actions of the person in the literature. Following the reading of stories, students are also encouraged to relate the attributes and behaviors of the characters to situations in their own lives. If they are comfortable, they are encouraged to share their own stories with a partner.

Levy goes on to discuss the idea of service activities and the literature as suggested by the Heartwood program. For example, Levy describes the time she and her students explored the attribute of hope through literature and connected it to a service by donating vegetables to a soup kitchen. The students wanted to provide hope for those struggling to find enough to eat. According to Levy, the Heartwood Program includes discussion questions for parents, which go along with the assigned books.

Elements of the Heartwood Program integrate the reading of literature with the lives of children outside of the school through parental involvement, service projects, and peer discussion. The elements of community service and peer involvement are carried through

the high school years. The seven core attributes make the Heartwood Program a true disciple of the character education movement.

One of the individual school winners in the 2000 National School of Character awards is Walnut Hill Elementary School, a pre K-6 school in Dallas, Texas. Walnut Hill uses the STAR program to aid them in creating an environment of tolerance, responsibility, and unity in a diverse community. The underlying theme of the program is represented by the acronym, STAR, which stands for Success Through Accepting Responsibility (CEP, 2000). The theme is made practical for students when they are taught the second meaning of the acronym, which is Stop, Think, Act, Review. These four steps identify methods for students to use in making decisions about their reactions to situations. STAR was developed and is supported by the Jefferson Center for Character Education in Pasadena, California.

B. David Brooks is the president of the Jefferson Center for Character Education and a founding member of the Character Education Partnership. Frank G. Goble is founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Jefferson Center for Character Education. In their book, *The Case for Character Education: The Role of the School in Teaching Values and Virtue*, the authors include results from *The Value of Character: Summary* (1994), a study completed in three Pittsburgh elementary schools using the STAR program.

McQuaide, et al. (1994) found that when the thirty students in their sample were questioned about actually stopping to think before acting, only two said that they did not stop and think. Twelve answered that they always stopped to think and sixteen replied that they "sometimes" stopped to think. More impressive, however, was that all thirty students were able to give examples of when they were able to stop and think before

acting (p.132). The researchers believe that this ability to give examples shows students clearly understood the meaning of the slogan, STAR.

McQuaide et al. (1994) made the following statement generalizing their conclusions about the STAR program:

Overall, the findings indicated that the STAR program was a highly valued, language-based social skills program which had a strong positive influence on the behavior of students in each school. In addition to the specific skills and themes of the STAR program, its ease of use and adaptability were significant to its success (p. 134).

Walnut Hill elementary is only one of many schools using the STAR program, and their inclusion in the 2000 National Schools of Character Awards indicates that STAR is effective in providing the type of character education promoted by the Character Education Partnership. Other schools awarded the honor of being named a National School of Character may use other programs, but the programs share similarities.

Of the nine individual 2000 National School of Character Winners, only two serve the high school population. One of those, the Excelsior Academy in San Diego, California serves students in grades four through twelve. This academy focuses on students with special needs and learning disabilities. Students are encouraged to learn mediation skills, perform service projects, and participate in partnerships for cross-age tutoring, mentoring and reading. Games and team-building activities are used on special days each month to encourage healthy relationships and a greater understanding of good character attributes (CEP, 2000).

South Carroll High School in Sykesville, Maryland, is another 2000 National School of Character Winner. Both character and community are taught here through encouraging students to be role models in the classroom and extracurricular activities. Teachers are encouraged to provide examples of good character, and the school established a student leadership program, which provides opportunities for students to learn and model good character. In 1999, South Carroll High School received Maryland's Blue Ribbon Award for its exemplary academic achievement and positive teaching environment (CEP, 2000).

These programs recognized and encouraged by CEP share many methods and strategies. Most are interested in integrating character education into the curriculum. Several include the ideas of service and leadership as important attributes in building character. Peer relationships are encouraged through cross-age tutoring, and the reading and discussing of stories is considered of key importance to the idea of character building. Clearly, academic achievement is considered as a goal of character education in these programs. These strategies illustrate an understanding and an implementation of many of the eleven principles for effective character education identified by the Character Education Partnership.

CEP recognizes other national programs including the CHARACTER COUNTS! national program. CHARACTER COUNTS! was implemented in New Mexico through the Albuquerque Public Schools as the result of receiving a grant from the *Secretary's Fund for the Improvement of Education: Partnerships in Character Education* in 1995-96 (CEP, 1998). CHARACTER COUNTS! began with Michael Josephson and the Josephson Institute of Ethics. The program is built around six values called the "Six



Pillars of Character." These values include: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

The CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition began in 1993 with 27 organizations. At present, more than 450 national, regional, and local organizations are members and millions of school children in more than 2,000 schools and hundreds of youth groups are learning about the "Six Pillars of Character" (Josephson Institute, 2000). Some of the members include: the National Association of State School Boards, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, YMCA, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, American Youth Soccer League and Little League (Josephson Institute, 1999). The purpose of the coalition is raise the awareness of the need to teach and model core values that are acceptable to liberals and conservatives as well as to secular and faith-based communities. Resources and training are provided to participants as well as three special programs, which can be made available to schools separately.

These three special programs include the CHARACTER COUNTS! Sports program, which provides specific programs for players, officials, and coaches to encourage character building in amateur athletic competition. Paul Tracey's "Your Character Counts" Assemblies, which features story-telling, music, and a character education message; and Primary Focus Assemblies, which are choreographed presentations by college kids for elementary schools are the other two special programs. The Character Counts! website makes available order forms and additional information on all the programs and materials available to groups (Josephson Institute, 2000).

Most interesting of all of these programs is the Primary Focus Assemblies. These assemblies are presented by young college students who have auditioned to be on a regional team to present CHOICES COUNT! These students give up one year of their life in order to participate in presenting the assemblies to schools and youth groups across their region of the country. The very participation of these college age students is illustrative of the programs identified by the CEP for encouraging character education.

CHARACTER COUNTS! has been implemented in several states including New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. The CHARACTER COUNTS! model is used to train teachers to implement character programs in their schools. Districts are not required to participate but over forty training programs and seminars were developed and administered for about 5,000 educators, coaches, and other youth-development professionals in the 1999-2000 initiative developed for the state of Texas (Josephson Institute, 1999). The UIL Leaguer is a newspaper developed to provide information for educators and coaches across the state of Texas who participate in the activities of the University of Texas sponsored University Interscholastic League. In the January/February, 2001 Leaguer, the UIL Athletic Director, Charles Breithaupt offered the following about implementing the CHARACTER COUNTS! program into Texas athletics, "Athletics can have a tremendous, positive impact on society if we practice due diligence in teaching the "six pillars of education" (p. 15). CHARACTER COUNTS! is currently a widely accepted and implemented program of character education.

The programs discussed above are among the most popular character education initiatives mentioned in the literature. Most of them are pre-packaged programs that are easily implemented in the classroom. Some of the programs like CHARACTER

COUNTS! offer teacher training in using the supplied curriculum. Curtis (1995) reports that the Jefferson Center has incorporated in their teaching contents the six pillars of the Josephson Institute's CHARACTER COUNTS! program. Bohlin, CAEC, and Brooks and Goble, Jefferson Center for Character Education, support the ideas of the Character Education Partnership, which indicates that the experts and centers involved in character development share a common vision for character education. This common vision is being offered in many programs through many institutes to the public schools in America who are urgently seeking for the means to integrate character education into their school's curriculum.

The Character Education Partnership establishes guidelines and principles and seeks to recognize those schools and groups who are positively affecting the character of American youth, but research studies are difficult to find. Lemming (1993) believes that more studies must be completed to fully understand the impact of character education. Most of these character education programs target students in elementary schools, and while they appear to be working effectively, adolescent character education is neglected. Lemming (1993) finds this intriguing since the character education movement has been prompted in a large part due to the "risk-taking behaviors" of our nation's teens (p.69). Lemming believes it is important to intensify our attention to this group in terms of character education research.

In summary, Lemming (1993) offers the following summary of his conclusions about character education research:

Didactic methods alone-codes, pledges, teacher exhortation, and the like- are unlikely to have any significant or lasting effect on character.

The development of students' capacity to reason about questions of moral conduct does not result in a related change in conduct. Apparently, one cannot reason one's way to virtuous conduct.

Character develops within a social web or environment. The nature of that environment, the messages it sends to individuals, and the behaviors it encourages and discourages are important factors to consider in character education.

Character educators should not expect character formation to be easy. Schools that expect easily achieved and dramatic effects will be disappointed. (p.69)

Lemming's conclusions raise interesting questions about the true effectiveness of these character education programs. Are they too simplistic? Are they truly effective? There are others interested in what they call, moral education, who argue that the character education movement in itself is flawed and incomplete. In the next section, we will look at the arguments of these theorists who hold alternative views about character education.

### **Alternative Theories to Character Education**

While there are a great number of educational theorists concerned about morals, ethics, and character in our nation's public schools, many of them are not in agreement with the theories of those in the character education movement. Rigid and narrow guidelines and listing of virtues appear to be the major culprits of character education according to these theorists. Kohn (1997) argues that there are two different meanings to the term, character education:

In the broad sense, it refers to almost anything that schools might try to provide outside of academics, especially when the purpose is to help children grow into good people. In the narrow sense, it denotes a particular style of moral training,

one that reflects particular values as well as a particular assumptions about the nature of children and how they learn (p. 428).

Kohn fears that since the term, character education, is now chiefly identified with the narrower meaning, many educators are turning to these simplistic, pre-packaged programs without realizing that they may later find them objectionable. Noblit and Dempsey (1996) and Nash (1997) support these ideas of Kohn's with theories of their own about the moral life of schools.

Through the study of two elementary schools, Noblit and Dempsey (1996) developed the theory of social construction of virtue. Their argument lies in the belief that people in social communities develop the virtues that they need to make their society function. Schools, they argue have become public bureaucracies losing the identities and cultures of their communities. This loss of community has resulted in the lost opportunity to construct social virtues. The relevance of the past gives way to a concern for the future while the present is ignored amidst the demands of a central bureaucratic educational organization. Creating a link between morality and education through the construction of virtues within a given society is crucial to reviving the moral life of schools. Noblit and Dempsey (1996) state, "It sees morality not in holding to principles or in an unbridled search for truth but in creating relationships between people, between schools and communities, and between the past and the future." (p. 194).

Nash (1997) argues that in a postmodern, pluralistic society, the different factions concerned with character education must find a way to converse. Nash, too, argues that virtue and morality are not about "checklists of individual qualities, or bags of particular habits or dispositions, or reading the 'virtue books', or even exemplary modeling."

(p. 188). Instead, Nash advocates the use of what he calls a moral conversation. He briefly describes the purpose of the conversation in his moral education courses:

The core content is the fullest understanding of the meanings provoked by conversation with others through the text. I emphasize for students that good moral conversation therefore starts with mastery of the text, progresses to an acute awareness of one's biases, culminates in an open-mindedness about the possibility of learning something from both the author and others in conversation, and ends up with a willingness to improve (enrich and expand) one's moral language.

(p.158).

Nash uses the moral conversation in the moral education courses he teaches at the University of Vermont. Questions arise about the appropriateness of this idea in the elementary or public school, but Nash cites the works of multicultural educators, Judith Renyi (1993) and Harlon L. Dalton (1995), as advocates of forms of classroom conversation centered around cultural diversity.

Clearly, there is opposition to the mainstream ideas concerning character education. The critical differences between those advocates of character education and those who see the character education movement as too simplistic seem to center around the ideas of absolute virtues or values. While many consider the core virtue programs of character education material to be rather simplistic, the idea that there are no common virtues or values on which all Americans can agree seems particularly troublesome as well. These differences illustrate once again the need for continued studies into programs, methods, and theories that might promote healthy personal growth in the youth of America. Harned (1999) states, "The key to the success of character education rests in the way it is

established, so it is important to consider the scope of the task." (p. 25). In considering the scope of the task, it is important to consider the total curriculum of the school. Where do opportunities for connecting curriculum and character education exist in the school?

### **The Arts and Character Education**

Eisner (1988) states, "In the arts, children must rely on that most exquisite of human intellectual abilities - judgement" (p. 7). Eisner maintains that when children are given opportunities to use their imaginations, they can seek solutions to problems and make judgements about those problems. Developing the imagination allows students to see all the possibilities, and thus, helps them to make responsible and intelligent judgments. These judgements can concern academic issues or character issues. Goodlad (1984) noted that students in the arts were given more freedom to make their own decisions because teachers were more willing to share responsibility for learning with the students. He made an interesting observation about student discipline in the arts. He states, "...the more we perceived students to be involved in decision making in the arts, the less time teachers were spending controlling students' behavior. This was a finding uniquely associated with the arts" (p.115). Students were given more opportunities to use their imaginations to seek creative answers. Students learned respect and responsibility through the teacher trusting them and respecting them to be responsible for themselves. Teachers raise self-esteem by setting high expectations and believing in the students' abilities to meet those expectations.

Godfrey (1992) speaks to the benefits of the arts in helping students to develop an understanding of what it is to be human. He believes the arts are capable of helping

students understand civilization and culture. Godfrey defines the important role of the arts to human development when he states, "If introduced early and incorporated regularly into instruction, art teaches us about our capacity to communicate ideas and feelings in a variety of modes and media; ... to accept compromise, ambiguity, and difference as positive human traits; and to construct ethical standards of judgment and action" (P. 596-597). For educators interested in developing character in our students, curricula which can foster communication and acceptance are important. Godfrey argues, too, for the inclusion of art in schools as a means to help students construct ethical standards of judgment. Increasing the knowledge and understanding of ethical responsibilities promotes judgments which reflect sound character.

Many arts educators are on the frontlines arguing for inclusion of quality arts programs in the educational system of America. Smith (1998) espouses that the arts are crucial to any educational reform movement which addresses the current cultural crisis in America. Smith asserts, " The arts then can be said to provide rich heuristic opportunities for satisfying the human need to reflect critically on values; for what are works of art but visual, verbal, and musical metaphors of value that express the whole gamut of human concerns?" (p. 4). Smith is arguing for arts education to be rigorous, to offer substantial understanding and aesthetic knowledge about human culture to our students. He believes that this renewal is important to education if students are to understand the importance of the arts in defining discipline, rigor, and judgement (p. 5). Discipline, rigor, and judgement are words that denote ideas concerning the development of responsible citizens. Eisner (1992) asks a crucial question, "Why do we think that poetry, the fine arts, music, and literature have no contribution to make to the creation of that kinder,



gentler America?" (p. 722). Most people are unaware of the impact the arts can have on the thinking and reasoning abilities of our young people. They do not understand the potential of the arts to develop young men and women who care about others and the democracy of their country.

Eisner (1998), Fowler (1996), Gardner (1973,1994), and Goodlad (1984) support the idea that the arts connect us to our human qualities. It is through the humanities or the arts that we ask questions about the meaning of our existence. Noddings (1992) states, "For adolescents these are among the most pressing questions: Who am I? What kind of person will I be? Who will love me? How do others see me?" (p. 20). If students are asking these questions, then they are searching for their identity. They are searching for the ability to understand and connect with their world. Eisner (1998) elaborates on this point when expresses his ideas about the arts, "... the arts ... make discovery possible. Discovery occurs as students learn through adventures in the arts something of the possibilities of the human experience. ... In other words, the arts can help students to find their individual capacity to feel and imagine" (p. 85). Learning to feel and imagine the possibilities of the human experience can increase our awareness of others.

Spearman (2000) calls the arts "humanity's stabilizers" (P. 2). The arts balance us as human beings. They give us perspective by allowing us to imagine the possibilities of the human experience. They influence our moral judgments by allowing us to express and understand our human emotions. While the arts are clearly related to the human experience, and therefore, to the development of character, Goodlad (1984) cautions that in his observations of arts teachers, their understanding of the capacity for the arts to teach appreciation of human dignity and values was often subjugated to emphasis on the

tools used in performance. It appears that even in the arts, it is critical that the teacher be aware of the potential for the curricula to aid in character education.

### **Theatre Arts and Character Education**

There are theories which maintain that a connection does exist between the idea of character growth and theatre. Levy (1997) argues that there is a connection between theatre and what he calls "moral education." Levy details historical attempts to use drama as a means for moral education. His major premise is that we must educate children in feeling. He connects this to an experiment in moral education and drama conducted by a Scotswoman, Joanna Baillie between 1798 and 1802. Baillie believed that by writing and presenting plays which illustrated powerful emotions, audiences seeing and feeling these emotions could gain an understanding of the connection between what they feel and what they think. Her experiment failed according to Levy because she attempted to isolate one emotion at a time, and for humans and the theatre, this is an impossible endeavor. Levy believes, however, that there is merit in what he calls Baillie's "noble design" (p. 72).

Levy states as follows:

I take the implications of her design, including the implications of the failure of her design, to be these: The way to produce informed and mature goodness is to educate the emotions, and to educate them *liberally*. This means educating them fully and completely, not isolating them, simplifying them, or censoring out some and concentrating on others. ... 'Theatrically' means, or should mean, using the full power of the theatre; using the theatre the way the theatre really works: not through the reasoning mind but, like music, as a stimulus to and a strengthener of the unsaid. The nameless faculty upon which we draw instinctively in a moral

dilemma can be enriched and deepened through the intense and various sympathetic experience theatre, in its fullness, can give. And just as we count on an educated mind to reason better than an uneducated mind, we can count on educated emotions to respond more humanely, more *morally*, than uneducated emotions. And the best way to educate the emotions, at least until virtual reality is much further along, is through the theatre (P. 72).

Levy is advocating moral or character education, which connects the student to his/her emotions and the effect these emotions have on their ability to act in a moral way.

Fowler (1996) believes in the ability of the arts to touch the humanity of students. However, of theatre, specifically, he states, "Theatre, ... explores the foibles and triumphs of humanity past and present. We see ourselves reenacted. By experiencing human situations and their consequences, we can better understand ourselves and others" (p. 53). Fowler suggests that theatre meets the goals of the humanities by allowing us to see ourselves and react to situations in a safe environment. Eisner would call it making discoveries about the nature of humanity. Winston (1999) theorizes that drama can be used to connect students to moral education in several ways including dramatic literature and the conventions of rehearsal and performance. He also suggests that drama explores the relationship between emotion, reason, and moral engagement.

Noted theatre historian, Oscar Brockett, weighs in with his ideas that drama is a different way of knowing which connects us to our own humanity and the humanity of others. Brockett (1987) states:

Of all the arts, drama has the greatest potential as a humanizing force, for it asks us to enter imaginatively into the lives of others so we may understand their

motivations, aspirations, and frustrations. Through role-playing we come to see ourselves in relation to others and to understand who and what we are. In a world given increasingly to violence, the value of being able to understand and feel for others as human beings cannot be overestimated, because violence depends on dehumanizing others so we no longer think of their hopes, aims, and sufferings but treat them as objects to be manipulated or on whom to vent our frustrations. We may learn much about human behavior through social studies, literature, and science, but drama requires that we **feel** our way **into** the situations of others. The result is apt to be a more intense learning experience, because it calls on our emotional, imaginative, and intellectual capacities and thereby impresses itself more firmly on our senses. Many educators do not seem to understand that drama is a way of knowing - and often a more stimulating way than that offered through the distanced, abstract learning provided in a purely intellectual approach. (p. 3)

Brockett agrees with Levy, Fowler, and Winston that drama is valuable as a tool to connect us to our emotions and our relations to others. Others in the field agree with these theories and offer different methods for tapping into "drama as a way of knowing."

### *Process Drama*

Wagner (1999) defines process drama as, "...drama at the service of the participants, themselves, not primarily to prepare a play to present to an audience" (p. 3). Process drama is quite often separated from dramatic literature in that those involved create their own drama through improvisation, or they adapt and enact short stories from other sources. Several other labels including creative drama, drama in education, or educational drama can identify process drama. Process drama in the classroom is popular at all age

levels, but most of the studies on creative drama and process drama have been conducted in the elementary arena. It can also be instrumental in the instruction of older students. In any case, there is a widely held belief that process drama or improvisational role-playing as some call it offers many benefits to students. Wagner (1999) compiled this list from (McCaslin, 1981) of the benefits of process drama in improving:

- self-expression, particularly for students who have trouble showing their emotions in other situations;
- self-understanding, through talking about feelings with others;
- empathy and understanding of others;
- and behavior and interpersonal relations (p. 137)

McCaslin (1981) includes in her list of objectives for teaching creative drama to students, the development of moral and spiritual values and knowledge of self. The potential for the many aspects of drama education to impact character education appears valid.

Yassa (1999) conducted a qualitative study in Canada of high school students and their involvement in creative dramatics. Yassa states, "Active participation in creative drama leads to a positive gain in personal qualities such as poise and self-confidence, as well as in interpersonal qualities such as empathy, tolerance, and adaptability" (p. 48). These interpersonal and personal social skills are closely related to respect and responsibility. Empathy and tolerance help students to accept and respect differences in each other while self-confidence can show a healthy sense of responsibility. Farris and Parke (1993) developed a similar study where students were asked what they thought about drama after participating in creative drama exercises for three weeks. Several

students concluded that their abilities to cooperate increased, as did their personal self-esteem.

Rohd (1998) taught high school theatre in Washington DC. He relates a story about his using the phrase, "theatre is healing" (p. xv) with his students. Finally the students challenged the truth of his phrase, and he invited them to an HIV clinic where he volunteered his time to teach drama to the patients. Rohd claims that through the process of improvisation, dialogue, and discussion both groups, students and HIV patients, grew to understand one another and to respect one another.

Another example of process drama being used as a tool to aid troubled youngsters is the Texas Youth Commission's Capital Offender Program. In this program, young juvenile offenders are forced to improvise and act out their violent crimes in an effort to help them face emotional reality about what they have done. Thompson (1998) cites Steven Robinson, Director, Texas Youth Commission, "The process described in the 'Capital Offender Program' is done in order to emotionally buckle the participants. It was done as part of a process of holding them accountable for what they have done" (p. 201). Thompson believes that the lack of choice and the forceful interpretation provided by the caseworkers in these improvisations is not effective. He feels that the young juveniles are not being allowed to fully own and understand the dynamics in the improvisation because they are not allowed to control their actions.

While Thompson does have some major reservations concerning the Texas program, he does advocate more research be done in the field because he believes that "theatre and arts programmes can be central to a total prevention approach-for engaging individuals in a process of personal, group, and community change" (P. 208). The Texas Youth

Commission in its 1999 annual review reports on the data collected to compare the recidivism rate of youngsters in the Capital Offenders Program with other youth who were unable to receive the services offered through this program. Those statistics revealed that the likelihood for rearrest for a violent offense was reduced by 53%, and the likelihood of rearrest for any offense within one year was reduced by 37% (Texas Youth Commission, 1999). Despite Thompson's claims, there is some evidence of effectiveness with the program. Although Thompson and TYC may not agree on the methods used, both agree that there are benefits to using process drama with the youth offender.

Smagorinsky (1995) discusses his findings in using dramatic literature written by the students in an adolescent drug and alcohol rehabilitation clinic. He states:

The experiences of the students I describe support Vygotsky's contention that performance and personality are inseparable; that a dramatic interpretation of literature is also a dramatic performance of one's life. Furthermore, the description of the students and their interpretative acts should reveal the ways in which the students develop physically through their dramatic enactments of characters, as those characters embody aspects of their own emotional experiences (p. 21).

The students gained an understanding of themselves and empathy for others by actually placing themselves in the situations and the lives of these characters. While there are established cases for using process drama in character building venues with young people, the role of dramatic literature and the process of rehearsal and production in character education are not as clearly defined.

### *Dramatic Literature and the Production Process*

Wolf and Heath (1993) see the power of creating and producing original dramatic literature as an opportunity for high school students to safely explore human conflicts. While this study supported the use of original dramatic literature, it also supported the use of dramatic literature, rehearsals, and productions, as keys to helping adolescents understand conflict resolution. Wolf and Heath conducted their study with the drama classes at Central High School in St. Paul, Minnesota, and in a summer camp in an unidentified Midwestern city. While the students were creating original scripts, the process of mounting a final production mirrored many of the procedures used when the work of a recognized and established playwright is being produced. Wolf and Heath summarize their findings concerning the influence of rehearsing and performing a play on adolescents:

Within the theater, youth work on handling conflicts and, thereby learn - through modeling and actual safe practice - numerous skills and strategies necessary in both academic performance and life management. The conflicts of time-honored literature, as well as of daily life, come in the love, honor, pity, compassion, sacrifice, and pride risked in the theater. It is the process by which individuals create and recreate their comprehension and compassion of the human condition, enabling the critical practice of putting oneself in the place of the other, necessary in handling conflicts off the stage. (P. 110)

Wolf and Heath (1993) support the use of traditional dramatic literature and play production, but chose to focus their study on those schools and organizations using original literature created by the students.



The literature draws the students into the world of the characters and their problems. Empathy is required to fully portray the characters, but there is a dual characterization taking place in these instances. Not only must the students understand their characters, they are also forced to understand each other in order to work as a whole and communicate the story and the message of the literature. Students are in a situation where they are forced to respect one another and be responsible to one another in order to achieve success. They are practicing the traits of character education in a real-life situation.

Kohl (1998) asserts that when he teaches theatre, there is a distinct bonding of very diverse people. These people are able to share some of their inner selves without feeling threatened. He states, "I've done theater in the most diverse and potentially explosive teaching situations and always found that it led to intelligent discussion, critical analysis, and perhaps, most important of all, communication among people who would otherwise never look each other in the eyes without turning the encounter into a battle" (p. 197). Kohl supports both process drama and dramatic literature, arguing that the literature allows for a deeper exploration of character and history than imagination can sometimes do.

Theatre teachers often find that in their classrooms, they do a mixture of process drama and production through dramatic literature. There is strength in both forms. Smith (1991) details his growth as a theatre arts teacher who discovered the importance of both forms of drama. He believes that as his students participated in the theatre arts curriculum he established, they struggled with themselves and the rest of society to find meaning and effectiveness in their own lives.

One central aspect of the theatre arts curriculum is acting. In a typical theatre arts program where producing dramatic literature is the key objective of the program, students are introduced to the process of acting from the beginning. One of the most important ideas of the great Russian acting teacher, Stanislavsky, is the idea of emotional memory. Simply put, actors are taught to use past experiences to help them remember and recreate or feel an emotion needed by a character in a play. This exploration of the past and the emotions can help students to understand themselves. Anita Jesse (1998) suggests the following to her acting students:

Becoming an exceptional actor is partly about breaking down inhibitions, and this is a frightening process because the giving up of boundaries set by the ego-self feels like a loss of self. For example, if you learned to smile when you were hurt- and that has *worked* for you up to this point - it's pretty scary to give up the smile. When you do, you expose your pain and risk the ridicule or hostility your feelings may evoke. If you give up your defense mechanisms, someone may hurt you, shame you, terrify you, or send you into an uncontrollable rage - and all this under public scrutiny. You risk uncertainty if you are swept away by pure joy or genuine love. This is a gamble worth taking because giving up the self-restraint that protects you from emotions is, in reality, a reclamation of your complete self.

(P. 40)

Gaining knowledge of yourself and the source of your feelings is important to understanding how to control them. Self-control is an important tenet in character education, and acting can help students develop this trait through self-knowledge. Even though Piirto (1998) believes that young actors may turn to acting as a means for healing

hurts, the researcher cautions that Jesse's words are written for professional actors.

Secondary acting coaches must remember the age and vulnerability of their students and seek professional help in situations that appear explosive or harmful.

Elkind (1998) argues that teen-agers today have lost the ability to define their own identity. They are developing what he calls "patchwork" identities where they randomly pick up and discard the habits and character attributes of those around them. They do not integrate their own experiences and emotions into a complete self. Learning to act can help them with this integration. Benedetti (1999) quotes acting teacher and psychologist, Brian Bates (1987) concerning the role of acting in personal growth:

Finding our inner identity. Changing ourselves. Realizing and integrating our life experiences. Seeing life freshly and with insight into others. Risking and commitment. Learning how to concentrate our lives into the present... Extending our sense of who we are, and achieving liberation from restricted concepts of what a person is. (P.1)

Benedetti (1999) claims that the study of acting can be "a meaningful journey of self discovery" (P. 1).

The art of acting appears to be an important element in the theatre arts curriculum for helping students to understand themselves and their emotions. Self awareness is necessary if students are going to be successful in creating a believable character. The art of learning to bring parts of yourself and your experiences to the creation of a role is instrumental in helping the student actor to know himself. It is a productive cycle. This process can aid students in developing empathy for others which leads to feeling respect for and responsibility toward themselves and for others.

## Summary

Ongoing reports of violence and deviant behavior in our youth have prompted a loud and strident call for the schools to find an answer to the problems that seem to be overwhelming our society and our kids. Educators who walk the halls of our schools everyday are concerned, too, with the decline of ethical character in the students they teach. Character education theorists have offered ideas concerning the teacher, the curriculum, the parents, and the school itself. Many of them seem to agree that the school has historically been responsible for transmitting the values of society to the young people of this country. While those values have been identified as traits like respect and responsibility, character educators also recognize the importance of creating community in our schools. Most believe that the schools are still responsible and must begin again to instruct the youth of American in the core values of its society.

Character education can take the form of discussions, and can be taught through studying heroes, real or imaginary. Literature and stories abound that teach morals by example. Bennett (1993) maintains that American youth need to achieve "moral literacy" through literature. Cooperative learning and community meetings have been identified as ways to achieve character education in the schools. While many ideas abound concerning character education in the schools, most agree that it should be integrated into the academic curriculum. Questions are asked concerning how it can be implemented into existing curricula. While some answers are provided, the arts have been virtually ignored as a possible avenue for character education.

Yet, the arts are often viewed as central to the humanity of our society and culture. Arts advocates maintain that the arts should be a part of every school's curriculum

because of the benefits they offer to America's youth. Few studies have been completed, however, into the possible benefits of arts education to character education.

In theatre arts, the curriculum has been explored more outside the classroom than inside. The methods used in process drama have been studied in relation to rehabilitating young people who are involved in harmful drugs and alcohol, as well as those involved in serious and violent crime. The benefits of creative drama and process drama are studied in special programs, but rarely in the classroom. Creative drama has been a domain of the elementary curriculum for most of its existence, and while the benefits are explored there, little has been done in the secondary classroom.

Studies, which investigate the effects of dramatic literature and the production process show that they do provide benefits in conflict resolution, cooperation, and bonding with others. Acting teachers maintain that the art of acting is beneficial to the development of self-understanding and awareness. Yet, very few studies have been done concerning the benefits of learning the art of theatre from acting to production.

Winston (1999) maintains that very little scholarship addressing the questions surrounding drama and moral learning has been completed or attempted. Winston studies narrative, but again, he is working with elementary children and the dramatizing of fairy tales as a means for exploring moral reasoning. Wagner (1999) shares many studies concerning process drama, and its effects on social behavior and personality; however, these studies do not look at the theatre arts curriculum, which promotes an understanding of producing theatre as an art form. It is interesting to note that even with all of the attention given to process drama in this literature review, studies of drama in this area lag far behind studies in other curricular areas. Wagner (1998) maintains, "With a total of 17,

671 dissertations reported in reading and 16, 542 in writing since 1989, and only 71 in educational drama, creative drama, creative dramatics, and drama in education combined, it is no wonder many of us have difficulty finding studies that support our work" (P.3).

The researcher discovered that finding studies dealing with traditional play production and a connection to character education was almost impossible. The lack of attention given to the producing of plays as a curricular choice piques the interest of this researcher. The Wolf and Heath (1993) study suggests that some benefits do exist for character education in the theatre arts curricula, but further research is needed. Basourakos (1999) is not interested in looking at the involvement of students in producing theatre, but he does recognize the power of seeing a play and responding to the human questions and dilemmas presented in the play. He argues, "I aim to make a case for this art form precisely because it has often been, and continues to be, overlooked and undervalued as a potent tool for moral education" (p. 474). Theatre arts education is defined by the researcher as a curriculum where dramatic literature, historical contexts, acting techniques, improvisation skills, as well as production and rehearsal conventions, and directing techniques are studied.

The lack of research conducted in the field of theatre arts education prompts the study of this particular curriculum. If the study of process drama is showing positive results in the areas of developing character, moral reasoning, and improved social behavior, then theatre arts education in the secondary classroom has potential to inform character education practices and theories. The researcher wants to explore the perceptions of others involved in theatre arts education. The researcher wants to investigate the following questions:

1. Do theatre arts teachers perceive that the theatre arts curriculum impacts the character growth of their students? If so, how?
2. More specifically, what aspects of the curriculum do theatre arts teachers perceive as creating a democratic and moral learning community in the theatre arts classroom or program?
3. What aspects of the curriculum do theatre arts teachers perceive as creating acts of respect and responsibility in their students?
4. Finally, what are the perceptions of students and former students of the theatre arts concerning the impact of the curriculum on their own personal growth?

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

#### **Qualitative Research**

The researcher chose qualitative research for this study based on the beliefs that inform qualitative research. Merriam (1998) maintains, "Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5). People and the context of their lives are important in understanding the phenomena being studied. The qualitative researcher seeks to understand the perspectives of the research participant.

Merriam (1998) suggests five characteristics of the qualitative approach which help to clarify its use in research. They are:

1. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.
2. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.
3. The research usually involves fieldwork.
4. Qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy. It builds concepts or theories rather than testing existing theories.
5. Since qualitative research focuses on process, meaning, and understanding, the product of qualitative research is richly descriptive. (P. 6-8)

These characteristics make qualitative research the appropriate approach for this study.

The words character, art and theatre imply that people - humanity are of essential



importance. The arts concern humanity. Theatre provides a glimpse into humanity through the production of dramatic literature. The investigation of character in humanity is served well by using a research approach which establishes the context, the life, and the understandings of the human research participant as the central source for data collection.

### **Comparative Case Studies**

According to Merriam (1998), "A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. ... Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research" (p. 19). Merriam further defines the characteristics of a case study as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system, which can be combined with other types of qualitative research such as ethnography, phenomenology, or grounded theory.

Comparative case studies are classified as studies using more than one case or site for data collection. Merriam (1998) suggests that they offer the researcher an ability to conduct cross-case analysis. Merriam maintains that cross-case analysis suggests a more compelling interpretation of the data. Miles and Huberman, (1994, P. 29) state, "By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where, and if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings" (cited in Merriam, 1998, P. 40).

The use of comparative case studies in this study is supported by the benefits to using case studies when attempting to advance the knowledge base of a subject such as theatre

arts education or character education. The case study can make the complex simpler to understand since it is anchored in real-life situations where vivid descriptions and insights can enhance the reader's comprehension of the phenomenon. Merriam (1998) states, "Educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice" (p. 41). Character education and theatre arts education constitute processes and programs. Therefore, case studies are appropriate for studying the possibilities for theatre arts education to inform the practice of character education in American schools.

### **Teacher Lore**

Finally, the use of teacher lore as narrative inquiry is essential to collecting data concerning the perceptions of teachers. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry as, "a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or a series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (p. 20). This study is about the experiences of human beings in the social context of the theatre arts classroom. The human beings in this study are teachers who are concerned with the needs of their students. Their perceptions are the tools used by this researcher to make meaning of the phenomenon of character education in the theatre arts classroom. Schubert (1992) defines teacher lore:

Teacher lore includes stories about and by teachers. It portrays and interprets ways in which teachers deliberate and reflect and it portrays teachers in action.

Teacher lore refers to knowledge, ideas, insights, feelings, and understanding of teachers as they reveal their guiding beliefs, share approaches, relate

consequences of their teaching, offer aspects of their philosophy of teaching and provide recommendations for educational policy makers. (PP. 3-10)

Teacher lore and narrative inquiry work together to inform the study of character education in the social context of the theatre arts classroom. The power of teacher lore lies in its ability to help those of us outside the context of the classroom to understand. Schwarz and Alberts (1998) suggest, "Teacher narrative offers an engaging invitation to the public, to policy makers and legislators, to understand schools from the inside" (p. 9).

### **Assumptions**

For purposes of this study, the following assumptions are made:

1. The participants are representative of theatre arts teachers in the state of Texas.
2. The theatre arts teachers in this study teach within similar curricula based on the Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge for theatre.
3. Teacher responses given in this study were truthful and acknowledged to the best of their ability since the teachers did not receive incentives and freely gave of their own time to participate in the study.
4. Student and former student responses given in this study were truthful and acknowledged to the best of their ability since the students involved in this study did not receive incentives and were given the choice to participate.

### **Subjects**

The population for this study was selected from members of the Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA). The members are theatre arts teachers certified in theatre

through the Texas Education Agency. The entire population is approximately 1500 teachers. The researcher chose this population based on personal knowledge and experience as well as the credentials of the TETA. The history and the goals of this agency provide evidence of a strong support system for theatre arts education. The organization was founded in 1951 and through its leadership, Texas became the first state to provide for secondary school drama certification separate from speech or language arts. Membership consists of college and university professors and theatre arts teachers at all levels throughout the state of Texas. TETA supports the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Theatre. These are mandated curricula established by the Texas Education Agency for all eight courses offered in theatre arts in Texas high schools.

Purposive sampling, which is sampling based on criteria established by the knowledge and experience of the researcher, was used to construct a sample of twenty-five teachers pulled from a list of TETA. These twenty-five subjects were mailed a brief demographic questionnaire. Only nine questionnaires were returned and these were narrowed to five. These subjects met criteria established by the researcher. The criteria met the needs of the study and met certain time, budget, and travel limitations of the researcher. The criteria are detailed below:

1. Theatre arts teachers who teach at least two theatre arts classes daily and produce at least two plays per school year.
2. Theatre arts teachers who have at least five years of experience in teaching high school theatre arts in Texas.

3. Theatre arts teachers who teach in a regional area of Texas defined as North of Interstate 20 within an East to West line from Tyler, Texas, to Lubbock, Texas.
4. Theatre arts teachers who have a reputation among members of TETA for developing and maintaining a quality theatre arts program.
5. Theatre arts teachers who meet the above criteria and are willing to participate in this study.

The participants included five teachers and their students. The sample included three female teachers and two male teachers whose teaching experience ranges from eight years to forty-five years. Texas categorizes their schools into conferences according to the size of the population of the school. Schools in the sample represent each of the five conferences from the smallest to the largest. Locations of the school sites encompassed a large area from West Texas to East Texas. The researcher contacted those teachers to ascertain if they were interested in participating in the study. The researcher chose participants based on her knowledge and experience with the intent to study different school and program sizes. Principal permission was required as well since a survey was administered to the students.

Over 350 students were asked to complete a narrative survey on their perceptions of theatre arts. 157 surveys were completed. The number of students was based on the number of classes taught by the teacher and the number of students who chose to participate. Students participating in the study were asked to complete a permission form. Principals of each of the schools were given the option of having the parents of the students complete a permission form. Four of the principals requested that parents be

contacted and permission given for their children to participate in the survey. The additional paperwork resulted in more limited survey data than the researcher had anticipated.

Additionally, the selected teachers identified two to three former students above the age of eighteen who might be willing to participate in a telephone interview with the researcher concerning their perceptions of the theatre arts curriculum. The age of the students contacted for the telephone interviews averaged between nineteen and twenty-eight or nine. While most of those contacted were willing to participate, several backed out when it came time to making the time commitment needed for the interview. While these telephone interviews offer some interesting perspectives, the researcher does not feel that they represent a large enough sample. Six interviews were completed and the perceptions of at least one student from each research site are included in the data.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

Numerous and varied methods for data collection exist in the realm of qualitative research and narrative inquiry. Interviews, observation, and document investigation are usually the primary methods involved. Merriam (1998) quotes Paxton's (1990) definitions of the three methods:

Qualitative data consist of "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" obtained through interviews; "detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions" recorded in observations; and "excerpts, quotations, or entire passages" extracted from various types of documents (p.69).

During the four month period of data collection, methods in this study included interviews and document examination. Narrative surveys were used. Each method is described in detail.

These methods provided thick description of the context and the subjects being studied. The instruments used for data collection provided multiple approaches and sources for answering the research questions. The differing perspectives of the subjects provided an in depth look at the themes involved in the study of character education and theatre arts education.

### *Interviews*

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each teacher in the sample. Berg (1995) maintains that interviews should be scripted but also allow for a give and take of responses between interviewer and interviewee. Berg (1995), Crabtree and Miller (1992), Glesne and Peshkin (1992), and Symon and Cassell (1998) all support and encourage the use of semi-structural interviews which allow the researcher to probe while following scripted questions. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) state, "The intent of such interviewing is to capture the unseen that was, is, will be, or should be; how respondents think or feel about something; and how they explain or account for something" (p. 92).

Paxton (1990) states of interviews:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. ... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. ... We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things.

The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 72).

Merriam (1998) calls for an interview guide, which she says, is a list of questions you intend to ask in the interview. Merriam suggests that questions for a semi-structured interview include several specific questions and questions that are more open-ended, which could be followed up with probes (p. 82).

The first interview conducted by the researcher explored and investigated the teachers' beliefs about the benefits and purposes of theatre arts, their current understanding of character education, and their perceptions of classroom dynamics. The second interview served to clarify journal entries made during the research period by the participants. The researcher also used the second interview as an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the ideas and themes gleaned from the first interview. The interviewer asked questions based on the journal entries, the first interview, and the artifacts supplied by the teacher. In all cases, the researcher used follow up questions, which were prompted by the individual teachers within the context of their interviews. Additionally, the researcher used email to contact the subjects prior to the final interview with additional questions that were prompted by the researcher's continued study in the area of character education. The original interview questions and selected sample interviews are included in the appendices of this study. (See appendix H and N.)

Telephone interviews conducted with former students of the selected teachers followed closely the line of questioning in the student survey. The perceptions of the former students helped to clarify the perceptions of the teachers and the students currently involved in the theatre arts curriculum. The time and experiences away from the



influence of the teacher and the theatre arts curriculum added an extra dimension to the study.

### *Documents*

*(Teacher Journals, artifacts, and Student Surveys)*

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) maintain that documents can collaborate the researcher's findings in interviews and observations. This collaboration adds credibility to the findings. Merriam (1998) supports the use of researcher generated documents to learn more about the person, situation, or event being investigated. Documents can include journals, surveys, and artifacts (Berg, 1995; Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; and Merriam, 1998).

### *Journals*

The researcher requested a journal from the participating teachers. Each teacher was supplied with a small notebook to be used for their reflections and thoughts. Some used these, while others preferred to keep their reflections on the computer. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) encourage the researcher to solicit journals or diaries from their subjects. They state, “ They (documents) enrich what you see and hear by supporting, expanding, and challenging your portrayals and perceptions” (p 54). Journals are considered private documents or records. Berg (1995) describes the value of private records:

Typically, owing to the personal nature of private documents, the subjects' own definitions of the situation emerge in their private records, along with the ways they make sense of their daily living routines. Precisely these bits of self-disclosure allow researchers to draw out complete pictures of the subjects' perceptions of their life experiences (p. 152).

The researcher sought the perceptions of the teachers in this study concerning their views about the theatre arts curricula and character education. The journal provided another avenue for these perceptions to emerge. The journal also gave the subjects opportunity to reflect and clarify their own thoughts and ideas concerning what was happening with the curricula in their classrooms and programs. Merriam (1998) states, "... the material is highly subjective in that the writer is the only one to select what he or she considers important to record. Obviously, these documents are not representative or necessarily reliable accounts of what actually may have occurred. They do, however, reflect the participant's perspective, which is what most qualitative research is seeking" (P. 116). These perceptions were subject to clarification during the second interview, but for a clear picture of the participants' interpretations, the researcher felt the need to provide a private avenue for the teachers to reflect.

The researcher provided suggestions as a guide for the journal, but specific requirements were not given. The journal must be a valid reconstruction of the teachers' reflections, observations, and possible conclusions. Teachers were also asked to reflect on relationships and situations in the classroom, and observations of student behavior, which influenced their perceptions about the theatre arts curricula and character education. Teachers were given opportunities for open-ended responses, but they were also asked to respond to three structured questions. These structured questions allowed for direct observation concerning the actual behavior of the students as they participated in the theatre arts curriculum. Teachers understood that the names of the students had to be changed or omitted in order to protect anonymity.

### *Artifacts*

Merriam (1998) suggests that in the qualitative study of a classroom, documents could include lesson plans and student assignments. These artifacts or documents can include information that may or may not inform the study, but they do provide a record of activities that preclude the research. Merriam (1998) says, "Because they [documents or artifacts] have not been produced for the research purpose, they often contain much that is irrelevant to the study; by the same token, they can contain clues, even startling insights, into the phenomenon under study "(p. 119). These artifacts provide the researcher with another view of the perceptions of the teacher concerning the curricula. They are valuable since they help to provide cross-validation with the interviews and journals.

Teachers were asked to include in the study any artifacts such as lesson plans, student assignments, activities, or lecture notes, which might inform the study of character education in their goals or the curriculum. These artifacts were returned to the teacher. Copies were made only with the permission of the teacher, and again the names of students were deleted.

### *Student Surveys*

Although Gay and Airasian (2000) are describing a form of quantitative research when they define the purpose of descriptive research or survey research, the stated purpose is similar to the qualitative research. They state, "A descriptive study determines and describes the way things are" (p. 275). While these quantitative researchers normally prescribe closed-ended questions for surveys, they do acknowledge the use of open-ended questions for some research. This type of survey then requires qualitative analysis, which

quantitative researchers would transform into numerical form. However, Berg (1995) does not support the idea of transforming narrative responses into numerical form. He argues that the study then becomes quantitative (p.26). The idea of the descriptive survey can be used in a qualitative study as a form of narrative data. Berg (1995) discusses the unobtrusive focus group interview, and he details the use of a computer diary being used with a group of female students as a way to elicit information about possible sexual harassment (p. 75-77). The female students were allowed to protect their anonymity, but the researcher was also able to glean important insights and information from the study.

This researcher used narrative surveys with the students of the teacher participants to act in the same way as the focus group interview described by Berg (1995). The survey operated much like an interview in that the students were asked open-ended questions. However, there was no attempt to follow up with probing questions since the interviewer or researcher did not participate in the questioning. The students were given the opportunity to reflect and answer anonymously on the survey form provided by the researcher. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) include the idea of a narrative survey as another form of documentation for the researcher to analyze (p. 5).

The students completed a narrative survey at the end of the semester. Farris and Parke (1993) conducted a study of middle school drama students, which suggested to the researcher ideas for questions. Questions concerning what the student recognizes in terms of personal growth, opinions about advising a friend to enroll in theatre arts, and thoughts about the role of cooperation in theatre arts are among those ideas. Students were asked to identify the number of years they have participated in theatre arts. The researcher studied the responses of first year students separately from those who have chosen to take

theatre arts more than once. This choice was made because the data revealed a marked difference in the attitudes of these two sets of students. Many first year students chose not to return for another year in theatre arts because they did not feel the pull or attraction of theatre arts as others did. This seemed to the researcher to be an important finding, and therefore, deserved separate treatment in order to explore fully the differing student perceptions. The questions asked in the surveys and selected samples of survey responses can be found in appendices M and P.

### **Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research**

Merriam (1998) details strategies and methods for achieving reliability and validity in qualitative research. These include triangulation, member checking, peer review, detailed accounts of procedures in data collection and analysis, and multiple sites or cases for investigation. Crabtree and Miller (1992) also suggest multiple methods to insure validity. These include member checking, triangulation, and thick description. The researcher attempted to include all of these strategies in the collection and analysis of data.

Triangulation is key to establishing reliability and validity in a qualitative study. Berg (1995) agrees with Fielding and Fielding (1986) in defining triangulation. He states, "They suggest that the important feature of triangulation is not the simple combination of different kinds of data, but the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each" (P. 5). The use of multiple methods allows for cross-validation, and it provides for a clearer recognition of the differences suggested in the data. In this study, the multiple methods included interviews, journals, artifacts, and student surveys. Further triangulation was established through the student surveys and the

telephone interviews with former students since both provided a unique voice separate from the teachers.

Member checking allows the subjects to review the researcher's interpretation of the data collected. Merriam (1998) suggests that these reviews help the researcher to know if the interpretations are plausible. Teacher participants and former student participants were given copies of the transcribed interviews, and teacher participants were given the opportunity to clarify interpretations during the second interview process. Peer review of the data and the instrumentation is also a method for insuring trustworthiness in the researcher and validity in the instrument. Peer review was established through close contact with the dissertation advisor.

Thick description allows for a detailed examination of all the subjects and their points of view. The honesty of showing all the differences as well as the commonalties strengthens the credibility of the study. Merriam (1998) maintains that thick description is important to establishing external validity in the qualitative study. She states that, "... providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred" (P. 211).

The use of multiple sites or cases is also important to external validity according to Merriam (1998). This study involves five different cases, and attempts were made in the purposive sampling to choose sites which are diverse. Procedures in the design are also important. It is necessary to carefully explain and track collection and analysis of the data so that the researcher can answer any questions pertaining to the study. The procedures for this study are detailed in the next section.

Cross validation using the teacher responses and the student responses hopefully decreased observer effect since the researcher had virtually no opportunity to influence the students. Observer effect was limited because participant observation was minimum. Only during the interview periods did the researcher have opportunity to influence the subject. In these interview situations, the researcher used an audio tape recorder and transcribed interviews verbatim in order to limit observer effect, and to recognize it if it existed in the transcription.

Symon and Cassell (1998) maintain that reliability and validity in qualitative research is maintained by the researcher's coherent and genuine insights into the behavior of the participants. They believe that the integrity of the research is supported by allowing public access to the research data, and/or disseminating the data widely to provide for public debate and critical appraisal (p. 71). The dissemination of this study also plays an important role in its ability to establish reliability and validity.

### **Research Procedures**

1. The researcher began the study only when given full permission by the Internal Review Board at Oklahoma State University.
2. A list of at least twenty-five possible participants was based on the criteria established earlier.
3. The teachers on this list were mailed a short questionnaire. The questionnaire concerned demographics of the teacher and the school. A return date was specified, and teachers were asked to indicate their willingness to participate. The researcher made judgments based on the criteria and the questionnaire,

but also allowed for diversity in terms of school size and teacher experience.

(See Appendix B)

4. The researcher began by contacting by telephone those teachers who returned questionnaires. This list was arranged in an order whereby those who best met the criteria were notified first. Additional information detailing the study was given at this time. (See Appendix C)
5. Once a list of those teachers (at least five) willing to participate was completed, the researcher contacted by telephone the principals of the schools where the teachers work. These contacts were prioritized in the order of the teachers who best met the qualifications of the criteria and agreed to participate in the study.
6. Permission to be on their campus and procedures for the student survey were discussed with the principals. (See Appendix D)
7. Once permission was gained from the principal, the researcher distributed and collected informed consent forms from the five or more subjects and the principals. (See Appendices E & F)
8. Parental permission forms for the surveys were signed a few weeks before implementation of the survey. (See Appendix G)
9. The researcher began with semi-structural interviews of the teachers in the sample. Interviews were recorded on audio tape. They were transcribed verbatim, and both the tape and the transcript were coded for anonymity and placed in a locked file box. (See Appendix H)
10. At the time of the first interview, a request for the journal was made.



11. The request was accompanied by written suggestions for completing the journal entries. (See Appendix H)
12. The journal entries were given to the researcher twice times during the four-month research period. Copies were coded so that real names were not attached, and these copies were kept in a locked file box.
13. During the first interview time, the researcher also made suggestions concerning artifact collection. Artifacts were collected with the journals throughout the research period. Artifacts were coded and placed in a locked file box. Names of students were omitted by the teachers. (See Appendix H)
14. Additionally, the researcher requested names and telephone numbers of at least three former students above the age of eighteen. These students were contacted for telephone interviews detailing their perceptions of the theatre arts curriculum. (See Appendix I)
15. Consent forms were mailed to these former students, and these were returned before the telephone interviews took place. (See Appendices I, J & K)
16. The researcher analyzed the data from the interviews, journal entries, and artifacts as the study progressed.
17. During the third or fourth month of the study, the survey was given to the students in each theatre arts class. Participation was voluntary and parental permission forms were collected at that time. (See Appendices L & M)
18. Students were instructed to omit their names, but to include the number of years involved in theatre arts on the high school level.

19. Students, themselves, placed their surveys in a blank white envelope and sealed the envelope. Most of the surveys were completed on the day of the final interview with the teacher, and the researcher was able to take them directly. If not, the blank white envelopes were to be placed in a larger envelope and mailed directly to the researcher. These methods allowed for total anonymity for the students.
20. The researcher provided the necessary envelopes and stamps.
21. Following the surveys, the researcher conducted the final interview with the five teachers. The same procedures used in the first interview process were followed.
22. Once the final interview was completed, the researcher finished data analysis.

## **Analysis of Data**

### *General Procedures*

The researcher pursued written analysis throughout the research period. Methods for coding and identifying themes were developed as the data from the first interviews was made available. Even during the transcribing of the interviews, the researcher wrote down repeated words and phrases in order to identify possible themes. Certainly, the research questions served as a beginning point for coding themes, and initially, responses were categorized according to their link to community, respect, or responsibility. As the analysis continued, however, new themes were identified in order to cross check them with the data from the journals, surveys, and artifacts. Once themes were identified as being repetitive throughout the data, the researcher began to code phrases and words with

different color highlighters. These phrases and words were then typed into a narrative data base under each theme. From here, the researcher narrowed and focused the themes in the study.

### *Interviews*

The researcher transcribed verbatim all interviews. These interviews were read and analyzed for themes. Interview transcripts were coded for themes. When new themes were identified in the data, they were noted. Differences in responses were noted. Tapes and transcripts were kept in a locked box for protection. Each teacher was assigned a code and the name of the teachers and codes were kept separate from the transcripts and tapes. All data was kept in a locked file box for protection. Data in the file box was identified by the teacher's individual code.

### *Journal entries*

Journal entries were coded according to themes as well. The entries were analyzed for similarities and differences with the interview transcripts. Differences and commonalties between teachers' individual responses in the interview and their journal entries were noted. The depth of reflection available to the teachers during the journal writing was explored for new themes and directions. Comparisons from the different cases were made and themes coded for commonalties and differences. New themes were identified as well. The researcher noted ideas for follow up questions in the final interviews.

### *Artifacts*

Artifacts were examined for new themes or support for themes already identified. These artifacts served as more thick description. Much of this thick description related to the perceptions of the students concerning the curriculum and the teacher. The researcher

noted ideas and questions inspired by the artifacts for follow up questions during the final interviews.

### *Student Survey*

Survey responses were coded for themes. As the researcher read each survey, repeated phrases and words were written down. Each individual campus was coded separately at first. Once all of the campus surveys were analyzed, the researcher compared the differing campuses and identified commonalities and differences. The differences between responses of first year theatre arts students and veteran theatre arts students were identified and analyzed. All responses and themes were compared with those of the teacher interviews and the journal entries. Findings were typed separately from the teacher responses in order to compare the themes established by each group.

### **Qualifications of the Researcher**

I first encountered drama as an elementary student. It was my first taste of success. As a high school student, my involvement in theatre grew, and I chose to pursue it when I entered college. I am a twenty-year veteran of the secondary theatre arts classroom, and while this experience gives me great insights into the curricula, I am aware that it also provides a basis for personal biases. As a qualitative researcher, I must be constantly aware of the biases and control for them. I have attempted to establish methods for controlling them through member checking, peer review, and keeping journals about my own impressions and thoughts throughout the research period.

As a teacher, I have a natural concern for young people. In recent years, I have been alarmed by the rising tide of violence in our public schools. I have observed a growing

lack of respect and responsibility in my own classroom. The culmination of my concern occurred when I first heard of the tragic shooting in Columbine. My inability to comprehend what had happened prompted me to examine more closely my own experiences with young people in the classroom. I questioned my own responses and methods throughout my tenure as a classroom teacher. I was compelled to seek answers.

In my search for answers, I discovered that many others are seeking the same answers. I encountered Lickona, Wynne, Ryan, and others. I began to recognize the need for character education in our schools. As I recognized the need for a formal commitment to character education, I sought answers for how I would initiate it in my own classroom. These thoughts took me back again to my own teaching experiences, and I began to examine the theatre arts curricula.

I remembered incidents with students that illustrated growth in character. When I encountered Lickona's ideas about a moral community, I felt affirmed because his definition established the criteria for a well-developed theatre arts classroom. The theatre arts curricula require such a community. I began to ask myself questions. Did other theatre arts teachers perceive the theatre arts curricula as I did? Did they recognize the potential in their classroom curriculum for aiding students in understanding community, respect, and responsibility? I wanted answers to my questions.

I believe the answers to my questions can inform the character education agenda in our country. I believe knowing the perceptions teachers hold about their own curriculum are crucial to understanding the full potential of that curriculum. I am seeking to understand the theatre arts curricula through the eyes of other teachers. I am not seeking to declare it as the ultimate "truth" surrounding all attempts to influence the character of our youth. I

am saying that the arts, particularly theatre arts, merit examination as a possible resource for character education.

The readers of this study will find their own directions and their own "truths". I want my research to be what Wolcott (1990) calls, "provocative." I want people to engage in asking questions about theatre arts and character education. I want to provide another perspective on character education, which may prompt new questions.

These comparative case studies offer a new focus for the study of character education in American schools. Merriam (1998) maintains that insights gained from case studies can be instructive in developing tentative hypotheses that help structure future research. Merriam purports as well that case study can advance a field's knowledge base (p. 41). Thus new information about theatre arts and character education, and new directions for possible research may be defined or suggested through this study. The researcher believes in the potential of this study to stimulate continued discussion, debate, and hopefully, action in the fields of character education and theatre arts education.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

Exploring the programs and teacher perceptions of several high school theatre programs seemed from the beginning to be the most promising method for discovering a connection between the theatre arts curriculum and character education. The original questions guided the interviews and the surveys used in the research. Those questions are included below:

1. Do theatre arts teachers perceive that the theatre arts curriculum impacts the character growth of their students? If so, how?
2. More specifically, what aspects of the curriculum do theatre arts teachers perceive as creating a democratic and moral learning community in the theatre arts classroom or program?
3. What aspects of the curriculum do theatre arts teachers perceive as creating acts of respect and responsibility in their students?
4. Finally, what are the perceptions of students and former students of the theatre arts concerning the impact of the curriculum on their own personal growth?

Re-establishing the definition of terms used in this study at this point will aid in the reading and understanding of the findings in the study. The definitions pertaining to the idea of community become increasingly important in exploring the perceptions of the subjects in this study. The original definitions are included again, here:

#### Definitions of Terms:

Character education: The researcher developed the following definition from the writings of Davis (1996); Kirschenbaum (1995); Lickona (1991); and Wynne and Ryan (1997).

Character education is concerned with teaching the traditional and secular values associated with developing caring, responsible, and productive citizens. Those traditional values include respect and responsibility. Other values linked to respect and responsibility include traits such as compassion, loyalty, self-discipline, self-esteem, and empathy.

Theatre arts education and drama: Historically, drama often refers to dramatic literature only. This researcher is using both words to describe a curriculum where dramatic literature, historical contexts, acting techniques, improvisation skills, as well as production and rehearsal conventions, and directing techniques are studied.

Process drama: Process drama is using the conventions of drama including improvisation, character analysis, and dramatic literature to stimulate discussions about certain subjects, ideas, or even personal problems. In many cases the discussions are conceived as methods to move human subjects toward behavioral changes.

Democratic community: The researcher has chosen to use precepts suggested by Fain (1999) for the focus of character education as a definition for democracy in the community: 1) students must understand what deserves respect; 2) students must understand the responsibilities of citizenship; 3) students must understand how responsible citizens ought to act on their morals and values, and 4) students must understand the context created by the history, traditions, and contemporary issues which collectively define their community (p. 51).

Moral community: Lickona (1991) states that three basic conditions are necessary for creating a moral community in the classroom. Those three conditions are: 1) students



know each other; 2) students respect, affirm, and care about each other; and 3) students feel membership in, and responsibility to, the group (p.91).

Learning Community: Based on the ideas of Ayers (1993) and Kohl (1998), the researcher developed the following description for a learning community. Learning takes place in a safe and supportive environment, the students have ownership in their learning through choice and personal discovery, the knowledge of students is recognized as valid, and the teacher as guide learns with the students.

Respect: Lickona (1991) defines respect as showing regard for the worth of someone or something. He states, “It includes respect for self, respect for the rights and dignity of all persons, and respect for the environment that sustains all life. Respect is the restraining side of morality; it keeps us from hurting what we ought to value” (p.67).

Responsibility: Lickona (1991) holds that responsibility is the active side of morality. He states, “It includes taking care of self and others, fulfilling our obligations, contributing to our communities, alleviating suffering, and building a better world”(p.68).

### Method and Subjects

Because of personal knowledge as a former educator in that system, I chose teachers from the Texas Educational Theatre Association as subjects. Secondly, I chose them because of Texas' and the Texas Educational Theatre Association's shared commitment to providing certified theatre arts teachers to teach high school theatre. Each of the five teachers participated in two interviews, completed journals, and contributed artifacts. These same teachers allowed me to survey the beliefs of their students, and provided me with at least one former student who participated in an interview with me. Selected interview segments and student survey responses can be found in the appendices of this

study. (See Appendices N and P) The interview questions and survey questions are also available in the appendices. (See Appendices H, K, and M)

The research process proved stimulating and somewhat validating as I questioned, listened, and discussed the subject of secondary theatre education with my subjects. While I sensed there were theatre teachers who cared about the humanity of their students, it was validating to discover that my intuition was correct. The five teachers who shared their ideas, their beliefs, and their valuable time with me are all concerned about the character of their students. They are cognizant of their role and the role of theatre in the character development of their students.

Each of the teachers selected shared similarities in that all of them are certified in theatre arts, and adheres to guidelines provided for them by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The TEKS are established and governed by the Texas Education Agency. A list of TEKS for Theatre Arts are located on the web at the following address: [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter 117/ch117c.htm](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter%20117/ch117c.htm). Each teacher also participates in the Texas University Interscholastic League (UIL) One-Act Play Contest each spring. The Texas UIL system is a governing body supported by the University of Texas and the school districts in the state of Texas. Its purpose is to organize and facilitate competition between schools in the fields of sports and academics. The Texas UIL One-Act Play Contest involves well over 1,000 school districts in Texas. Each conference holds contests from the middle of March to the first weekend in May. Plays produced by these schools advance through competitions moving from the lowest level of competition, zone, through district, area, region, and finally, state. At the state level, eight plays from each conference perform. For three days, the University of Texas

in Austin is host to forty play companies as they perform hoping to take top honors in their particular conference. Although all five of these subjects participate with their students in this contest, each is unique because of the level of experience, the size of the school, and the support of the community.

Teacher A teaches in a small school in West Texas where she has been for the past twenty-six years. It is a conference 1A school that boasts forty-two theatre arts students. She has two theatre arts classes each day and balances her day teaching English. Her program mounts two productions each year. Partly due to the success of the program in the UIL One-Act Play contest, the community actively contributes to the plays and supports the high school theatre. Teacher B is a forty-one year veteran of the classroom, and she has spent that entire time in a small conference 2A school in the Texas Panhandle. She produces two plays each school year and opens the school to her students to produce three plays every summer. She teaches Theatre Arts I and II classes to approximately sixty-three students. She enjoys tremendous support from her community and her administration. Teacher C is a twenty-four year veteran of high school theatre arts. He teaches in a large conference 5A high school in the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex. He teaches six theatre arts classes with 135 students, and he shares his duties with two other theatre arts teachers who also carry a full teaching load. His program produces seven productions each year. Two of these productions are unique in that they are written by students, and all of these productions have the unqualified support of the community and administration. Teacher D has been teaching theatre arts for sixteen years, and she currently teaches two classes with a total of twenty-five students. The balance of her day is devoted to teaching public speaking. Her school is a conference 3A school in Northeast

Texas, and despite the two productions that are mounted each year, the program enjoys very little support from the community or the administration. It was the most difficult school for me to gain access as a researcher. Teacher E is the youngest member of the group and has enjoyed phenomenal success since he began his teaching career. He has his MFA in directing, and he has eight years of experience in the high school classroom. He teaches in a new conference 4A school in the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex where he has approximately one hundred two students. He shares his duties with another young teacher who carries the same teaching load. They produce three shows each year, and they have received first place honors in the 4A state UIL One-Act Play contest. The principal and the community are proud supporters of the program. I believe that the ideas and themes gleaned from all the teachers in this research process can offer more insight into how secondary students can grow and develop as human beings.

It was also an interesting experience to explore the minds of the students in the classes of those very teachers. Most of them are typical "kids" who evaluate subjects by determining the amount of fun derived from their participation. Many of them also believe that they increased their self-confidence through participating in theatre. Former students of these same teachers removed from the classroom for only a few years also remember the fun. Many of them felt, too, that they were impacted by the ability of a theatre arts education to promote their understanding of teamwork, their personal growth through the acting process, and their development of self-confidence.

#### Teachers' Perceptions

The teachers provided complex and rich themes for exploration. The difficulty in identifying themes lies in their complexity and in the deeply integrated quality of theatre.

Subjects in their interviews and their journals spoke of the cycles and circles that exist in the practice of theatre. The richness and complexity of the teachers' methods, ideas, and individual observations yielded six themes concerning the connection of the theatre arts curriculum to character education. The six themes follow:

1. *Production elements in the curriculum are interdependent, and this interdependence of director to actor, designer, and technician creates a community where respect and responsibility are necessary elements.*
2. *Teamwork or ensemble is an essential element to the theatre production.*
3. *Teachers in the study perceive their role as one of curriculum instructor, but this role is integrated with their role as moral/ethical mentor.*
4. *Dramatic literature, acting, and production provide students with an opportunity to increase their awareness of and their understanding of others, as well as promotes self-knowledge and self-confidence.*
5. *Teachers spoke of the "safety" of the theatre arts program or classroom.*
6. *Teachers spoke of the idea of community within the community.*

Perusing the transcripts of the interviews, as well as the notes taken following each interview aided in defining what I thought were general themes. When I began to read the interview transcripts, the journal entries, and the teacher artifacts, looking for connections, more specific themes began to emerge. As I re-read the evidence, I started to highlight and circle words that were the same or similar. I read again the highlighted segments of the evidence making notes about the connections, and six specific themes emerged. In this next section, I explore each of these themes and provide examples of the

evidence that lead me to these specific motifs. Following the exploration of teachers' themes, I will detail students' themes as well.

### **Teacher Theme I:**

*Production elements in the curriculum are interdependent, and this interdependence of director to actor, designer, and technician creates a community where respect and responsibility are necessary elements.*

The subjects used the words *respect* and *responsibility* in describing the interactions of their students during the mounting of a production. Each felt that these were essential qualities that are taught by both the instructor and the curriculum. Interestingly, these acts of respect and responsibility seemed to be most clearly illustrated through the behaviors and obligations of the technical crews. They are, however, also important in the classroom where group projects and activities create even smaller communities of cooperation and dependence. This idea of community being linked to respect and responsibility speaks to research questions two and three which pertain to the impact of the curriculum on character growth.

### **Teacher A**

Teacher A believes strongly in the idea that students in theatre arts are responsible to and for each other. She tells the story of being called away for a family emergency and depending on her students to go forward with the production of the play that evening even though she would be gone. She told her administration that this was a good opportunity for the kids to take responsibility, and they did. She stresses that all students be at all rehearsals no matter the size of their role so that all understand the importance of

their contribution in the process of mounting the production. In response to a quote on "earned self-esteem" from Wynne and Ryan (1997), Teacher A stated,

Our students learn early in the rehearsal process that the production is only as strong as the weakest actor or crew member. Each has a responsibility to do his best at every rehearsal, whether he's responsible for prop placement or the lead actor. Theatre arts teaches respect and responsibility on a daily basis. If the light man is not paying attention, he may leave an actor in the dark. If an actor misses or skips a line, he can cause the light man to miss a cue. It's all interrelated (Journal Entry).

Teacher A believes that members of a cast must form a supportive unit focused on the dramatic literature and its message.

### **Teacher B**

Having spent forty-one years teaching high school, Teacher B tends to be the most realistic and practical of all my subjects. While she believes that mounting a production can teach respect and responsibility, she admits that students do not always learn the concept. She offers the anecdote concerning a group of young men who did not want to take responsibility and help a young woman in her class complete a puppet show project. Teacher B attempted to give them time to take responsibility and show respect to the young woman, but they did not do so until Teacher B called the parents. These were students in a Theatre Arts 1 class, and they were not involved in productions outside of the classroom.

Teacher B has built what I like to call a "heritage of training" in her program. She relies on students to train each other as they move through the program. For example, an

upperclassman taking the role of stage manager will take an underclassman under his wing and teach him/her the duties and responsibilities of a stage manager. When the upperclassman is gone, the younger student is ready to step in and take on that role. This is true of all her technical positions, and she believes that it is an important aspect of teaching both responsibility and respect. Teacher B also stresses the importance of respecting the students as she asks them to respect her. She carries this idea of respect between student and teacher into the training process she uses for continuity in the technical aspects of her program. Students learn to appreciate the work of others because they are dependent on them in the training process, and they see the value in the training as it benefits the entire production.

In her journal, Teacher B made a list of the goals she had established for her program, and two of these are presented here:

2. To teach the importance of respect.
3. To teach the necessity for taking responsibility. (Journal Entry)

Teacher B's "heritage of training" makes it almost a tradition for students to learn to respect each other and to be responsible to one another.

### **Teacher C**

Like B, Teacher C believes that it is important for him to respect his students. He believes that this means being honest and modeling for kids by meeting deadlines, being punctual, and acknowledging others. He, too, believes in the idea of training being passed down through the generations of students that come through his program. He respects his students by encouraging them to take on more and more responsibility like taking on the role of stage manager or staging a curtain call. His students are encouraged to produce



original works, and he refuses to be backstage with them during the set-up and strike times established for the UIL contest play. Play companies are given a set amount of time to set up their scenery at the beginning of the play, and a set amount of time to remove it when the play is finished. The director or teacher is only allowed backstage during these times. Teacher C states that the element of responsibility given to students during the contest is what he likes most about the entire contest experience. Teacher C uses the words community and family along with the words respect and responsibility. He states, "The crew people are not on an island and neither are the actors. They're not on an island...everybody is responsible for the total success of the production. And that's family" (Interview, 5/01).

Teacher C uses the word interdependence saying that he believes it is the greatest single aspect of the art of theatre. He talks about how in a given production, dramatic moments are created by the synchronization of the actor's lines, the music, and the lights. All of these elements are coming together in a heartbeat to create emotion and tension and drama. He calls this the community working together and states that, "when all the independent elements click together in perfect harmony, then theatre happens." (Journal Entry). Without each student respecting the role of the other students in the production, and each student taking seriously his/her individual responsibility to the production, Teacher C feels these moments of "harmony" could not happen.

#### **Teacher D**

Teacher D speaks of specific elements that students learn by being in the highly fast paced and intense atmosphere of a production. She lists many qualities that are developed in the process of mounting a production. Some of these include: the ability to follow

instructions, a strong understanding of social skills, and the ability to accept “no” as an answer. Other qualities include the ability to accept criticism, the ability to address a problem, the ability to communicate, and finally, the good of the whole over the desire of self.

Teacher D states that theatre is an "equalizing factor" in high school because throughout the process of producing a play, you are asked to play whatever role you are assigned no matter your age or social status. Teacher D says, "Being willing to accept ground level responsibility...understanding that there are other people who maybe have already been there and moved they're way up, and the reason that they are up here is because they started down here. And just because that person is up here and you came in at that same age, that doesn't mean that age wise you deserve the same level. You've got to start at the bottom just like everybody else. That's the equalizing factor" (Interview 5/01). Teacher D's idea of respecting the person in a responsible position is similar to both B's and C's ideas concerning the relationships required in mounting a production.

#### **Teacher E**

Teacher E mentions the idea of building a community and the importance of respect in that community. He states, "Kids are building respect for each other, and I think to make a community livable and worthwhile and interesting to live in there has to be some kind of respect between people. And then responsibility, the whole thing, especially the production aspect of it. Kids have to be reliable and dependable and responsible to get done what they need to do so that you can do it" (Interview 1, 2/01). He discusses additional responsibilities that come with making a commitment to a production. These involve all aspects of student's life like making the choice to attend rehearsal instead of

attending a concert with friends and passing all classes so that you are not removed from the cast or crew. Teacher E views the high school theatre experience as a time for students to develop lifelong social skills, not just theatrical skills.

**Teacher Theme II:**

***Teamwork or ensemble is an essential element to the theatre production.***

The subjects believe that *teamwork or ensemble is an essential element to the theatre production*. The use of words like “trust” and “ensemble” suggest a community that recognizes the need for each member of the group to honor their commitment to the group. The word “*trust*” is used by several of the subjects to indicate the type of relationships that are necessary to promote teamwork. Some of the subjects describe traditions that are built within this teamwork or ensemble. Subjects use other words to describe teamwork such as family, circle, or even, “theatrical ghetto.” The idea of teamwork closely relates to the idea of community proposed in question two. Community is identified as a place where learning takes place and democratic values are observed. Again, the subjects agreed that this ensemble is a form of interdependence, which is a fundamental requirement in any theatre production.

**Teacher A**

Teacher A sustains a tradition of keeping pictures of all her past one-act play casts on the wall in her room. She tells many stories that are unique to each cast as she points to their pictures and remembers each fondly. Most of her present students strive to be on the wall and former students return with their own families to point out their pictures and their names on the wall. The wall provides a symbol of the continuity in ensemble that she has attempted to build.

This year's one-act play was set in the Civil War era and many questions were raised about present day race relations. Teacher A tells the story of two young men in her cast, one black and one white. She relates that one of the students, who she called "the biggest red-neck in the school," developed a tenderness and a sensitivity toward the young black man in the cast. Before the play, the two sat side by side in class and never spoke, but once into the play, the two begin to speak and even tease one another. Teacher A observed the way seating on the bus changed and shifted as they traveled through the contest process. This teacher believes that the seating on the bus signified a real and obvious change in perceptions and attitudes. The young black man was always seated with the "red-necks" including the "biggest red-neck in the school." "Trust" had been established between these two young men.

Teacher A suggests that one of the key factors in developing bonds within a play cast comes from the vulnerability of the students. Each shares worries, joys, fears, and doubts during the intensity of the rehearsals and production. Teacher A is in a unique position because in her small town, former students return often to visit and reunite with each other. Of her theatre students, she observes, "A level of trust is shared and protected by members of the group and bonds usually last for years" (Journal Entry).

### **Teacher B**

Teacher B relates the idea of community or ensemble to a circle. The "circle" is a ritual that most theatre companies use before the production of a show. It is a time to come together for last minute announcements and bonding. The group holds hands in a

special cross over method and someone speaks a sort of blessing on the upcoming production. This teacher uses that same term to explain the continuity in her program as students depart, and new students move into the group and create a place for themselves.

Teacher B recounts several stories that describe the bonding between her students during a production. One story happened when a veteran decided to leave the production because he did not get the role he wanted. The rest of the cast shifted roles and responsibilities the moment the student exited, and according to Teacher B, "never missed a beat. The company became a united, tight-built group after recovering from the initial shock of the actor who quit" (Interview 1, 2/01).

Teacher B describes a very poignant moment when she discusses the reactions of her one-act cast after the death of a student in a play. This student was a favorite of all and a leader in the school. His death was emotionally devastating, and it placed the students in the difficult position of having to shift three roles and a technical position. She offered to call the State Drama Director and bow out of the contest, but the students responded, "No, we're going to do the show, and we're doing it for \_\_\_\_\_" (Interview 2, 5/01). Since that time, every show is dedicated to this young man, and the circle continues from cast to cast. This dedication has turned a shared sorrow into a meaningful tradition for this particular ensemble.

### **Teacher C**

Teacher C recounts stories that illustrate the relationships between the students in his program, but he also relates revealing stories about the relationships he has developed with students. I mentioned earlier that Teacher C firmly believed that he must respect his students if he expected them to respect him. He feels the same way about trust, saying

that it is a big thing with him. Trust, to him, is being honest and sensitive to the needs of his students. He remembers a time when he arrived at rehearsal and realized that he was not properly prepared to stage a particularly difficult scene. He tells the story best in his own words:

I was so frustrated and there was a scene... And those poor kids, they were frozen like trees or something. ...I finally said, 'You guys...', and I wasn't mad. 'Guys, I apologize for taking your time. I am not prepared. I am not ready. My mind is gone. You're through, just go home.' And this one girl tapped me on the shoulder, and I looked back and she said, 'You know, the Sistine Chapel took a while.' And I looked at her, and it was just exactly what I needed and that's camaraderie...

(Interview 1, 2/01)

Teacher C goes on to relate stories about traditions within the program that have evolved through the years. Specifically, the story about muledog illustrates the continuity that is built in what he calls the \_\_\_\_\_ family. Muledog was a very ugly prop that looked like half-dog and half-mule, and now in every school production, alumni on the final Saturday night production wait for someone in the cast to say muledog in the course of their lines. It is a special moment and a special bond for those who have been a part of the tradition and the teamwork.

#### **Teacher D**

Teacher D feels that her students develop a special bond as they create their own community because of the lack of support they receive from the outside community. She describes them as preferring each other's company when they are not doing theatre because they tend to understand each other. She calls it a "theatrical ghetto" where they

speak each other's language. She says that it is almost portable because they move within this ghetto as they travel through the larger community. Teacher D describes it as an "incredibly rich" ghetto, and it functions as a community. By "incredibly rich," the teacher is describing the relationships established within this ensemble.

Since Teacher D was a high school theatre student, she has an interesting perspective on what theatre can offer in terms of family. She believes that theatre offered her reinforcement that she could not receive from her own dysfunctional family. She describes it:

That you know that you are part of something just good...this family, this environment, this community, and that every time you see that person that reconnects you with that. Within the process of creating that moment or the final performance, just the joy of getting together. ...And then you have all of these children who are doing things together and creating that excitement, and then individually offering that to make it even greater so you have this teamwork and then you have this individual success, and it just lifts you above the mundane...

(Interview 2, 5/01)

Teacher D believes that she has students who will be lifelong friends because of their experiences in theatre.

### **Teacher E**

Teacher E prioritizes the idea of building trust in his theatre arts classroom. He sees it as elemental in the theatre arts curriculum. He bases this belief on the fact that so much of the curriculum is problem solving through cooperative learning. He describes auditions where students are placed into groups and must in a matter of a few minutes build a scene

for presentation. These students must have developed some trust to be able to work together in these group situations.

One of his favorite exercises for building trust is called the knot. Students put their hands in, everybody grabs somebody else's hand, and then students have to undo the knot. It becomes a big circle where people are touching each other, breathing on each other, and everybody is in everybody else's bubble. Teacher E says that the kids do not care because they are caught up in working together, and it takes a lot of trust to just want to be that close to someone else in order to accomplish a goal.

Teacher E is convinced that the very nature of performance requires trust because students must feel comfortable to get in front of each other. It is an example of that vulnerability that Teacher A mentions. Teacher E offers this explanation to clarify his belief:

They've got to know they can get up there without kids laughing or making fun of them, or snickering or not paying attention, or not caring what they're doing. That is that respect and trust and all a part of that. And I can't imagine any kind of successful theatre class not having that inherently built in the curriculum.

(Interview 2, 5/01)

Teacher E believes building trust within the theatre community is crucial to creating an environment where students can learn the art of theatre.



### **Teacher Theme III:**

*Teachers in the study perceive their role as one of curriculum instructor, but this role is integrated with their role as moral/ethical mentor.*

Early on, it became clear to this researcher that the personal beliefs of the teacher influence the theatre curriculum. This is balanced with the knowledge that the experiences of the teachers in theatre arts education and the curriculum have fostered the teacher's personal beliefs. *The teachers in the study perceive their role as one of curriculum instructor, but this role is integrated with their role as moral/ethical mentor.* The teacher is role model, cheerleader, and sometimes, in "loco parentis." It is perhaps, impossible, to separate the influence of the teacher from the curriculum and visa versa. The two are intermingled and intertwined to such a degree that one cannot tell where one leaves off and the other begins. This idea seems to be like the chicken and the egg analogy. Which came first? The curriculum and its influence on the beliefs and behaviors of the teacher, or did the teacher influence the curriculum with his/her personal beliefs? The curriculum and the teacher seem to work together in a continuous cycle which provides opportunities for growth and learning. While providing for a fascinating new element in the study, it appeared to cloud the original questions, which dealt exclusively with the curriculum. However, it was the teacher's perspective of the curriculum that I was seeking, and thus, the cycle of teacher and curriculum is crucial to that perspective.

### **Teacher A**

As a director, Teacher A concludes that she is good at finding analogies to teach bigger life lessons to her students. This belief coincides with her conviction that she was "called to teach." She uses the "snow goose" analogy to help her students understand their

responsibilities as members of the cast. She is committed to discipline as an element of the theatre. She calls it the "heart of drama," and she relates what she means vividly:

You talk about drilling that into their heads because it is everything from being committed to do your best to being on time to having your costume and your prop where it needs to be because it's like a big machine. It's like the space shuttle...one little "O-Ring" can blow it up. ...the discipline frees you, and I know that sounds ironic, but it puts you into a position where if you've done everything you're supposed to do and you've taken care of all the commandments of whatever you know for sure that the role asks you to do and you've got that covered, then you're free to go a step farther. (Interview 2, 5/01)

Discipline, according to Teacher A, is the key that allows students to grow and truly test their potential

Teacher A also tells the story of having a young student ask if their contest judge was gay. The teacher felt like she and the whole group had taken two giant steps backward, but she took the time to answer the question honestly. She explained that the judge was a young husband and father and that he got caught up in the passion of the play. She used an old native American proverb to help her explain to the student. The proverb says, "Nothing is so strong as gentleness. Nothing is so gentle as real strength." This is another example of this teacher's belief in teaching character in the moment.

### **Teacher B**

Teacher B will admit that the principal and the counselor often put students into her classroom because they feel the students will benefit. She will reluctantly admit that it is not just the theatre curriculum, but it is also the fact that she accepts students and works

with them as individuals. She believes that her influence and the curriculum work together in her theatre arts classroom or program. Teacher B calls her classroom, "a warm, fuzzy class," because she is committed to increasing the self-esteem of her students because she feels that so many students in today's society need desperately to know that someone believes in them.

Perhaps, one of the most revealing artifacts in Teacher B's journal was her list of classroom goals for theatre arts. While some elements of the theatre curriculum, theatre history and production, are present in the list, those concerning the personal growth of the individual student outnumber them. Teacher B's list of goals is included here:

1. To enhance each student's appreciation for theatre arts.
2. To teach the importance of respect.
3. To teach the necessity for taking responsibility.
4. To enhance each students' self-worth and self-concept.
5. To encourage active communication among students.
6. To create a comfortable atmosphere for students.
7. To acquaint students with concepts of performance/technical theatre.
8. To emphasize the importance of solid, trusting human relationships.
9. To acquaint students with some measure of theatre history.
10. To teach the importance of positive, constructive evaluation/feedback.

(Journal Entry).

Teacher B's goals show that she is a teacher who feels that theatre arts can be a tool for molding young people.

### **Teacher C**

Teacher C enjoys teaching theatre arts because of what he calls, "life-tiles," those moments where he really connects with students about their futures and their personal growth. He tells his students that, "this means that today, we're going to have a life tile which means there's something we're doing in class...put this in long term memory" (Interview 1, 2/01). For example, he recounts an incident when one of his students was interpreting a gay guy, and he and the class started talking about how you should not judge someone based on how they walk or how they talk. Teacher C repeated to his kids that this was a "life-tile" experience, and basically, he wanted them to remember that people shouldn't judge others based only on what you see. He credits the curriculum because if they had not been doing stage work, he would not have had the opportunity to illustrate the lesson about judging others.

Respect and courtesy are elements that Teacher C feels are important traits students need to function within the world of producing a play. For this reason, he and his colleagues require students to acknowledge any comment or direction with a simple, "Thank you." This teacher thinks this is a type of discipline that requires the student take responsibility for the request that has been made, and he believes that it facilitates communication during intense and tedious rehearsals. Teacher C is dedicated to teaching his students to respond with respect to everyone involved with a production.

#### **Teacher D**

When asked directly if she felt that personal growth in a student was the result of the curriculum or the explicit instruction of the teacher, Teacher D replied that it was explicit. She stated, "I think the teacher is the standard that the students learn to follow" (Interview 2, 5/01). The other subjects in the research felt that it was a combination of both

curriculum and instructor, but this teacher believes that the teacher sets the tone of the classroom and guides all learning. She states strongly, "I am a disciplinarian. I'm a firm believer that students are only as good as the management or their directors" (Interview 1, 2/01).

Teacher D is most passionate about her "calling" as a theatre arts teacher. She believes that she has many roles to fulfill for the sake of her students. She mentions a few such as priest, nurse, mother, task master, and caretaker. In her journal, she summed up what she believes is different about theatre teachers:

I think theatre teachers, being of the 'creative temperament' themselves are more accepting and students respond to that. I try to keep in mind what the needs of the class are within the boundaries of the established curriculum. My greatest desire for my theatre classes is to teach them theatre skills, but more importantly to teach personal value. ...A theatre educator must be so much more than a regular classroom teacher. We reach into the very core of young people and encourage, teach and mentor them. It's not just knowledge. It's all about living and the very essence of our cultural existence. (Journal Entry)

While Teacher D's discussion of her feelings are sometimes abstract, she clearly believes that she has a responsibility to help students grow.

### **Teacher E**

As the youngest of the subjects, Teacher E tends to view his role quite differently. He does not believe that he can be a traditional disciplinarian as a theatre teacher. This teacher feels that talking and establishing relationships with students is crucial to building a trust that will facilitate discipline. He tells the story of two of his young male students

walking off from their responsibilities during a technical theatre class, and how he expressed his disappointment with the students because they had "taken advantage" of him. He expresses his feelings about what he perceives as the relationship between students and teachers today:

I don't think young teachers, ...no longer are we that strict disciplinarian, slap you on the hand with the ruler - type, stereo-typical thing that we think of. So, ...I think it's a lot of that respect stuff cause you gotta go and be there to listen to them and be a part of that because they don't have that at home anymore. So, you become a parent as a teacher now and not just a teacher. Your role is completely different. It is a listening role, it's a let me do what I can do for you and help you out the best I can. (Interview 2, 5/01)

Interestingly, however, when Teacher E discusses traveling with his contest students, he becomes quite explicit in his expectations of behavior. He notes two incidences where he speaks to his students about their treatment and consideration of others. Students are reminded to be patient and respectful with waiters and waitresses in restaurants, and they are required to tip properly. He also encourages his students to include the bus driver, and make him or her feel comfortable and included.

Finally, this teacher's view of the curriculum and instructor appears to be one of integration. He views the teacher as guide, one who is responsible for providing opportunities for students to learn and experience for themselves. He believes that students will have success in discovering such qualities as self-identity and self-esteem, motivation, discipline, cooperation, and responsibility. I think a story that Teacher E told about his response to a counselor's surprise at how well a student was doing best sums up

his perception of his role and the curriculum. He stated, "The counselor attributed the positive influence to the theatre teachers. I attributed it to the power of theatre to change lives" (Journal Entry).

#### **Teacher Theme IV:**

*Dramatic literature, acting, and production provide students with an opportunity to increase their awareness of and their understanding of others, as well as promotes self-knowledge and self-confidence.*

Other themes, which emerged under the umbrella of integration between teacher and curriculum, offer answers to the original questions in the study. Subjects related that students grew in their ability to express themselves because they gained self-understanding through acting and dramatic literature. Their awareness and understanding of others grew as well when taking on the roles of other types of people through acting in plays. Through the mounting of a production, students gained insight into interacting with others in a positive and focused manner. Their own personal self-esteem increased through the act of performing dramatic literature for their peers and audiences. This theme speaks to research questions one and two by suggesting that a student's personal growth does increase through being a member of the community created by the theatre curriculum.

#### **Teacher A**

Teacher A expresses her feelings and beliefs about the role of dramatic literature in her journal:

Drama is the ideal tool for reflection, introspection, and self-awareness. Dramatic literature from every era tells us how frail human beings are...how we are often powerless to control our current situation...but how resilient the human spirit can be in the end. 'By stepping into the shoes' of another human being, even a fictional one, we learn empathy and open ourselves up to new ways of thinking, as well as a better understanding of human motivations. In teaching drama, we study the choices that characters make and we make personal choices about role interpretation. Applying these lessons from literature, the student learns the adage, 'When you choose the behavior, you choose the consequences.' (Journal Entry)

Teacher A details stories about her students and their responses to different pieces of literature. She speaks of how her students learned to be more sensitive to the elderly when they performed *The Golden Shadows Old West Museum* by Larry L. King, and how they gained more understanding about gangs and tolerance through performing *Romeo and Juliet*. She relates the story of one young girl's growth in understanding and acting when she related to her character as a real human being who served the needs of the confederate soldiers as a nurse. Her experience taught her to value her few minutes on stage as worthwhile and necessary to the production. In this same production, she relates how a young black man and a group of young white men found common ground through the experiences of acting in a play about the Civil War.

### **Teacher B**

Teacher B discusses the feelings involved in performing dramatic literature versus reading it or studying it in an English classroom. She believes students have to feel and



understand the emotions in order to perform them. She calls these emotions the "gut level, nitty-gritty feelings."

This teacher gives students a character analysis sheet with some twenty-four questions that they must answer to aid in their research on their character. As they answer the questions, they are creating a blueprint of their character's concerns, goals, and personality traits. Below is a sampling of some of the questions:

2. What is my ethnic background?
5. What piece of music would I associate with myself?
9. What type of environment shaped my early life? What kind of relationship do I have with my family?
11. What is my position in society - rich, poor, important, powerful, popular?
14. What are my values, attitudes, beliefs?
16. How do I treat other people? How do they treat me?
17. Do I have a secret that I try to keep hidden?
18. What is my greatest want or need? (Teacher Artifacts).

Teacher B feels that this exercise if transposed into real life could help students in their own self-discovery.

### **Teacher C**

Teacher C quotes the famed actor, Richard Dreyfuss, as saying that all actors find both Hitler and Mother Teresa in their character. He quotes Dreyfuss as going on to say that when we get mad in traffic, our Hitler is taking over, but when you see a homeless person and respond, your Mother Teresa is in charge. This teacher maintains that giving

students a chance to explore these types of characterizations in dramatic literature gives them an opportunity to look at right and wrong in hypothetical situations. He talks about the dramatic conflict and the courage it takes to know the difference between the right and the wrong, and how students are introduced to this idea. Teacher C suggests that students are given the opportunity to understand all types of characters, both good and evil.

He does admit that he has never done a longitudinal study or asked them directly, but he does hope that students who participate in Stanislavsky's "Magic If, " transfer those skills to real life. He states:

We teach them to be in the "Magic If" ...If this were happening to you, what would you do? Then it makes them think, if I were in this situation...it helps them decided maybe later on cause they'll touch on something... Well, in this play, he did this, but I don't think I'd do it that way. Look what happened to him. He had too much pride and look what happened to him and that kinda thing. (Interview 2, 5/01)

Teacher C also relates the power of his students' written performances and what his students gain from having a "voice" to express issues that concern them. He believes that having researched and talked with families who have loved ones suffering from AIDS helped them to understand and have compassion. Other story lines have centered around homeless people and suicide. These plays impact the community where the students live in very powerful ways, and they will be discussed later as evidence for another theme.

### **Teacher D**

Teacher D feels that through theatre we breathe life into the words on a page so that characters become warm and fresh and alive rather than distant, detached people.

Students can see them as living and form relationships with them because they can see, touch, and hear the characters. These relationships allow students to see relationships and life working on stage, and they can make observations and learn from them.

Teacher D remembers with fondness a production of Neil Simon's female version of *The Odd Couple*. She recalls that the production was fun because the students worked so well together and there was little "difficulty." This teacher adds that the students jelled into such a strong ensemble that it was easy to believe that the two young ladies had been friends for twenty years or more. One of the young women came to rehearsal in tears because of romance problems, but she managed to add her personal feelings to the character she played in the final act. Teacher D remarks that this was "Very Stanislavsky!" (Journal Entry). Stanislavsky believed that actors should utilize their own personal "emotional memories" to create emotional truth in the character. The young actress allowed an important part of herself to add dimension to the character she was playing. The character was no longer distant and detached for this young woman.

### **Teacher E**

Teacher E speaks specifically about two dramatic works that he felt impacted his students. One, *God's Country*, by Steven Dietz concerns the white supremacy movement, and the students began to understand the idea of militant racism. Students were in the middle of this production at the same time the David Koresh episode was playing out in

Waco. This teacher believes it helped students to understand more clearly the idea of militant movements in this country.

A second show mentioned by Teacher E is *Spring Awakening*, by Frank Wedekind which was written in the 1890's all about teen-agers coming to grips with their sexuality and life. Because it discussed issues like abortion, pre-marital sex, and pregnancy, students were given the opportunity to discuss and explore their understanding of major social issues in their life. Teacher E states, "And I love doing shows like that - that you can bring in people that will help people deal with what they're going through. So, and I think, a lot of it is trying to pick plays that open kids' minds and make them accepting of anybody and everybody. And knowing that we may not all march to the same drum, but we can dance a tune with them or something" (Interview 1, 2/01).

Teacher E further suggests that acting and dramatic literature offer students a vital playtime that helps them discover and develop who they are. He talks about the imagination and how the student is able to pretend much like when they played with Tonka toys, or portrayed Cinderella as a child. They can look at the virtues and qualities of the characters and pretend while they explore the different aspects of these fictional people.

#### **Teacher Theme V:**

##### ***Teachers spoke of the "safety" of the theatre arts program or classroom***

Central to the subjects' beliefs concerning the theatre arts curriculum is that the community developed and fostered by both the teacher and the curriculum should provide an environment where students may feel safe to explore and learn about themselves. Students should grow from self-exploration and self-awareness to self-confidence.

Students are free to be themselves because acceptance and empathy are encouraged through dramatic literature, theatre games, and "fun." This theme addresses some answers to research question one because the teachers identify their perceptions concerning how the curriculum affects the personal growth of their students.

### **Teacher A**

Observing students for twenty-seven years, Teacher A is convinced that most students need a place where they can express themselves and not be judged. She believes that that theatre can be that "refuge." She even goes so far as to suggest that theatre at times can be therapy for some students who need a place to belong. She describes an improvisation game that the students play in her classroom called "can of squirms." It is basically a role-playing improvisation where students change roles in the middle of situations that can deal with issues like alcoholism, cheating, drugs, and other social issues important to teens. Teacher A states that when students play this game several times, barriers seem to disappear as all the kids get involved.

Teacher A recites the story of casting a young man that she risked casting even though she knew he was "an outcast angry kid" from a broken home. She talks about how he was a big problem backstage for a while, but she decided to give him a responsible position as the keeper of the candles. This meant it was his job to keep the lighter and light the candles when they were needed in the production. This kid blossomed and all of the popular students in the play began to really love him and talk to him in the halls. On the night of the final performances for the year, the students put together a parody of all of the shows done that year, and this little boy was given a chance to shine. Teacher A believes that he blossomed because of the experiences he had in theatre arts.

## Teacher B

B's perspective is that students gain "comfort" from theatre arts because it gives them a sense of confidence when they have to perform or speak in front of others.

This teacher also embraces the idea that students should be having fun in a place where they also have a sense of belonging. She sees her classroom as a place where students who would not speak to each other in the hall learn to understand and enjoy each other. She believes theatre arts offers students that environment. She calls theatre arts a "universal course." When I asked her to explain what she meant by the term, she related it to Shakespeare's quote, "All the World's a stage and all the men and women on it merely players." Understanding the quote helped students to grasp the fact that acting is part of their everyday lives, and that it is something that is a natural extension of their own personalities. She maintains that students begin to gain confidence when they comprehend the concept.

Teacher B discussed the progress of two students in her journal. Student Y did not want to take theatre arts, but the principal encouraged him to do so. She describes how this student went from a reluctant participant who did not want to contribute ideas to a leader who was willing to risk playing an 80's rock star in an improvisation. Teacher B explains that his self-confidence grew tremendously. A second student, whom she calls Student X, is a limited English speaker who is very quiet and shy. He had taken speech with her the year before, and she was very surprised when he showed up in theatre arts. She observed that for the first six weeks, X did not participate very much, but that he slowly started to come out of his shell. He began by actively participating in group projects and moving to solo performances. Teacher B states that not only did his self-confidence increase, but his

English improved as well. She ends by saying that he did a fantastic job portraying a nun at a school for custodians involved in a game of strip poker. Both students gained the confidence to perform because of the "safety" of the environment created.

### **Teacher C**

Teacher C offers parents the argument that the ritual of the rehearsal schedule in his program offers safety because they will know where their children are from three to six p.m. each day. He stresses his belief that students build their confidence with every production in which they participate. Teacher C again refers to his program as a community when he discusses the relaxed atmosphere. He talks about encouraging the students to make "screwy choices" in the classroom and the program. He wants them to take risks within the safe and relaxed atmosphere of the theatre community. He describes an incident when they needed a pond on stage, and they just could not get it created. Two students stepped forward claiming that they were tired of it not working. These two students had the self-confidence and felt safe enough to take risks, and they built a pond on stage.

Teacher C describes his definition for safety in the following quote:

...we all have a need to be loved, and we have a need to be included, and I think that's where theatre comes in. We give them that need to be included into something. I see so many people that are in the halls walking around and they don't have a place. Theatre not only offers them a place, but it offers them a home.

(Interview 2, 5/01)

This teacher feels quite passionate about providing a niche for students.

### **Teacher D**

Teacher D speaks of creating "la familial" in her theatre arts program. She wants students to fully understand that while the single person is important, the individual is not greater than the whole. However, individual students are encouraged to learn about themselves, and she works to build their confidence. She contends that for the student who has always felt a little strange, theatre offers him or her a place to belong. She recalls a student who told her that all her life she had missed fitting in, but theatre changed that. The student felt she had found her place where she was accepted and belonged.

In her journal, Teacher D reports that students often tell her that they feel "safe" in theatre arts. This teacher calls it a "haven." She summarizes her view of the theatre community:

Every community requires a certain form of hierarchy, rules for safety and discipline, structure, and responsibility. The theatre community embodies all of these - while enabling those involved to express themselves creatively. Theatre community is also elastic enough to encourage members to "fly". By that, I mean to try new things (Journal Entry).

Teacher D maintains that all students need a place where they can find acceptance and flourish.

### **Teacher E**

While Teacher E uses the word "safe" to describe the environment created in theatre arts, he also calls it, "some place to go to and escape" (Interview 1, 2/01). He affirms the idea that students gain confidence and self-knowledge through theatre arts. He describes the first exercise in his beginning classes as an exercise where students are given the



opportunity to both gain self-confidence and self-knowledge. This teacher's students are asked to complete a collage of pictures and words that describe them, and the students share the collage with the class. This sharing starts the students on the road to a "safe" environment where they know each other and themselves

### **Teacher Theme VI:**

#### ***Teachers spoke of the idea of community within the community***

Research question two explores the idea of community. One interesting theme that emerged in relation to community is *the idea of community within the community*. That is, the community created within the theatre arts program interacts with the wider community of the school and the city where the school is located. Subjects spoke of services they rendered to the wider community as well as receiving aid and encouragement from that wider community for their projects. This created an interesting bond between students and the world beyond the theatre classroom. This theme relates to research question two in that students are provided an opportunity to be involved within a community and observe their role or connection to the larger community.

### **Teacher A**

Teacher A recounts several examples of the school and the city community reaching out to the community of her theatre arts students. The first story involved an elderly gentleman arriving at her classroom door early one morning with three videotapes on the Civil War. He brought them because he thought it would help her students understand the play, *Confederate Letters*, they were performing. Interestingly, Barre Gonzales is a high school theatre arts teacher in Texas.

In addition to the elderly gentleman's contribution, the band director researched the Civil War drum, and when he found one, bought it claiming that one day the band would use it in a confederate show or something. Finally, Teacher A tells of a lady in her seventies who shared photographs and letters from the Civil War with her students. These were precious items that had been in her family for over a hundred years, but she wanted to share them with the students. Teacher A feels that these connections to the wider community give her students a sense of belonging, and she feels blessed to have this type of support in her community.

### **Teacher B**

Teacher B glows when she talks about the community where she lives. She praises their support for her program, and even admits that the reason she has stayed so long is because she knows, "the support is out there whenever people need it." The community supports not only her performances during the school year, but also supports productions during the summer. Teacher B speaks as favorably of her principal and the administration. She mentions several times that the principal and the counselor place students in her class because they feel that she accepts them for who they are. Personally, when I met with the principal to set up my access to the school, he was most complimentary of this teacher and her ability to interact with teenagers. There is a sense of mutual appreciation between the two communities.

### **Teacher C**

Teacher C feels that his program contributes to the wider community by offering quality theatrical productions that move audiences to laugh and cry, and hopefully, grow as citizens by recognizing another side of themselves. He relates a story concerning the

audience and a production of *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance. This particular show begins with the young male actor portraying *The Elephant Man* on stage wearing only a diaper like cloth. No make-up is used to show the ill effects of his disease, but the actor contorts his body to physically show the form of the defects. Teacher C relates the following story as an example of the influence quality productions can have on the larger community:

These two kids had their hats turned backward. First of all, they shouldn't wear their hat in the theatre, but as far as I'm concerned if they are going to see theatre, I don't care what they look like. But they go into the theatre and at first, they're like whistling, and I'm having to look at them and say, "You know, you're not going to do this." I'm this close (indicates a small space with his hands) to kicking them out, and all of a sudden as they started progressing into it, they started listening and they started responding, and they started to see moments happen. I didn't know these kids, but they came out afterwards and said, "Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, that was awesome. That's one of the best things I've ever seen". (Interview 1, 2/01)

Teacher C says that these two young men never missed a production after that, and he contends that audiences are affected for the good by the productions they see in his program.

Teacher C offers his students a unique opportunity in that they write their own shows and mount them for production; he believes that it is one of the most beneficial things he does because he gives his students a voice. These original plays have become a very important link between the wider community and the students in the theatre arts

community. Most of the plays concern controversial social issues that are important to the community. For example, the students researched and interviewed people concerning the impact of AIDS in their community, and they wrote a play based on the personal histories of families and victims dealing with AIDS. The play, like many of the others, was so successful that the students volunteered to do an additional performance so that all could see it. These plays are not a profit making enterprise. Profits are given to various charities that support the cause being illustrated with the dramatic work. The money made with the AIDS piece was given to AIDS outreach, and the national quilt. For Teacher C, this is the most "phenomenal" activity in his theatre arts program.

#### **Teacher D**

Interestingly, Teacher D is the only subject who has a negative feeling about her community as a whole. As a result, she concentrates on creating a rather insulated community for her theatre arts students. Her program receives very little support from the school community or the wider community. Although a wealthy benefactor in the community donated a large sum of money for a new state of the art auditorium, the school administration has limited Teacher D's and her students' opportunities to use the facility. Scheduling of classes did not recognize the needs of the theatre arts students, and the technical quality of productions is hindered. One of the rooms near the auditorium which used to serve as a costume and prop storage room for the theatre was turned into a choir classroom during the day, and the theatre students were no longer allowed to pull costumes or props during class time because the choir had class at the same time as one of the theatre classes. There is another performance area called the "Little Theatre", but

since it is close to other classrooms, the theatre department was asked not to rehearse, or work on scenery in there during the day because it disturbed the other classes.

Evidence of this lack of support is seen in the numbers in the program. Twenty-five students is small for a conference 3A program. Personally, I felt a coldness and an abruptness from the administration which made it very difficult for me to gain access to this campus. Little recognition is given to the theatre program, and few seem to perceive it as a valuable program.

### **Teacher E**

While Teacher E values the importance of the community within the community, he is not totally altruistic. He believes in the importance of positively promoting the theatre arts program to the community because this will in turn create more support for theatre arts. He creates opportunities beyond the performances to interact with the community. His students participate in a canned food drive, and the fifth grade students are invited to see the Fall musical free of charge each year.

Perhaps the most innovative event that Teacher E uses to promote his program in the community is "Drama Day." It is a fundraising activity, but according to E, it differs in that, students are not knocking on doors in the community asking citizens to buy something that they may not need. "Drama Day" is a Saturday devoted to providing theatre training to K-6<sup>th</sup> graders. The cost is \$35 per student, and the students receive four hours of intense training from the advanced theatre students. It offers both the older and the younger students opportunities to grow and learn through new experiences. This teacher is convinced that this event provides for quality interaction between his theatre arts program and the wider community.

Exploring the themes that emerged from the interviews, journals, and artifacts of the teachers provided some answers to first three original questions. Although the teachers have identified some of their students' thoughts concerning the theatre arts curriculum, the surveys of the current students and interviews of former students of the theatre students included in this study best answer the fourth question. In this latter section of this chapter, I explore the themes and ideas of the students more closely.

### Students' Perceptions

Of the 367 possible survey participants, 155 participants returned a completed survey. Of the ten possible former students, six chose to participate in a telephone interview with me. Current students were categorized by school and number of years of experience, but the findings show that the perceptions of students from the differing programs are very similar so I chose to look at all of them together. However, I did observe a difference in the responses of students with only one year of experience and those who chose to take theatre arts for two, three, and four years.

Most of the comments with depth came from students involved for more than one year and involved in production beyond the classroom experience. Many of the first year students, in fact, had negative comments to make about the curriculum and/or the teacher. Some of them referred to it as a "blow off" class. These same first year students will for the most part, though, identify theatre arts as fun and agree that it builds self-confidence.

Since the surveys were qualitative in nature, and students provided short answers to the questions, many ideas emerged. While there were several minor themes, four were

prominent. A fifth concerning the impact of the teacher on the students' views also emerged. The perceptions of the former students with whom I conducted telephone interviews revealed close identification with the current students. The themes listed below are the themes I explore in this final segment of Chapter Four.

1. *Theatre Arts is fun.*
2. *Theatre Arts builds self-confidence.*
3. *Theatre Arts promotes teamwork and understanding of others.*
4. *Theatre Arts provides opportunities for self-expression and self-discovery.*
5. *The theatre arts teacher influences a student's perception of the theatre arts curriculum.*

#### **Student Theme I:**

##### ***Theatre Arts is fun***

The idea that being in a theatre arts classroom is fun was almost a unanimous view of the students from Theatre Arts I to Theatre Arts IV. Many suggested that this was the main reason a friend should consider enrolling in the course. Others referred to it as enjoyable or a "break from regular classes." Many students suggested that theatre arts relieved stress because it was fun. For example, one student remarked, "Besides, it's nice to have a fun class between AP classes and dual credit classes" (Student Survey). Others said that it was enthusiastic and energetic. One student even remarked that it cheered him/her up.

Students cited that working on improvisation was fun because you laughed at each other. One student remarked, "Improvisation - it's totally hilarious and we learn without

realizing it" (Student Survey). Several students connected the fun to learning, calling it a "fun learning experience" (Student Surveys). The idea of fun connects to the remarks by students concerning their own participation in theatre arts because it was not typically a lecture situation. Interaction was a prominent term used to describe the fun in theatre arts as well. Even most first year students who elected not to take theatre arts for another year felt that it was fun.

### **Student Theme II:**

#### ***Theatre Arts builds self-confidence***

Students believed that they gained self-confidence because of the repeated performing. Some called it feeling more comfortable in front of an audience or a group of people. Others mention how shy they were and how theatre arts helped them to overcome their shyness. Still others say they are more outgoing than they were before being in theatre arts. Several claimed an acceptance of themselves with one student saying, "It's alright to be who you are, not who people want you to be" (Student Survey). Along the same lines, another student responded, "Dare to be yourself, go with your inner feelings, don't be afraid of what others think, everyone is different, but that's okay" (Student Survey).

Quite a few students remarked that they could be leaders because of what they learned in theatre arts. Many stated they learned that they were good at something. One of the former students tells the story of how she found herself taking on ten different roles in a series of vignettes being performed for her school. People were dropping out because of grades, and she felt overwhelmed, but she did it. Now, she conducts training sessions with people she does not know for a major insurance company. This former student



maintains that theatre gave her the confidence to meet the requirements of her job (Telephone Interview).

Learning to think for themselves and gaining a sense of independence is related to gaining self-confidence. Students felt they overcame fears by focusing on a goal, and this helped them to believe that they could accomplish anything if they tried. One former student relates this idea of focusing to sticking to a production, seeing it through, and taking risks. As the students risk being vulnerable, they discover what they can really accomplish, and their self-confidence grows (Telephone Interview).

### **Student Theme III:**

#### ***Theatre Arts promotes teamwork and understanding of others***

Surprisingly, the theme of teamwork and understanding others emerged as the strongest of the themes. More students mentioned in on their surveys, and many of them spent time elaborating on what the idea of teamwork meant to them. Former students identified teamwork and the understanding of other as one of the lessons they had learned to appreciate in theatre arts.

Students seemed to recognize the quality of interaction and working together as one of the qualities that separates theatre arts from other classes. Students described teamwork as camaraderie, family, ensemble, and community. In addition, they discussed bonding and building trust with others while sharing with them. Many felt that theatre arts offered an opportunity to learn about others, as well.

The idea of teamwork is directly tied to the interaction that occurs during the production process. Students use words and phrases like reliable, interdependent, trust,

and accepting responsibilities as qualities that are needed for a positive production experience. Others speak of focusing together on a common goal as the impetus for creating teamwork. One student remarked, "I also learned some things that will better prepare me for life, like working with people you don't particularly care for, and they mutually share those feelings, but you work together and get along and put aside your differences anyway" (Student Survey). A former student related her feelings about teamwork, "Teamwork - the greatest teams I have been a part of have been shows. It makes me a better team member on the other teams even now in the professional world. ...A good team means everyone is contributing. It is a collaborative effort, and no one is more important than anyone else" (Telephone Interview). Another current student expresses what it is like to work with classmates during rehearsal: "There is a lot of respect involved for each other, yet each one has to remain calm and have patience, as well. Each person grows through each rehearsal" (Student Survey). Teamwork is viewed as bonding and working together to accomplish a goal, the final production of a play.

Students believed that the relationships they formed in theatre arts were strong, and many referred to them as family. The family or community was important to them personally. One or two students referred to the theatre arts community as a "second home." One of the former students discussed how coming from an abusive family had made her particularly needy and vulnerable. She felt that she could open up to her friends in theatre arts and share with them. A current student stated, "Without the support I get from the theatre guys here at school, I believe I would be more susceptible to peer pressure" (Student Survey). Other students describe this community as a place where

unity is important, where students can express themselves without fear of judgement, and where people really grow to know one another through working together.

Thirdly, students postulated that theatre arts aided them in understanding others. A former student observed, "It takes effort to see where another person is coming from, and I probably wouldn't have thought of that without theatre" (Telephone Interview). Students see theatre arts as helping them to be more open-minded, to project into another person's feelings, and to see other viewpoints. Many students listed learning social skills as one of the benefits of theatre arts, and some specifically mentioned that through characters in a play, they could demonstrate feelings of people involved in disputes over racial prejudice and social classes. One current student expressed his/her view this way, "They challenged me to look at myself and realize that there is a little part of me in every person and visa-versa. I can relate to anyone, and understanding is one of the only qualities essential to life" (Student Survey). Students also mentioned the diversity in the students they encountered in theatre arts, and they felt this was important. Many felt that it gave them a deeper understanding of others in the world around them. When asked about the benefits of taking theatre, one former student explained as follows:

New perspective. You have to learn something about yourself before you can play another person. Reading a play that is different from your background exposes you to a new perspective. ... my awareness of other people has been heightened. I hope I am more observant. I hope it means that I question someone's motivations before I judge them. If you have to do a character history of someone in a play or a scene, and if you meet someone...you may ask the same questions about the

real person. It creates an openness and acceptance of others. (Telephone Interview)

Students felt that they functioned as a team to accomplish an important goal. While accomplishing this goal, they became a part of a family and grew to understand each other.

#### **Student Theme IV:**

##### ***Theatre Arts provides opportunities for self-expression and self-discovery***

The theme of self-expression and self-discovery and its importance to teenagers was quite prominent with both the current and the former students. Many called it a healthy or creative outlet. Others referred to self-expression and self-discovery as self-exploration and making choices. Still others believed theatre arts to be a haven for creative thought and a place for non-threatening experimentation. One former student called theatre arts, "an outlet where it is safe to be a little crazy" (Telephone Interview). Another former student felt that theatre arts was almost therapeutic in that she could rage as a character when she was not allowed to do so as herself.

Many of the current students describe theatre arts as a place where students could both learn about themselves and learn to express themselves. One student stated that theatre arts allowed students to reach out and explore. Another believed that theatre arts promoted the discovery of one's self while making art. Still others made statements such as, "I found where I belong"; "I found the emotional part of myself"; and "I learned a lot about my values and what matters to me" (Student Surveys).

A former student who is currently a graduate student in a theatre for youth program states, "I think theatre is one of many opportunities that allows kids to experiment socially and mentally. ... Kids need an outlet because they are high-strung and emotional and theatre provides that" (Telephone Interview). In responding to a question about learning about yourself in theatre arts, one former student replied:

For one, I realized that it was my personal ... not just my physical being, but my emotional and mental being were valuable. As I took on a part, it was partly me and no one else could play the part exactly as I did. So I felt like a unique tool, a painter's brush. I stopped trying to be like everybody else and started to appreciate my own uniqueness. (Telephone Interview)

One particular student was quite vulnerable in responding to the survey, and his/her comments revealed what he/she believed he had learned about himself/herself through theatre arts. He/she states:

I learned far more than I can write down on one sheet of paper. Before theatre my thoughts were shallow. I used drugs and deceived people around me. Theatre taught me that I was only fooling myself, my body is to be cherished and my words to change those who had once thought like me. ... I was a completely different person before theatre, but I know now I would not give up my experiences for the world. They've molded me into the person I am today and I am proud. I may never step on stage after high school again, but what I have learned gives me the courage to stand up for what I believe in. (Student Survey)

The surveys and telephone interviews revealed that theatre arts students in this study felt they were learning about themselves as well as theatre.

### **Student Theme V:**

#### ***The theatre arts teacher influences a student's perception of theatre arts***

While this theme was not as prominent as the others were, it did exist and deserves some discussion. In most of the groups of surveys, students mentioned their teacher. Some mentioned them in a positive manner, while others had negative responses to their teacher. Former students and current students quoted their teachers, and discussed their feelings about them. Students who responded negatively tended to be first year students in one particular subject's group who had made the decision to get out of theatre arts at the end of the year. These students felt that the teacher sometimes showed favoritism to students in the contest play, and one student felt humiliated by the activities which the teacher asked him/her to complete in class.

Two of the former students speak of their teachers in favorable terms. One student recalled that her teacher's encouragement in a situation helped her have the courage to follow through with an opportunity and a responsibility. Another believes that the director (teacher) had a great deal to do with the building of teamwork in their program. One former student's teacher was her mother, and certainly, she felt that her mother had a positive influence especially in helping students to embrace dramatic literature.

Current students stated that they loved their teachers and felt honored to work for them. Some even responded that their teacher was "like my best friend" because of the connections the teacher made with the students. Others discuss how the teachers gave them the tools to understand who they are, and some mentioned the life lessons learned. One student even mentioned that he/she was glad to have been taught to respect other

groups during competition. One student called his/her relationship with his/her teacher as a "safe mentorship." Although all students did not mention their teachers, some in each subjects' group did, and it seemed relevant to the study to include these examples.

### **Summary**

In briefly summarizing the findings in my research, I find that the teachers and students do share similar perceptions concerning theatre arts. Both tend to see it as a haven or a refuge where students feel comfortable and safe, and teachers and students identify increased self-confidence as a benefit of the environment in the theatre arts classroom or program. Both groups vividly support the theme of teamwork. Students felt they grew in their ability to understand their peers, and teachers felt they observed this increased understanding in their students. The teachers in the study identified self-expression and self-discovery, as did the students.

While all students did not identify the teacher as an integrated part of the curriculum, all of the teachers did perceive their role as necessary for the curriculum to serve the personal growth needs of their students. However, several students within each subject's group did specify the teacher as either a negative or a positive influence. Most students saw the teacher as a positive aspect, but one subject's group had several Theatre Arts I students who felt the teacher's influence on the curriculum created problems for them personally. Surprisingly, the teachers and students shared much of the same terminology in describing their perceptions of the benefits of their theatre arts experience. Perhaps, this sharing of terminology is a further indication of the teacher's influence on the curriculum.

Another important factor in the findings appears to be the level of experience of the student. First year students agreed that a theatre arts course was fun, and most even agreed that it helped them with their self-confidence. Nevertheless, most of these first year students did not perceive the theatre arts curriculum offering the same benefits as those identified by students involved for more than one year, or involved in extra-curricular productions. Older students provided more in-depth responses and seemed to display a passion for theatre arts, which did not exist in Theatre Arts I students. There are implications here that deserve exploration and discussion.

I have tried to report my findings with care and respect for my subjects. As a theatre arts teacher with twenty years experience, it is possible that my own biases have shown themselves in this reporting. It was, however, not intentional. Earlier in this chapter, I identified the appendices where a portion of my notes from the interviews, journals, artifacts, and surveys can be found. The original interview questions as well as the survey questions are also included in the appendices. Hopefully, this will provide the reader with more insight into the nature of these findings. Finally, I found my subjects eager to discuss their perceptions of the role of theatre arts in the lives of young people. I believe the reporting shows this eagerness.

Chapter Five contains the conclusions or perceptions that I have drawn from this study. My thoughts in Chapter Five are the closing stages of this study and offer suggestions for further research as well as interpretations into the data provided by the study. Chapter Five also includes what I believe are the very strong implications of this study. I hope that my perceptions, interpretations, and implications will inspire readers to ask more questions about theatre education and character education.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Perceptions

Perceptions relate to insights, discernment, or understanding, and I chose this title because I believe that my investigations revealed thoughts and reactions rather than hard core conclusions. Secondly, I was actually seeking the perceptions of teachers and students concerning the theatre arts curriculum. My thoughts and reactions to what they said about theatre arts can only be my perceptions of their words. I cannot declare definitive answers, but rather relate what I believe to be the picture presented by their words and stories.

The stories told by the teachers studied reveal their understanding of how the theatre arts curriculum influences students in their classroom. In attempting to study behavior, the stories and insights of those most involved with the students in the classroom, the teachers, are most revealing. Their perceptions are valuable in helping me to identify any possible link between the theatre arts curriculum and character education. Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) argue the validity of teacher stories and personal perspectives, stating, "...narratives are key components in the authentic study of teaching, for until we understand the context and appreciate the perspectives of those involved, any understanding of what it means to teach and learn will remain fragmented and disconnected from the real world of teaching" (p. 16). This study is a beginning to understanding the link between theatre arts, which teaches the art form, and character education. I believe it provides another look at character education in broader terms and addresses alternative ideas to character education, as well.

Let me first address the notion that this is a beginning study of the link between theatre arts and character education. As noted in Chapter 2, most studies of theatre arts are concerned with creative dramatics or process drama. Little attention has been paid to the traditional art as it is taught on the secondary campus. The producing of dramatic literature unless it is the original work of the student is rarely included in creative dramatics or process drama. Secondly, process drama and creative dramatics are most often mainstays of the elementary classroom. Therefore, the perceptions gathered in this investigation provide a glimpse into the art of theatrical production in educational theatre.

The ideas of Kohn (1997), Nash (1997), and Noblit and Dempsey (1996) illustrate that there are those concerned with the character of our youth, who believe that a broader understanding of character education is needed. These researchers argue that more than identifying a list of character traits or virtues, educators need to help students gain a personal understanding of character and what it means to them as they relate to their world. Noblit and Dempsey argue that communities develop the virtues needed to make their society function. Kohn and Nash both believe character education is more than just a narrow program that molds students according to a pre-set determination of values. These broader, alternative views are essential to showing a possible link between the theatre arts curriculum and character education. With these assumptions in mind, I will explore my impressions of the data in my study.

In the beginning, I proposed four questions to help me in my exploration of the theatre arts curriculum and its possible connection to character education. Those questions are restated below:

1. Do theatre arts teachers perceive that the theatre arts curriculum impacts the character growth of their students? If so, how?
2. More specifically, what aspects of the curriculum do theatre arts teachers perceive as creating a democratic and moral learning community in the theatre arts classroom or program?
3. What aspects of the curriculum do theatre arts teachers perceive as creating acts of respect and responsibility in their students?
4. Finally, what are the perceptions of students and former students of the theatre arts concerning the impact of the curriculum on their own personal growth?

Two brief and general answers to these four questions relate the common threads of thoughts between teachers and students.

Questions one and four are addressed in that both teachers and students indicated that self-expression and self-discovery lead students to increased self-confidence. While teachers saw some indications that students gained an understanding and appreciation for others, many of the students discussed their increased knowledge and understanding of those different from them. Both groups felt that the group participation and group goals established in the theatre arts curriculum facilitated these character growth traits.

In answering questions two and three, teachers believed that dramatic literature, the acting process, the rehearsal and production process, and the practice of technical work are elements involved in creating a community where acts of respect and responsibility are necessary for the established community to function. These elements are connected to questions one and four as well. The environment created during production requires that students have the self-confidence to fulfill their responsibilities, and they must respect

other members in the production cast and crew if a production is to be successful. These general answers are expanded and explored in this next section.

### **Perceptions of the Researcher**

First, I have discovered that the definition for character education provided by most researchers in this study is somewhat narrow. It relates to a list of traits or qualities and does not encompass a wider view, which would encompass the identity of the student.

Although many of these qualities are mentioned by both the teacher and the student, knowledge and understanding of them is a by-product of the students' personal growth and awareness as functioning members of the established theatre arts community.

Therefore, the possible link between the theatre arts curriculum and character education is not a direct, explicit link. The link exists more as a by-product of the activities in the curriculum and the teachers' influences and relates more closely to alternative ideas of character education suggested by Lemming (1993) and Noblit and Dempsey (1996). This discovery leads to a discussion of the community established in the theatre arts classrooms and programs in this study.

Lemming (1993) in a summary of his conclusions following his own character education research states, "Character develops within a social web or environment. The nature of that environment, the messages it sends to individuals, and the behaviors it encourages and discourages are important factors to consider in character education" (p. 69). Theatre arts can provide such a social web or environment. The atmosphere necessary to spend six to eight weeks in intense and exhausting rehearsals requires students to gain maturity in their relationship to others. The traits of respect and

responsibility must be clearly established, and the teachers in the study identified this trait. The student's need or desire to be an accepted and functioning member of the established community leads to personal awareness and growth in the student. Noblit and Dempsey (1996) are advocates of building community through shared experiences. They contend, "It is through small social institutions that individualism is tempered with commitment to others and through which shared values are created" (p. 201). Students in the study described commitment as focusing on a shared goal and learning to work together. Students and teachers referred to this established community as teamwork, ensemble, and even, family.

The authors also contend that opportunities for people to connect their pasts and their visions of their future are important to understanding virtues established within their communities. This relates to Teacher B's "heritage of training" where older students took the responsibility of training the younger students in the areas of technical expertise. Teachers A and C also established traditions in their programs that helped connect the past with the future. These traditions included the wall of pictures of previous show casts, and using the name of the old prop, muledog. Students related to an existing community where relationships had been built in order to accomplish a common goal, and they were carrying on the commitment as a part of their present responsibilities and their future development. Former students maintained that the self-confidence they gained in their high school theatre programs and the teamwork they practiced in those same programs helped them to fulfill the responsibilities of their current jobs.

Lickona's (1991) definition of a moral community first influenced me because I recognized it as a definition of the theatre arts classes that I had taught. Lickona states

that three basic conditions are necessary for creating a moral community in the classroom. Those three conditions are: 1) students know each other; 2) students respect, affirm, and care about each other; and 3) students feel membership in, and responsibility to, the group (p.91). Lickona's definition relates to the ideas of Noblit and Dempsey, and it relates to the ideas of the students and the teachers in this study. Students express their feelings about getting to know others, getting closer to others, and trusting others to get their job done. Two students speak of compromise and sacrifice as being important for the greater group. There is within the data a prevailing conception that the group and its purpose override the personal desires of the individual members. The paradox seems to be that students actually grow in self-awareness and self-confidence, as they submit to the needs of the group and take active responsibility in the production.

Teacher D constantly reminds her students that the individual is not as important as the greater good of all. Teacher C often illustrated his belief in teamwork or community by talking about a student struggling to carry a ladder across the stage. Someone within the community should always show up to help; when help is needed to accomplish the common goal, help is given. Students are united in community dedicated to a common goal. Noblit and Dempsey (1996) suggest four tasks necessary for schools to be a place where students learn how to participate in life. The fourth task states, "to engage in a shared enterprise that lets students and adults construct moralities that link the two" (p. 202). The suggestion here is that adults and students bond in understanding what "moralities" are necessary for growth and success as a group. Unless the individuals internalize these moral traits, the whole will suffer. Members of the community learn and practice the personal characteristics needed to accomplish the goals of their community.

My perceptions of the theatre arts teachers in my study reveal their belief in the importance of the teacher in establishing a community where the common goal of the group is the goal of all the individuals within the theatre arts arena. While the curriculum sets the perimeters in terms of essential skills and knowledge for the subject, the teacher recognizes the needs of the community and establishes guidelines for students as citizens of that community. Fain (1999) argues that the development of students as the next generation of citizens of the nation is a responsibility of the present community. He believes that the focus of character education should be on teaching four specific understandings:

- 1) students must understand what deserves respect,
- 2) students must understand the responsibilities of citizenship,
- 3) students must understand how responsible citizens ought to act on their morals and values, and
- 4) students must understand the context created by the history, traditions, and contemporary issues which collectively define their community. (p. 51)

The teacher appears to be the person who establishes these guidelines as a part of the curriculum in theatre arts. From studying the interviews, journals, and artifacts of the teachers, I believe the teachers in this study consciously and thoughtfully established guidelines for their students. I think in many cases the teachers became models of the proper citizen within the community. Teacher D explains, "...the teacher is the one who provides the safety in the classroom because she's the one through her discipline management of the classroom, through her levels of expectation in student performance,

classroom rules, tolerance levels. All of that plays an important factor, and it is the teacher that sets the standard" (Interview 2, 5/01).

Teachers B and C advocate the importance of respecting their students as they expect their students to respect them. They establish trust in their students in small ways like being honest and meeting established deadlines. Teachers choose dramatic literature that helps students to understand their history, traditions, and contemporary issues. Teacher A mentions *Confederate Letters* by Barre Gonzales and Teacher E speaks of *God's Country* by Steven Dietz as examples of plays that helped their students gain different perspectives on racism. Teacher E teaches his students to be respectful to the waitresses and bus drivers they meet while traveling. Teacher D states quite clearly that she believes that it is her job to provide explicit instruction concerning behavior. All the teachers speak of their efforts to help students cope with the responsibilities that come with the UIL One-Act Play Contest. Understanding the citizenship needs of their students, the teachers are able to see beyond the curriculum guide and devote attention to helping their students recognize their potential as human beings interacting with others. Whether students fully understand that the microcosm of the society in their theatre arts program can or should transfer to the real world is not known. That is a matter for further study.

As I said in Chapter Four, this study began by investigating the theatre arts curriculum through teacher and student perceptions. Interestingly, as the study grew, I realized that separating the influence of the teacher from the curriculum is difficult. The integration of the two is deep and complicated. The passion that these teachers feel for theatre is so great that they believe in its "power to change lives" (Teacher E). The teachers believed that they were somehow different from other teachers because they



taught theatre. Teacher A speaks of being "called" to teach theatre, while Teacher B refers to her class as a "warm and fuzzy class" where students can feel good about themselves. Teacher E remembers going to summer theatre camps and being inspired by the high school teachers who were willingly spending their summers to teach theatre to the students of other people. He relates that they "enjoyed" what they were doing. He remembers thinking that he wanted to grow up and "enjoy" what he did for a living.

Teacher D summarizes these feelings below:

Theatre teachers are not...it is not a vocation. It is an avocation like being a pastor. Teaching in and of itself is an avocation. Theatre goes even beyond that in my opinion. I know it seems like I'm patting myself on the back as being perhaps... But I don't think you can be a successful theatre teacher without it being a special gift that you have been given because you have to have a special sensitivity. And it is a learning process, also. ... you were probably a far more understanding individual as you progressed through your experience than when you first started. ... We are called there from infancy. I was involved in some kind of performance ever since I was a little tiny girl. It is not something that I just suddenly - "Oh, I think I'll be a theatre teacher." I think those of us that are born to be theatre teachers were born to be theatre teachers, and ... it is a thread throughout your entire life. (Interview 2, 5/01)

This passion felt by these teachers is strong and powerful. They attempt to pass that eagerness onto their students. They choose dramatic literature because it touches them, and they desire that it touch and move their students. They also spend time choosing literature that meets the needs and the talent of their students. As directors, they have a

vision of that piece of literature as it takes life on stage. They spend six, seven, or eight weeks after school every day sharing that vision with their students. Sharing the vision sounds dramatic and esoteric, but the teacher understands this idea in practical terms as well. Sharing means teaching about all the aspects of production. The technical elements have to be designed and implemented. Students learn to hang, focus, and run lights. Students learn the art of interspersing sound and music into the play. Other students are building sets, painting, or building costumes as they create a physical world for the play. As the technical elements are coming together, the teacher is serving as director and acting coach. Students are learning to analyze their characters and bring them to life. Each scene, each moment in the play must be staged, and students are learning how to make the audience laugh or cry. Students are slowly being given responsibility as the teacher releases backstage to the stage manager, who in turn communicates to the lighting technician, the sound technician, the props person, and the actors. This collaboration illustrates the community established by the curriculum requirements and the teacher's vision. These teachers prod and encourage students to grow and take responsibility to fulfill the vision. Teacher B and Teacher C both believe that the students should run the show once it comes into production, and the UIL One Act Play Contest does not allow teachers in the backstage area during production. The students learn responsibility by taking responsibility for the shared vision in the theatre arts curriculum.

More than the students, the teachers understand the feeling that will come on opening night as they share a precious part of themselves with an audience. Teacher D refers to it as "joy." Teacher C loves allowing his students to write their own original works and produce them because of the look on their faces when he reminds them that no one else in

the world is doing this piece of original work. Teacher A's face lights up like a Christmas tree as she looks about the room and sees the pictures of all the productions and all the students. The memories aroused show a reverence for each piece of literature and each cast. Theatre is the passion of these teachers, and their desire to share that passion with students motivates them.

Teachers in this study do perceive that their students' personal growth is influenced by the theatre arts curriculum. Each speaks of the growth in confidence that takes place as students carry the responsibility of a production. Students, themselves, are amazed at the ease with which they can get in front of a crowd. As mentioned earlier, their awareness and understanding of others is increased as they learn to respect others while taking on additional responsibility in the production. Their ability to work together backstage without the monitoring of an adult is a clear indication of respect and responsibility working in tangent together. Individual students gain a deeper understanding of themselves, as they become aware of what they can accomplish and how they interact with others. These are traits in student growth indicated by the study.

Yet, it is important to discuss another perception of mine. Clearly, theatre arts will not meet the character growth needs of all students. Theatre Arts I students who choose not to continue in the theatre program do so for various reasons. Some exit the program because of scheduling difficulties, but most do not feel the pull or the attraction that others feel. It is not meeting their educational or emotional needs. Although most claim that it was fun and they grew in self-confidence, these students do not become permanent members of the community. A few students felt that it was a "blow off" class which did not challenge them. Others within one subject's group did not respond positively to the teacher's

methods or personality. This perception implies a question about students and their needs in education. Is education doing what is necessary to help *all* students find a community where they can grow? This question leads me to the next segment of this chapter. What are the implications of this study?

### **Implications**

The implications of this study include the need for a broader and deeper understanding of character education, for integrated character education curricula, and for communities which foster self-expression. The need for significant attention to the adolescent's character education needs is crucial. Finally, an understanding of the role of the teacher, student, and curriculum within the development of a community is also important. Specific implications include:

- a) This study indicates the need for educators to gain a deeper understanding of integrating character education into the curriculum. Character growth through social interaction and activity within the community of the classroom requires that teachers have a broader knowledge of character education than that provided by a list of suggested traits in a pre-packaged format.

Kohn (1997) suggests educational institutions are choosing convenient and pre-packaged programs rather than examining carefully what their students and their communities need. Ignoring the needs of adolescents is just one example of what can happen when institutions narrow their view of character education. Individual teachers should be asking questions about how character education can fit into their classrooms, and administrations should be supporting this type of inquiry. Fain (1999) contends, "The

powerful potential of character education is the force behind the challenge for educators to pay attention to character education as a curricula question" (p.51).

Teachers and schools are accepting greater responsibility for their students, and character education is just one example of these new responsibilities. As the needs of our students in this fragmented society grow, teachers are serving many times as confidants and "in loco parentis." Developing community within the classroom can supplement the teacher's role. Remembering that many of the teachers and the students in the study referred to their theatre community as family, teachers and administrators need to grasp the importance of providing students with the opportunity to participate in a "family." Drills and lectures on character traits do not provide students with the opportunity to function as an acceptable member of a society. Classroom communities can provide those opportunities, but educators need to understand as much as possible about character education and implementing it in the classroom before these communities can be built.

- b) Secondly, the study implies that a curriculum which promotes character education through self-expression and self-discovery is vitally important to the character growth of the adolescent. In theatre, the student's involvement in the action of the production provides such an avenue for expression and growth.

Personally, in this time of rigidity through curriculum and testing mandates, I believe students need an avenue for self-expression more than ever before. The comments of the teachers and the students in this study imply a significant need for self-discovery as well. Eisner (1997) states, "In democratic societies and in those societies

seeking to create a democratic way of life, children are helped to realize their distinctive talents and, through such realization, to be in a position to contribute to the culture as a whole" (p. 351). Elkind (1998) discusses the importance of students having time and space to discover their own identities. He theorizes that students grow by differentiation and integration or by substitution. The first process, differentiation and integration requires that a child separate ideas, feelings, and emotions, and then put them together as a whole identity. Substitution means merely replacing one set of ideas, feelings, or emotions with another. Healthy self-identities usually practice differentiation and integration as students examine their experiences in light of their emotions and understanding and decide which ones work for them (p. 18).

The study shows that theatre arts provides a place for *some* students to realize their potential through acting and production. The roles in the dramatic literature give students the opportunity to explore aspects of themselves that are similar to the character as well as different from the character. The roles students take as technicians and designers help them to see their strengths and weaknesses and make choices about where their talents lie. In all phases of production, students are provided with avenues where they gain understanding about their personal responses to stress and responsibility. As students respond successfully to increasingly intense responsibility and the accompanying stress, self-confidence grows. These aspects of the curriculum create venues for self-exploration and self-discovery where students gain a greater maturity and understanding of their own personality in relation to their world. Whether they continue in theatre or not, most students will carry this self-confidence with them.

However, the study shows, as well, that all students do not choose theatre arts as their place for self-exploration and character growth. Where do these students find this avenue of self-expression and self-discovery? How do we as educators recognize and develop places where self-expression and self-discovery are nurtured? These questions deserve the time and effort of educators if we believe character matters.

- c) Teachers need professional development that will enable them to understand and create moral learning communities throughout the curriculum, including English, math, science, and social studies. Student to student interaction offers students the chance to explore their own roles as social human beings who must learn to function in the greater society beyond the classroom. When students are interacting with one another, they discover similarities and differences in beliefs and opinions. These similarities and differences are examples of the real world. Questions concerning ethics arise in all of these subjects, as well as in our electives. In theatre when students can try on the roles of fictional characters, they begin to identify traits that they like and dislike in the character. In these other classes, students can benefit from having the opportunity to explore and understand the ramifications of their answers to ethical questions because they are allowed to "try on" differing opinions and identify those with which they agree.

Professional development programs are needed that will aid teachers in developing learning communities where students can apply and practice character education principles like respect and responsibility. How does a classroom turn itself into a

community? Cooperative learning is one method, and teachers still need help in understanding how to use it in the classroom. I believe theatre arts can be a model for using cooperative learning. Basset, et al (1999) quotes the five basic elements that Johnson and Johnson (1989a) advocate for successful implementation of cooperative learning in the classroom. They are:

1. positive group interdependence where one member of the group succeeds only when all members of the group succeed;
2. face-to-face interaction/discussion
3. individual accountability including assessment of each individual's contribution to the group;
4. development of effective social skills;
5. communication about improving the group process (p. 46).

Subjects in the study related incidences in theatre that mirror these elements suggested by Johnson and Johnson (1989a).

The idea of interdependence is crucial to the successful production because of the individual accountability of each actor, each designer, and each technician. Interaction and discussion takes place during rehearsals as a means to improve the quality and understand the meaning of each scene. Both students and teachers in the study discuss developing social skills as they learn to understand and work with others.

Communication about improving the group process is vitally important during the constructive critiques and discussions following a rehearsal. Cooperative learning is the essence of theatre arts. The necessity of cooperation between people is another reality of the society beyond the school and the classroom. Cooperative learning can be transferred



to the regular classroom situation if teachers are convinced of its worth and given proper training.

d) There is a significant need for meaningful character education and its research among adolescents who are creating their adult identities. Secondary schools are facing tremendous pressure from the undesirable forces in our society, and the school and the students deserve the attention required to aid them in escaping such societal pressure.

The adolescent in our society deserves and needs greater attention, and the literature indicates that character education programs neglect the needs of adolescents. As noted by Lemming (1993), most character education programs are aimed at elementary students. The Character Education Partnership's 2000 National School of Character Winners recognized only two high schools out of the nine school winners. High school is the public school system's final opportunity to influence students before they move into the mainstream of society with all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Yet, the character education movement continues to direct most of its efforts at primary students.

Elkind (1998) maintains that as adults we have projected a sophistication onto adolescents that does not exist because we are too concerned with coping with our own stresses. It becomes easier for us as adults to assume that these high school students can cope with their problems and frustrations than it is for us to seek avenues to help these children cope. Elkind describes this phenomenon:

Instead, adolescents often have a premature adulthood thrust upon them. Young people are now required to confront life and its challenges with the maturity once

only expected of the fully grown, but without any time for preparation and with little adult guidance. (p. 7)

The perceptions of the subjects in this study argue against neglecting the development of the adolescent. I am reminded of the young person who praised the "theatre guys" for keeping him/her out of trouble, and the student who expressed vividly how theatre had helped him/her escape from drugs and deception. Teacher A's story about the young black man, the "redneck", and their bonding through the rehearsals of a play about the Civil War is another example of an adolescent growing in maturity. This study illustrates what can happen when students and adults are involved in a community focused on a worthwhile goal. Students can grow in self-awareness and self-confidence, as well as become more understanding and accepting of others. Students also grow to understand that putting the good of the whole before their own needs is a worthwhile sacrifice. Many times it is a sacrifice required in a democratic society where the individual is asked to be a responsible and productive citizen.

e) There is an undeniable link between the teacher, the curriculum, and the student in building the moral learning community where character growth is possible. Each element contributes to the relationships developed in the community. The function of each element establishes the framework of the community.

This relationship between the curriculum and the teacher, and the curriculum and the student, and the teacher and the student creates a powerful circle. In fact, all of these groups practice the "circle" before each performance. It is a time when the cast and crew

gathers in a circle, crosses arms, hold hands, and shares the preciousness of the moment. They celebrate their oneness. Teacher C recalls doing a survey with his former students, and he was surprised to discover that most of them remember "circle" as their favorite time. I believe the circle is representative of the relationships and the community built by the teacher, the students, and the curriculum. The teacher is a vital member of the cycle of learning and growing that occurs within the theatre arts community.

Palmer (1998) discusses these ideas of teacher, curriculum, and community. He describes the process of connecting all three as weaving a web of connections among teacher, students, and subject. I call it a circle or a cycle. Palmer speaks of the teacher's heart as the place where intellect and emotion and will and spirit converge. I call this passion. Palmer summarizes these ideas when he says, "The courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living require" (p. 11).

The teacher's relationship with his or her students is an important component in the circle of learning that takes place in any classroom. Deiro (1997) conducted a study, which explored role-appropriate ways teachers could nurture healthy relationships with their students. The results of the study suggested six strategies for connecting with students. Three of these speak to the behavior of the teachers in this study. Those three are:

3. Having high expectations with a belief in students' abilities
5. Building a sense of community
6. Using rituals and traditions (p. 192).

As has been previously discussed, the teachers in this study work to develop a sense of community through production as well as in their classroom. The "circle" in which all of the teachers participate suggest rituals and traditions. The teachers set high expectations for their students each time they ask them to participate in a dramatic production. These actions help them to build relationships with their students, and students are provided opportunities to build relationships with others in the community. Elkind (1998) advocates such programs where teachers can guide students even beyond the classroom. He says, "Contemporary high schools provide little in the way of teacher-organized activities (with the exception of sports) that speak to the need of young people for adult guidance and direction" (p. 3). Kasen, et al (1998) speak of the school providing "supportive ties" to help students cope with problems within their society. (p. 70) I believe theatre arts can provide "supportive ties" for students.

The topic of theatre arts and character education is richer than I ever imagined before I began this study. I find myself asking many questions. I think this one study has barely scraped the surface of discoveries concerning theatre arts and the character growth of students. In this next segment, I discuss my questions and suggest further studies.

### **Questions/Recommendations for Future Studies**

- First and foremost, this study should be replicated, involving other observers, readers, and subjects for reliability. For example, how do lower SES students respond to theatre arts?
- With only six former students to verify continued growth, a longitudinal study of specific students over a ten-year period would offer results that are more reliable. Do

the lessons learned in theatre arts transfer to real life? If so, how do these lessons manifest themselves in the behavior of the students as they mature?

- Additional observation time in the classroom to allow for more insight and verification of the perceptions of teachers and students would deepen and enrich the findings.
- As expressed earlier in this study, I am concerned with the lack of research into the secondary theatre arts program. Most of the research concerns process drama and creative drama in the elementary classroom. The type of theatre arts instruction supported by the state of Texas and the Texas Educational Theatre Association is unique because of the quantity, quality, and type of productions mounted by the students in these programs. Students are encouraged to participate in all aspects of production, and they are challenged by mature dramatic literature. Theatre educators need an opportunity to explore the potential of these programs. What does it offer educationally? Are the criticisms of this type of instruction valid?
- Additionally, the role of the teacher within the theatre arts curriculum deserves further exploration. What types of people choose to teach theatre arts? How do they understand their role as theatre director and teacher? How do they develop goals for their students? What are those goals? Do their goals and ideas change with experience in the classroom or program? A longitudinal study of a group of theatre teachers would aid in answering these questions.
- Gaining access to juvenile facilities using drama and role-playing as methods for rehabilitation would provide more information on drama's ability to reach troubled adolescents. My attempts to interact with the Texas Juvenile Commission were not

successful, and this was not really the focus of my study. However, I believe it would add to our understanding of the potential of using theatre arts as a means to character education.

- I think a study exploring the effects of theatre arts on cultural diversity would be beneficial to educators. How do students from different cultures relate to one another in a theatre arts program? How does dramatic literature aid in the understanding and acceptance of different cultures? Answers to questions like these would help the education community to understand more fully how to connect students in our richly diverse society.
- Further studies into all of the arts can help educators understand the potential of the arts to aid students in character growth. Elliot W. Eisner speaks strongly of the power of the visual arts to reach students on many levels, but what of the other arts, dance and music. What do we understand about them? Do they also build community? Do they give the adolescent a place for self-expression and self-discovery? What other arts or programs are available for students who do not find their niche in drama?
- Additional studies observing how teachers build appropriate relationships with students are important if schools are to provide the adult guidance that Elkind (1998) suggests. How do teachers build relationships that function like those of the teachers in my study? How do students respond to these teachers? What are the long-term effects of these relationships?
- Additional studies observing how different educational programs like sports, student leadership, and service clubs affect personal growth and provide adult guidance. What character traits do students acquire from being in these programs? How does

the teacher/coach assist students in their personal growth? What are the perceptions of these teachers/coaches concerning the potential of their programs in character education? What do extracurricular programs give to character education?

### **Concluding Thoughts:**

#### ***Personal Reflections and Insights***

In the fall of 1985, I was just beginning my eighth year of teaching. I was the theatre director at Abilene High School, and I was dissatisfied with what was happening in my classroom and in my theatre program. As the time approached for our annual inservice training, I approached the district fine arts consultant and requested special professional development for the other theatre director in the district and myself. He agreed, and I contacted Josh Williams at Imaginary High School where he had long been the theatre director. I had seen Josh's productions, and I admired him for what he was able to coax from his students in performance. His shows were always imaginative and moving, and I hoped to gain some insights about teaching theatre from him. The few hours spent with Josh changed my perspective about teaching theatre. After spending a few hours with him, I found that I was more interested in developing young human beings who knew and valued themselves and those around them than I was in learning new techniques for teaching acting or staging a show.

On a personal level, I had always known the power of theatre to give students a sense of belonging and to enhance their self-esteem. I had felt that power in my own life as a teen-ager at a small Texas high school. Before I entered high school, I was informed by the counselor that I was not college material. Grade school had been for me a series of

humiliations. Junior high had improved a little. I was given an award for writing an essay on patriotism, but the teacher treated the award as a fluke, and I was not encouraged to believe that I had any talent for writing or anything else. Therefore, when the counselor informed me that I was not college material, I accepted it as fact. So, how did I arrive here working on doctoral degree in education? I have to thank my high school drama teachers.

During my sophomore year, I auditioned for the one-act play. I was cast, and for the first time in my schooling career, people recognized me for doing something very well. I was thrilled. I also loved being on the stage. At the beginning of my junior year, a new drama teacher was hired. Mr. Mitchell changed my life. I was again cast in the one-act play. I was beginning to understand that I belonged somewhere. I was recognized again for a short poetry piece that I wrote in English. My grades did not improve, but I began to think that maybe I could achieve something if I really wanted it.

The biggest break came for me during my senior year. Mr. Mitchell cast me in the lead role for the senior play. My feelings about myself began to change as teachers and students complimented my performance. Mr. Mitchell told me that I should major in drama in college. College? Mr. Mitchell thought I should go to college. Someone encouraged me, and it made all the difference. I knew that I wanted to continue to act. I felt a fulfillment and an excitement that I still feel today just thinking about acting or directing. My wonderful Mom made a way for me to attend college, and I fulfilled a dream.

I spent four wonderful years growing in self-esteem while developing my talents as an actress. I discovered a very strong talent for directing. I realized that I had talent and



worth. My grades improved as my sense of responsibility grew. I was part of a group that worked together and supported one another to achieve our artistic goals. I belonged. I believed in myself. I received my MS in theatre education and tried to share my love of theatre with my students as Mr. Mitchell had done with me. I understood that the very nature of theatre promoted this type of growth, but Josh's approach to teaching theatre was different. His approach went far beyond mine in helping students to grow as individuals.

Josh believed his priority as a theatre teacher was to encourage personal growth as human beings in his students. His students often called his Theatre Arts I course, "Life 101." In the course, he prompted them to examine their own provincial attitudes and tendencies toward stereotyping. Josh asked them to move beyond these attitudes and tendencies. He was honest with them when he asked them to compare high school cliques to the caste system in India. Josh cared about the student as a whole person. He wanted them to learn about theatre, but it was more important for them to learn about themselves and their role in the society where they lived. He used the theatre curriculum to help them gain self-understanding and a sense of responsibility for themselves and others.

Beginning that very year, I began to change my approaches in the classroom. I introduced my classes to the ideas of provincialism and stereotyping. We talked about the cliques in high school and their parallel to the caste system in India. I began to look at dramatic literature as more than just an opportunity to produce a play. I introduced my students to great works of dramatic literature from Euripedes to Shakespeare to Williams. As I slowly changed my own perspectives, my teaching style became less autocratic. My students had more opportunities to express themselves and explore their own ideas. I lost

what I thought was control and discipline, but watched in delight as my students gained self-discipline through their own enthusiasm for their own projects.

I sought methods for incorporating more and more projects and less and less lecture and testing. I made every attempt to relate the subject matter to the lives and times of my students. They explored Greek tragedy through writing and staging their own modern versions with modern heroes and modern flaws. Their discussions concerning characters who suffered from desiring too much popularity, or too much academic success to characters who abused drugs stimulated their thinking about decisions and choices in their personal lives. Their willingness to expose the weaknesses they saw in themselves and other teens around them moved them toward greater understanding and empathy.

The universality of the literature was not lost on the students either. I remember well the day we were discussing Euripedes' *The Trojan Women*. The students were comparing it to the Holocaust, the American Indians, and the conflict in Bosnia and Croatia. Few if any of my students were Jewish or Native American, but I did have one Black student in the room. She was a very bright and sensitive young woman who spoke up to say that it reminded her of the South and Black Slavery. There were sounds of breaths being caught by several of the students as they realized the full impact of her comment. The discussion was no longer academic. It had become personal. My students acknowledged truth and the pain it often brings. They grew in empathy and understanding by relating the events and emotions in the play to one young girl and the history of her people.

Through the years, I continued to adapt my ideas to meet my new perspective. I realized the importance of openly discussing ideas like respect, responsibility, and empathy. I began every year by asking my students to respect themselves, each other, and

me. I introduced them to definition of humanities which states, "...those areas of human interest which ask the eternal questions, 'Who am I?; Why am I here?, and Where am I going?'" The discussions surrounding these ideas led me to understand that my students did not always know what it meant to respect themselves. I encouraged discussion about self-respect and self-esteem. I promoted the idea of self-awareness as an important aspect of actor training by prompting them to keep a journal describing their feelings and experiences. I supported self-knowledge as a key component in the curriculum in my classroom.

I challenged my students to work with many different people by changing groups for different projects. There were cliques at the beginning of the year, but they soon merged into what Lickona (1991) calls a "moral community" where students knew each other, cared about each other, and enjoyed membership in the group established (p.91). I watched as students grew to understand and care about one another. I saw students greet each other in the halls who had stated earlier that they could not speak to one another because they were members of such and such groups.

Personally, I believe these changes began to take place in my classroom for several reasons. I believe the theatre arts curriculum itself fosters cooperative learning where responsibility and respect are encouraged. I also believe that the study of human beings in dramatic literature as real people honestly portrayed through acting requires sensitivity and empathy toward others. I am also convinced that unless the teacher views the curriculum as an opportunity to enhance the personal growth and development of his/her students, the traits of a moral community cannot be established and, thus, the benefits of such a community are lost.

As I considered my own experiences and understood more fully the steps I took in following Josh's example, I began to wonder if others in the theatre arts field were seeing the curriculum in the same way. Did other theatre arts teachers perceive the theatre arts curriculum as a source for character education? Did they use their classroom and the curriculum as an opportunity to help their students understand respect, responsibility, empathy, and self-esteem?

I was in the midst of asking these questions, when the tragedy at Columbine hit the news. I was horrified. I identified with the teachers in that situation, and I felt frightened, angry, and guilty. Had I done enough to encourage character growth in my students? What are my responsibilities as a teacher? I realized that the urgency to understand character education and the perceptions of other teachers in my field demanded that I make inquiries. It became a personal and a professional issue.

This study is a result of my concern as a teacher. Certainly, it has not answered all of my questions, but the conversations that I have had with other theatre arts teachers have helped me to gain new perspectives. I am very grateful that these wonderful, caring, and creative teachers were willing to work with me. I am appreciative, too, of the students who took the time to answer honestly about their perceptions concerning theatre arts. My hope is that this study will stimulate more inquiry into theatre arts and the character development of our young people.

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## APPENDICES

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Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 1/1/02

Date : Wednesday, March 07, 2001

IRB Application No ED0166

Proposal Title: STAGING CHARACTER EDUCATION: INVESTIGATING THE POSSIBLE LINK  
BETWEEN THE THEATRE ARTS CURRICULUM AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

Principal  
Investigator(s) :

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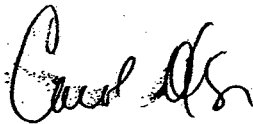
Gretchen Schwatz  
255 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Expedited (Spec Pop)

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

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Signature:



Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Wednesday, March 07, 2001

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

**Appendix B**  
**Interest Questionnaire**  
**Staging Character Education:**  
**Investigating the Possible Link Between the**  
**Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education**

Dear (TETA Member - name to be placed here),

My name is Terri Castleberry, I am a sixteen-year veteran of the Texas Educational Theatre Association, and I am currently finishing my doctoral studies. My dissertation is titled, "Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education". I am requesting that members of the Texas Educational Theatre Association be participants in this study because of that organization's commitment to quality theatre arts curricula. I am hoping that this research will aid the educational community in discovering another resource for character education. The study should also contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the arts and their value in the public school systems in America. The ideas of community, respect, and responsibility will be explored through your perceptions of the theatre arts curricula.

I would like to conduct two interviews with you concerning your ideas about the theatre arts curriculum. Each of these interviews will last about one and one-half hours. I will travel to your school to conduct the interviews at a time which is convenient to you. I want to begin with an interview and conclude the study with a follow-up interview. I will not interrupt instructional time. I will also be requesting that you keep a journal of your observations and thoughts as you teach theatre arts. I will also be asking you to collect artifacts (lesson plans, student work, documents) that reflect those perceptions. All student work must be submitted anonymously to protect the privacy of your students. Finally, I will be asking you to identify at least three former students who might be willing to participate in a telephone interview with me concerning their thoughts about the theatre arts curriculum. These students must be eighteen or older, and they should no longer be associated with your school or your program.

I am anticipating beginning around February 1, and concluding at the end of the current school year. All personal data including your name, phone number, and email address will be kept confidential. Signing this form does not mean that you have committed to being a part of this study. It is simply a form to show interest so that I may follow up with more information via a telephone call. If you are still interested following the telephone call, I will provide you with a consent form, and I will contact your principal for permission to be on campus. This is strictly voluntary and there is no pressure for you to participate. If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time.

If you are interested in participating, please take a few moments to answer the questions below, and return this questionnaire to me by the date indicated. A stamped return envelope has been provided.

1. How long have you taught theatre arts in Texas?
2. Are you certified to teach theatre arts in Texas?
3. How many classes of theatre arts do you currently teach?
4. What classes are you currently teaching?
5. How many students are currently enrolled in your theatre arts classes?
6. What is the conference classification for your school?



7. How many plays do you produce each year?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in participating in this study. Please contact me by telephone with more detailed information. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you have more questions, please feel free to contact me.

Telephone number: 405-275-0508 E-mail address: drmd93@aol.com

**Please return in the envelope provided by (date will be set once IRB is approved).**

Thank you for your time and consideration in considering this request.

Terri Castleberry

**Appendix C**  
**Second Teacher Contact**

Hello, teacher participants:

My name is Terri Castleberry, I am a sixteen-year veteran of the Texas Educational Theatre Association, and I am currently finishing my doctoral studies. My dissertation is titled, "Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education". I am requesting that members of the Texas Educational Theatre Association be participants in this study because of that organization's commitment to quality theatre arts curricula. I am hoping that this research will aid the educational community in discovering another resource for character education. The study should also contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the arts and their value in the public school systems in America.

The ideas of community, respect, and responsibility will be explored through your perceptions of the theatre arts curricula.

I am hoping to begin around February 1, and I will need your input. I am requesting that you participate in two interviews with me. I will also ask you to keep a journal of your thoughts and observations during the research period. The journal should reflect your perceptions concerning the dynamics in your theatre arts classroom and program. I will also be asking you to collect artifacts (lesson plans, student work, documents) that reflect those perceptions. All student work must be submitted anonymously to protect the privacy of your students.

I will also be asking your students to complete an anonymous survey concerning their perceptions of the theatre arts curricula. It will be important that the identity of the students is kept anonymous from both you and me. The students need the freedom to respond without influence from others. That is the only way to assure validity in the responses.

With your permission, I would like to contact your building principal or appropriate administrator to request his or her permission to include you and your students in this study. I will need to be on your campus for the interviews and the survey, and I need his or her permission. I will explain to them the specifics of the study especially the survey. Once, I have the necessary permission, I will contact you to set a time for the first interview. I will bring consent forms for you and your principal at that time.

I anticipate taking about three hours of your time for the two interviews. The journals are completed at your convenience, but I am requesting that I receive journal entries from you at least once a month during the research period. The final interview questions will be based on your journal entries. The artifacts can be given to me during the final interview period. I am very excited about the study and the insight that I think you can provide.

Willing to participate? \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Phone: 405-275-0508

Email: drmd93@aol.com

**Appendix D**  
**Principal Contact**

Hello, principal .....

My name is Terri Castleberry, I am a sixteen-year veteran of the Texas Educational Theatre Association, and I am currently finishing my doctoral studies. My dissertation is titled, "Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education". I am requesting that members of the Texas Educational Theatre Association be participants in this study because of that organization's commitment to quality theatre arts curricula. I am hoping that this research will aid the educational community in discovering another resource for character education. The study should also contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the arts and their value in the public school systems in America. The ideas of community, respect, and responsibility will be explored through your perceptions of the theatre arts curricula.

I have spoken with one of your teachers, \_\_\_\_\_, and I am requesting input for this study. I am hoping to conduct two interviews with \_\_\_\_\_. These interviews will not disrupt any instructional time. I am also requesting that \_\_\_\_\_ keep a journal and collect artifacts that reflect \_\_\_\_\_'s perceptions of the theatre arts curricula and its possible link to character education.

I am also hoping to include \_\_\_\_\_'s students in an anonymous survey toward the end of the study. Students will be protected from being identified by either myself or \_\_\_\_\_. The survey will take approximately twenty minutes of instructional time. It will cover general questions about the student's perceptions concerning the theatre arts curricula. The students will be requested to omit their names and place their surveys in an envelope and seal it before giving it to the teacher or me. Parental permission forms will be made available if necessary. The survey is voluntary. No incentives or pressures will be used to insure the participation of the students.

I anticipate being on your campus twice, once in early February, and once in May. I will interview the teacher during that first visit. During the second visit, I will interview the teacher and collect the surveys. All other data will be collected through \_\_\_\_\_ via mail or email. Confidentiality of school and teacher will be maintained. This will all be explained on the consent form which I will provide for you to sign as representative of your school.

I hope you are willing to allow \_\_\_\_\_ and his or her students to participate. I will mail you a consent form for your signature, and set a date with \_\_\_\_\_ for my first visit.  
Thank you.

Willing to participate? \_\_\_\_\_  
Any other questions, please feel free to contact me.

Phone: 405-275-0508  
Email: drmd93@aol.com

## Appendix E Teacher Consent Form

### A. Authorization

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Terri Castleberry to perform the following treatment or procedure.

### B. Description

You are being asked by Terri Castleberry, an Oklahoma State University doctoral student who is working on her qualitative research dissertation - Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education- to be interviewed about your perceptions concerning the theatre arts curriculum. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the theatre arts curricula and its connection to character education by examining the perceptions of teachers and students.

You, the participant, will be interviewed twice, each interview lasting approximately one and one half hours. These interviews will not be scheduled during instructional time. Questions have been formulated around the needs of the study, and follow up questions will be asked in the second interview. Interviews will be recorded on audio tape and transcribed verbatim. In addition, you will be asked to keep a journal during the three to four month research period. These journals will reflect your observations and perceptions of the curriculum's impact on student behavior and character education. The follow up questions in the second interview will be based on the journal responses. Artifacts directly related to the study and collected by you will also be included in the study. In addition, you will be requested to submit names and telephone numbers of former students over the age of eighteen who might be able to inform this study. Teachers, students, and school sites will remain confidential. Terri Castleberry will give a code name to each teacher, each former student, and each school site, and she will be the only one with that knowledge. These code names will be used in all discussions and written reports concerning the interviews, journals, or artifacts. Only Terri Castleberry will view original data and conduct the interview, journal, and artifact analysis. All transcripts, data, and recordings will be treated as confidential materials and kept secured during and after the research study is complete.

Your students (9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>) will be asked to complete a survey during the fourth month of the study. These surveys will be narrative and require approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. Questions will be general in nature concerning the students' perceptions of the theatre arts curricula. The students will not identify themselves. The surveys will be placed by the student in a simple white envelope and sealed. These smaller envelopes will be placed in a larger manila envelope and coded for school site. No individual students will be identified by name. Surveys will be seen by Terri Castleberry only, and the surveys will be kept secure during and after the study.

It is the plan of this research to add to the discussion and debate concerning character education and its integration into the public schools. Secondly, the research will benefit the teachers by aiding them in understanding more fully how they perceive the curricula they teach.

Thirdly, this research will add to the debates and discussions concerning the value of the arts in public education. Lastly, no interviews or surveys with students or teachers will take place unless this consent form has been signed.

**C. Voluntary Participation**

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty.

I understand that the interview will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken will be recorded in such a manner that participants cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to respondents/interviewees.

I understand that journals and artifacts will be analyzed in such a manner that participants cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to respondents/interviewees.

I understand that students (9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>) surveyed in this study will do so on a voluntary basis. I understand that these same students will not be identified.

I understand the research will not cover topics that could reasonably place me at risk of criminal or civil liability, cause damage to my financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

If I need further information, I understand that I may contact the following people:  
Researcher: Terri Castleberry, 2616 N. Union, Shawnee, Oklahoma 74804  
Telephone: (405) 275-0508  
Research Office: Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst,  
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078-4042

I have read and fully understand this consent form and sign it freely and voluntarily.

**SIGNATURE OF TEACHER PARTICIPANT** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

I have personally explained all elements of this form to the respondent before requesting the participant to sign.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

## Appendix F Campus Permission Form

### A. Authorization

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Terri Castleberry to perform the following treatment or procedure.

### B. Description

You are being asked by Terri Castleberry, an Oklahoma State University doctoral student who is working on her qualitative research dissertation - *Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education* - to interview a teacher from your school and survey his or her students. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the theatre arts curricula and its connection to character education by examining the perceptions of teachers and students.

The teacher will be interviewed twice, each interview lasting approximately one and one half hours. These interviews will not be scheduled during instructional time. Questions have been formulated around the needs of the study, and follow up questions will be asked in the second interview. These same teachers will be asked to keep a journal during the three to four month research period reflecting on their perceptions and observations concerning their curricula and character education. The follow up questions in the second interview will be based on the journal responses. Artifacts directly related to the study and collected by the teacher will also be included in the study. Teachers and school sites will remain confidential. Terri Castleberry will give a code name to each teacher and each site, and she will be the only one with that knowledge. These code names will be used in all discussions and written reports concerning the interviews, journals, or artifacts. Only Terri Castleberry will view original data and conduct the interview, journal, and artifact analysis. All transcripts and data will be treated as confidential materials and kept secured during and after the research study is complete.

Students (9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>) will be asked to complete a survey during the fourth month of the study. These surveys will be narrative and require approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. Questions will be general in nature concerning the students' perceptions of the theatre arts curricula. The students will not identify themselves. The surveys will be placed by the student in a simple white envelope and sealed. These smaller envelopes will be placed in a larger manila envelope and coded for school site. No individual students will be identified by name. Surveys will be seen by Terri Castleberry only, and the surveys will be kept secure during and after the study.

It is the plan of this research to add to the discussion and debate concerning character education and its integration into the public schools. Secondly, the research will benefit the teachers by aiding them in understanding more fully how they perceive the curricula they teach. Thirdly, this research will add to the debates and discussions concerning the value of the arts in public education. Lastly, no interviews or surveys with students or teachers will take place unless this consent form has been signed.

### C. Voluntary Participation

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that the school campus and its participants are free to withdraw consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty.

I understand that the interview will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken will be recorded in such a manner that participants cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to respondents/interviewees.

I understand that journals and artifacts will be analyzed in such a manner that participants cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to respondents/interviewees.

I understand that students (9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>) surveyed in this study will do so on a voluntary basis. I understand that these same students will not be identified.

I understand the research will not cover topics that could reasonably place the school district or participants at risk of criminal or civil liability, cause damage to their financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

If I need further information, I understand that I may contact the following people:  
Researcher: Terri Castleberry, 2616 N. Union, Shawnee, Oklahoma 74804  
Telephone: (405) 275-0508  
Research Office: Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst,  
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078-4042

I have read and fully understand this consent form and sign it freely and voluntarily.

**SIGNATURE OF CAMPUS REPRESENTATIVE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ **(A.M./P.M.)**

I have personally explained all elements of this form to the respondent before requesting the participant to sign.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ **(A.M./P.M.)**

**Appendix G**  
**Parental Permission Form**

**A. Authorization**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parents of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Terri Castleberry to perform the following treatment or procedure.

**B. Description**

You are being asked by Terri Castleberry, an Oklahoma State University doctoral student who is working on her qualitative research dissertation - Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education - to allow your child to complete a survey concerning your child's perceptions about the theatre arts curriculum and its benefits to character education.

Your child will be asked to complete a survey during this study. This survey will require about fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. Questions will be general in nature concerning your child's perceptions of the theatre arts curricula. Your child will not identify himself or herself. The survey will be placed by your child in a white envelope and sealed. These smaller envelopes will be placed in a larger manila envelope and coded for school site only. No individual students will be identified by name. Surveys will be seen by Terri Castleberry only, and the surveys will be kept secure during and after the study.

It is the plan of this research to add to the public discussion and debate concerning character education and its integration into the public schools. Secondly, the research will benefit the teachers by aiding them in understanding more fully how they perceive the curricula they teach. Thirdly, this research will add to the debates and discussions concerning the value of the arts in public education. Lastly, the survey will not be completed by your child unless this consent form is signed.

**C. Voluntary Participation**

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty.

I understand that my child will complete this survey on a voluntary basis. I understand that my child will not be identified.

I understand the research will not cover topics that could reasonably place my child at risk of criminal or civil liability, cause damage to their future financial standing or future employability or deal with sensitive aspects of behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

If I need further information, I understand that I may contact the following people:



Researcher: Terri Castleberry, 2616 N. Union, Shawnee, Oklahoma 74804

Telephone: (405) 275-0508

Research Office: Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst,

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078-4042

I have read and fully understand this consent form and sign it freely and voluntarily.

**SIGNATURE OF PARENT** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

I have personally explained all elements of this form to the respondent's representative (the principal) before requesting the participant to sign.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

**Appendix H**  
**Interview Questions**  
**Journal Suggestions**  
**Artifact Suggestions**

**Interview Questions**

1. How long have you taught theatre arts in Texas?
2. What theatre arts courses are you currently teaching?
3. On what aspects of the curricula do you spend the most instructional time?
4. Why do you teach theatre?
5. Describe the day to day dynamics in your classroom.
6. Some people say that fine arts courses like theatre arts should be cut from the curriculum in order to save money. What do you say?
7. What would you tell a parent whose student was contemplating enrolling in theatre arts?
8. What would you tell a student who was contemplating enrolling in theatre arts?
9. Describe the dynamics involved in mounting a production in your theatre arts program.
10. What shows have you produced that you felt were most beneficial to your students? Why?
11. What are the differences in approaching dramatic literature in a theatre arts classroom and approaching it in an English classroom?
12. What aspects of the theatre arts curricula do you see as beneficial to students? Why?
13. How do you define community?
14. How do you define respect?
15. How do you define responsibility?

**Journal Suggestions**

**I will provide you with a spiral notebook. You may copy pages and mail them to me, or you may transfer information to e-mail, or you may choose to remove the originals and mail them to me. I will provide stamped, stamped self-addressed envelopes for the mailings.**

**I would like to analyze the journal at least twice before the second interview.**

Record thoughts, observations, and ideas concerning your perceptions of the theatre arts curricula as you implement that curriculum in your classroom and/or program. Some of these responses can be very open-ended. I am interested in your day to day thoughts, but I am also interested in some structured observations and responses from you. The journal is an illustration of how you see your students interacting with the theatre arts curriculum in your classroom and/or program.

Generally, you might think about reflecting and using the following open-ended questions as a guide.

What do you see happening with your students within the curriculum?

What do these observations tell you?

What words do you hear students using when describing theatre?

What do these words tell you about the theatre arts curriculum?

What do you read that informs your perceptions about the curriculum?  
(i.e. literature, textbooks, etc.)

What thoughts do you have as you plan a lesson?

What goals do you have in mind when you plan lessons around specific dramatic literature?

Share your thoughts and ideas concerning confrontations, resolutions, and problem solving within your classroom and the curriculum.

Structured responses include the following:

1. Choose three to four students and observe their behavior during the research period. How do you see the curriculum - the practice of theatre- influencing their behavior? This influence can be positive or negative. Share specific incidents and the conclusions you drew from observing the incidents and behavior. Give the students a code instead of a name. Do not identify them.
2. Describe a successful production experience that you have had in the past year or two. Why was it successful? What contributions did the students make in producing a successful production? Be specific, but again, do not identify students by name. Give them codes.
3. Describe an unsuccessful production experience that you have had in the past year or two. Why was it unsuccessful? What contributions did the students make or not make in producing an unsuccessful production? Be specific, but again, do not identify students by name. Give them codes.

**Artifact Suggestions:**

Goals you set concerning your perceptions of the curricula and character education.

Lesson plans that reflect character traits - dramatic literature, discussions, role-playing, etc.

Student assignments that reflect character traits (performance or written). Be sure to remove any student identification.

**Appendix I**  
**Former Student Contact**

Hello, former student \_\_\_\_\_.

My name is Terri Castleberry. I understand that you are a former student of \_\_\_\_\_. He or she gave me your name and number hoping that you might be interested in participating in a study that I am conducting in order to complete my doctoral program at Oklahoma State University. My dissertation is titled, "Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education". I am requesting that members of the Texas Educational Theatre Association be participants in this study because of that organization's commitment to quality theatre arts curricula. I requested those members participating to supply me with names of former students who might be interested in sharing their thoughts concerning their involvement with theatre arts in high school. I am hoping that this research will aid the educational community in discovering another resource for character education. The study should also contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the arts and their value in the public school systems in America. The ideas of community, respect, and responsibility will be explored through your perceptions as a former student of the theatre arts curricula.

I would like to conduct a telephone interview with you in the future if you are interested in participating. What I would like to do is send you a consent form, have you sign it, and return it to me in the stamped self-addressed envelope that I will supply. The interview should last about twenty-five to thirty minutes, and it will contain questions asking about your experiences in theatre arts in high school. If you are interested in participating, please allow me to address and mail this consent form to you. Once I have received it, I will telephone you to set up a time for the interview. Please give me some ideas about the best times to call, and I will call at a time which is most convenient for you. Of course, there is no pressure for you to participate. This is strictly voluntary, and you can decide not to be involved once you receive the consent form.

Interested yes or no?

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Best times to call: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will get this consent form in the mail to you immediately.

**Appendix J**  
**Former Student Consent Form**

**A. Authorization**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Terri Castleberry to perform the following treatment or procedure.

**B. Description**

You are being asked by Terri Castleberry, an Oklahoma State University doctoral student who is working on her qualitative research dissertation - Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education- to be interviewed about your perceptions concerning the theatre arts curriculum. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the theatre arts curricula and its connection to character education by examining the perceptions of teachers and students.

You, the participant, will be interviewed once. The interview will last approximately twenty-five to thirty minutes. Questions have been formulated around the needs of the study. Your name will remain confidential. Terri Castleberry will assign you a code name, and she will be the only one with knowledge of that code name. Only Terri Castleberry will view original data and conduct the interview analysis. All transcripts of interviews will be treated as confidential materials and kept secured during and after the research study is complete. The interview will be recorded verbatim on audio tape. The recordings will also be kept secure during and after completion of the research study.

It is the plan of this research to add to the public discussion and debate concerning character education and its integration into the public schools. Secondly, the research will benefit the teachers by aiding them in understanding more fully how they perceive the curricula they teach. Thirdly, this research will add to the debates and discussions concerning the value of the arts in public education. Lastly, no interview will take place unless this consent form has been signed.

**C. Voluntary Participation**

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty.

I understand that the interview will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken will be recorded in such a manner that participants cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to respondents/interviewees.

I understand the research will not cover topics that could reasonably place me at risk of criminal or civil liability, cause damage to my financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

If I need further information, I understand that I may contact the following people:

Researcher: Terri Castleberry, 514 Barbara Jean St., Hewitt, Texas, 76643

Telephone: (254) - 420 - 3778

Research Office: Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst,

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078-4042

I have read and fully understand this consent form and sign it freely and voluntarily.

**SIGNATURE OF FORMER STUDENT** \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

I have personally explained all elements of this form to the respondent before requesting the participant to sign.

**SIGNATURE OF  
RESEARCHER** \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

**Appendix K**  
**Former Student Interview Questions**

1. How long were you involved in theatre arts?
2. Why did you choose to take theatre arts in high school?
3. What would you tell a high school student who was thinking about enrolling in theatre arts?
4. How would you describe the theatre arts classes that you took in high school?
5. Do you think you learned anything about yourself from being in theatre arts? If so, what?
6. What, if any, are the benefits of taking a theatre arts course in high school?
7. Describe a favorite production that you were involved with in high school.
8. Why was it a favorite?
9. Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from the schools to save money. What would you say to these people?

**Appendix L**  
**Student Consent Form**

**A. Authorization**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby give Terri Castleberry permission to use the answers I give on the survey concerning my theatre arts class.

**B. Description**

You are being asked by Terri Castleberry, an Oklahoma State University doctoral student who is working on her final research paper, to answer some questions describing your ideas about your theatre arts class. The paper is called "Staging Character Education: Investigating the Possible Link Between the Theatre Arts Curriculum and Character Education". The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the activities in theatre arts classes and their possible link to helping students grow in character. Your ideas as students are important to the study.

You will be given eleven questions to answer. You do not have to answer all of the questions or any of the questions. If after looking at the questions, you decide not to answer any of them, you can simply put the questions in the envelope provided, and it will be understood that you decided you did not want to participate.

This is voluntary. No one including your teachers or parents will see your answers. Terri Castleberry is the only person who will see your answers, and she will not be able to identify you because you are not going to put your name on the questions paper anywhere. If you choose to answer the questions, you will place your answers in the envelope given to you and seal it. You will not place your name or any information on the envelope. The envelope will go directly to Terri Castleberry without being opened. Terri Castleberry will read your answers and use them to support her research, but you will not be identified because she will not know your identity.

Answering the questions will take about fifteen to twenty minutes of your classroom time. There are no right or wrong answers. Terri Castleberry is interested in getting your opinions about being in theatre arts. The information that you provide for this study will help teachers and others better meet the needs of the their students as they grow into adults. This research will also help us to understand the value of the arts, including theatre arts, in our schools.

**C. Voluntary Participation**

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary. I can refuse to sign this consent form, and I can refuse to answer the questions even if I do sign this form. I understand that there is no penalty for refusing to participate. I understand that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions.

I understand that my participation in answering these questions will not affect my grades or my standing in school. I understand that my answers will be given anonymously, and Terri Castleberry will not be able to identify me. I understand that these questions will concern theatre arts only and will not cover sensitive areas of behavior like illegal conduct, drug use, sexual activity, or use of alcohol.

If I need further information, I understand that I may contact the following people:

Researcher: Terri Castleberry, 2616 N. Union, Shawnee, Oklahoma 74804

Telephone: (405) 275-0508

Research Office: Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst,  
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-4042

I have read and fully understand this consent form and sign it freely and voluntarily.

**SIGNATURE OF STUDENT** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)



I have personally explained all elements of this form to the respondent or the respondents' representatives (teacher, principal, and parents [through the principal and a consent form]) before requesting the participant to sign.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

**Appendix M  
Student Survey**

**Survey Questions**

**Directions: My name is Terri Castleberry, and I am working on my doctorate at Oklahoma State University. I am conducting a study to understand theatre arts, and I need your help. I am attempting to honestly ask questions about the value of theatre arts in the high school. Your answers are important to helping me understand how you see theatre arts. Please do not put your name on this survey. It is important that you remain anonymous. Please answer each question in your own words as completely as possible. It is important to give your honest thoughts and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. No one except me will see your answers. This is voluntary. If you choose to answer the questions, please answer them, fold the survey, and place it in the envelope provided you. Please seal the envelope, and do not put your name anywhere on it. When you are finished, please hand me the envelope. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.**

1. What theatre arts class are you currently taking?
  
2. How many years have you been in theatre arts?
  
3. What are your favorite activities in theatre arts class? Why?
  
4. If this is your first year in theatre arts, will you take it again? Why or why not?
  
5. If you have been in theatre arts for more than one year, why did you choose to enroll in it for a second, third, or even, fourth year?
  
6. What would you tell a friend who was thinking about taking theatre arts next year?

Please continue with questions on the back. Thank you.

7. Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from the schools to save money. What would you say to these people?

8. Do you have a favorite play? If so, which one? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Describe what it is like to work with your classmates when you are rehearsing a scene or a play for performance. (This can be as an actor, director, or technical person.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Did you learn anything about yourself from being in theatre arts? If so, what?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. How would you describe the theatre arts classes you have taken in high school?

**Appendix N**  
**Selected Interviews**

## Teacher A - Selected Interview Segments

### 1<sup>st</sup> Interview - February, 2001:

? - Okay. How do you define...I'm looking at as you know from the study and what I've told you is that I'm looking at the theatre arts program and the classroom as a community and wanting to see if there is a link. And that if it does develop a community, does it also develop respect and responsibility? So, how do you define community. To you, what is community?

A - Let's see - I think community is people who have shared interests and a commitment to one another. I don't know if that's a good definition, but that's been my experience here in \_\_\_\_\_. And I don't care if you're in an Ag judging contest, a basketball game, or a theatre production - you have this core of people from school people to community people who come to support, and they don't just come to watch. I'll give you an example - 7:30 the other morning, a man - he's probably in his 70's came to my door with those three video tapes on the civil war (pointing them out in the classroom). He came and said, "I had these and I thought it would help your students". And I can't tell you how many times that's happened over the years - it's happened a couple of times this year. The band director went to some great length to research for me the civil war drum, and actually bought one - right there (pointing it out in the classroom). It's great and he had to spend a lot of money, and he said, "Well, I going to buy it for the band program and someday we'll use it in a confederate show or something".

? - How wonderful!

A - Isn't that great? And the Lion's Club asked me to come and speak two weeks ago about the play because they're so supportive, and they wanted to know what are you doing this year and when can we come and watch. You know. So it's a community. They kinda adopt the kids and they're involved with their lives and they all support. There's a lady in town...first of all, one lady came to me and said you must visit *Augajem*?? Her family was in the civil war. One side fought for the South and one side fought for the North, and she has their letters.

? - Wow!

A - Uh, hum. So, I visited her. She's in her 70's. And she shared with me these fragile pieces of paper, and I just cried. She let me bring them and copy them. We gave them all to the kids, we gave them to the Lion's Club, and what was so amazing - this is a fictional play - the letters were to Sarah her great-grandmother, and our girl is Sarah. And she spoke in the letters of Turner, and Turner is this old Rebel, you know, kid in the play that's very pivotal player. It just brought it alive. In fact, I then, talked to the author at TETA and I brought him copies of the letters. And he teared up and he got cold chills, and he said, "This is amazing that these people's names came together". So, that was very special - the connections that we had. Then when I left her house, she said, "Let me sew.

I can sew. Bring me things to sew". And I've had people in the community do that often - every year so I feel very blessed that they get involved and have a stake in it, you know.

? - Do you think the kids build a community within themselves and within the cast and within the program?

A - Yes, and I'm sure you've had this experience. It's a family. This play, here (pointing to a picture on the wall), a terrible thing happened to them at zone, and they didn't go on, but the rose that's left. There were 14 kids in that production, and they brought me that card - *You Found Wildflowers*. The name of the play - we did a world premiere actually - it was a movie, a screenplay and I got the author and producer to let us do it. "You found wildflower by fate, taught us by hand, and waited for our rose to dance" (reading from the card attached to the picture on the wall). They composed that and brought me 14 roses. And we still are family to this day. *Daddy's Dyin'* over here (pointing to another picture) - there are 8 kids there that are still completely bound by that play. And these ex-students will write me. One wrote me this week tell me, "The production dates. We're all going to be there. When you come this direction, we'll be there from Tech". And they come and support one another, and as you can see, looking around the room - we try to remember them all. They have places of honor and those who have been in it four years - get a frame up and that always say, "I want to go on the wall", you know. And this is where we honor them. Since 1976, I have all-star cast members on the wall over there. And when they come to homecoming, they come down and they show their wives, "This is my name". You know. They are my family. Another thing happened this week. I got very upset. I had an old hat. I'll show it to you in a minute. That was Muff's hat in *Tom Sawyer* and this kid into his second or third year of college, but it was his hat. I found it for him, and I loaned it to a little kid in this play. Well, he was messing around backstage and somebody jerked it and tore it off. And I just cried, and I took that hat and I glued it back together. But I said, "This belongs Muff and if you ask me twenty years from now whose hat this was, I will tell you". And I can go and point to every costume and tell who it belonged to. And sometimes kids will look on the wall, and they'll say, "Let us do Sara Crew, that looks like fun". No, because it belonged to those kids, and I will never repeat a production. It belonged to them, it was special to them and they own it. They own that experience and that's just me. I'm not saying that's a good thing to do or ... there aren't merits in repeating a play, but I won't do it. It's just special to them. I feel like I'm just rambling.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Interview - May, 2001:**

? - This word is in the literature a lot of times so I'm going to use the word. The word is virtue. And do you think that theatre arts fosters any virtues and if so, what do you think those virtues are. And if you want to start with the definition of virtue, that's okay.

A - Virtue is to me, I guess, just a (unintelligible) integrity. I think that just about everything you do in theatre strives toward that. Even if you're playing a negative part in a play that's about something that is a terrible atrocity. Finding the truth for that person and being honest to the playwright and then performing it with a total commitment and

relinquishing yourself to it and that honesty. That's a virtuous thing, but I think that more than that we want kids to come away from a theatre program and not be afraid to be sensitive, compassionate people in society. I mean, I know you probably did it and I do, too. You want to make them feel something. I am so afraid for our kids who watch things like *Tom Green* and *MTV* and that "Jackass" program. Do you know that one? Oh, it's all the kids watch down here. It's horrible and the music they listen...I know that sounds like a cliché, but all of that is so desensitizing to them, and I want them to remember this...I want them to remember how powerful real human emotion can be and how wonderful and freeing it is to walk in somebody else's shoes. To see something from a different point of view. And this play...I know I've told you ... a cast of rednecks...real rednecks who flew rebel flags, in my opinion, for the wrong reasons. Boy, the journey was difficult, and every single day, we talked about tolerance. I promise you, every single rehearsal - if it wasn't me, someone else would say, "That's not a very tolerant attitude." And they would say, No ... it changed them a little bit. They at least were introduced to things that they hadn't thought about in a new way. I'm...I'm not sure...Do you feel like I'm just jumping around?

? - No, no, you're not. Trust me. I'm just listening because I don't want to lead you in any way.

A - Oh, I know, but I feel like I'm not really answering...

? - Yes, you are...because you talked about some things that you feel like they gained from it and that's what I asked you. So, yes.

A - Even Jeffery the little boy who played the slave ... I think he learned tolerance, you know. At the very beginning, it was scary to me. Kids would say, "Come over here, Slave Boy, and do this for me." And boy working through that was kinda risky, and I'd pray about it because I'd think, "Boy, I'm not wise enough to handle this thing. Show me how to do this." In the end, he was so valued, so valued. You can tell the way kids change bus seats on the bus when somebody's been accepted. All of the senior jocks on the back of the bus at the beginning on our little trips and at the end, some are in the middle sitting by the shy girl and the only Black kid in the cast is right back there in the middle of them. There's a whole psychology to bus seating, I think. (Both chuckle)

? - Maybe we should do a study. Let me ask you something...(momentarily interrupted) You said that you really believed the young Black man who was playing the slave changed or even learned some tolerance. I think that's the way you said it. Can you give some observations of behavior or words he said or something very specific that led you to think that? ... And you may not can, but if you can...

A - I'm not sure. When we first had our t-shirts ordered, we debated about what to put on them and they couldn't do a cast picture so we had to do symbols and we ended up getting the Confederate flag and the American flag with the 33 stars. And he said, "I won't wear mine." And I said, "Okay, does it offend you?" And he said, "If I go to the projects with a rebel flag on, they'll kill me." I said, "Well, let's talk a little bit about why

that's such an emotional issue." And then, ...boy, I tell you what I had some help from the community...we had some *Reader's Digest* - the video tape series on the Civil War and then we had the correspondence with the man at Dixie Depot, and we had the letters from actual Confederate soldiers and what the flag meant. And we just kinda gradually ...didn't try to make him wear the shirt or anything if he was offended by it and we just gradually talked about...Well, I'll use an example. When my daughter was young, Rainbow Bright was big and everything in her room was rainbow and we had a His Kids choir that was Rainbow Promise and the rainbow was God's promise to the World and it was a beautiful, positive thing. And then I said, the Gay community took the rainbow sign and now when my children see a rainbow on a bumper, they no longer think of it as God's promise, but they think of someone declaring their sexual preference. And it puts it in totally different context. And I said, "Is it possible that the people who had loved ones who died defending what they thought was right and defending their homeland and waving this proud banner for what it meant to them in that era feel the same way about the people who have misused that symbol today as a tool of hate. Does it mean that the symbol cannot mean the same thing for those who people who want to fly it in Georgia over the state house or whatever?" We had a lot of conversations over that, and you know, he started wearing his t-shirt. I don't know. He didn't have to because there were a few times when some of the other kids forgot theirs or didn't have it when we went to a clinic or something. So it was not a thing he had to do. I thought his...also, when the flags were stolen, he was as upset as anybody. He could have reacted differently and I think he might have earlier in the rehearsal process. But it was almost like he's part of this family and they had a mission. They wanted to tell a story and someone was trying to thwart that effort. Somebody was going against our little family so he wasn't on the outside anymore. I don't know if that is a good example. It's just what popped in my head.



## Teacher B - Selected Interview Segments

### 1<sup>st</sup> Interview - February, 2001:

? - Why do you teach it? Why do you teach theatre?

B - I teach it because I enjoy it and it puts me in touch with students that I might not be able to be in touch with if I didn't teach it.

? - Can you clarify that a little bit more. What kind of students?

B - Well, here at this school, I teach students all the way from the special ed students up to the gifted and talented, and I might have all of that whole broad spectrum in a theatre arts section. Here, it's kind of a "warm, fuzzy class", actually.

? - Explain that.

B - Okay, we have lots of students who don't really have any other class that they need to take or want to take, and so for some reason, the principal and the counselor think theatre arts is a good place to put them. So, I come in contact with a ... lots of different kinds of kids.

? - Okay, I'm going to keep probing. Why do think that the counselor and the principal think that that's a good place for them to be?

B - I think they put them in there because I think that they believe that theatre arts is a good place for kids to learn about life, to learn about responsibility, to learn to respect other student's viewpoints. It gives them an opportunity, maybe, to be exposed to a small measure of culture.

? - Okay, so this is sorta summary question. What aspects then of the curricula do you think are beneficial to the students and why?

B - The theatre curricula?

? - Uh, huh.

B - I think having the feeling of belonging ... having a feeling of knowing that your peers are appreciating what you're doing. I think the fun part of it cause I think theatre arts should be fun, and if it's not fun, if it's not something that you enjoy doing, then ...that's not good. It has to be fun. I'd do the same thing if you asked me about sports. It needs to be fun.

? - I agree and I think sometimes we lose sight of that especially when we get involved in competition.

B - I do, too. I try not to. My...well, you may be going to ask me that question. I just going to say that, you know, my philosophy of competition is the honor is in competing...not the other stuff. So...

? - Okay, this one...how do you define community and think in terms of...defining community? (bell rang in the midst and I think we lost part of the question)

B - I think community is kinda like a circle. It's everybody supporting everyone else in any given group situation. ...?? I think if the support is there, regardless of what the group is - if you're talking about a community - a town. That's one of the reasons I've stayed in this town as long as I have because I know the support is out there whenever people need it.

? - Uh, hum. Okay. What about...how do you define respect?

B - I define respect as a basically, liking yourself first and then knowing that if you like yourself, it's easy to like other people. And that you're not going to tread on their territory. You understand where their space is and that you're going to respect ... or try to respect who that person is in terms of their space, their feelings, their beliefs... whatever it is - they have going for them. Or against them.

? - Okay and responsibility.

B - Responsibility.

? - Define responsibility.

B - Taking charge, being a good decision maker, sticking with the decisions that you make, knowing that if someone out there has certain expectations of you, for example, if your Mom asks you to make your bed before you leave for school that morning, then that should be part of the responsibility that you take seriously.

? - I'm going to ask you to take those last three...those three definitions and kinda of in a summary of the interview ...how does or does your theatre arts program or the theatre arts curriculum use those or fit into those definitions?

B - Okay?

? - Did I frame that sorta right?

B - Sorta right. Within the theatre arts curriculum or spectrum or whatever you want to call what we do here, I know that we're definitely a group...that we go in that circle. We understand the circle thing and that every time... Just for example, every time ... you know, each year when we do a new one-act play that the cast and the company make-up is somewhat different because obviously people graduate. But the circle is ...it's kinda a

continuous thing ...every one within that group respects the other people. They respect who they are and what they do. They have a kinda closeness, a togetherness that you don't see everywhere, and all of them are willing to take the responsibility to contribute to that group. And if they're not, then usually they find a way out. Actually, you know for the last four years, I've just been teaching speech and theatre before then I taught...mostly I taught English classes and then I'd have one speech class and maybe, one theatre class. Some years I didn't have any theatre classes at all so we did it all after school and so it's kinda interesting ... for me that, you know you go from one section of theatre arts of about 14 kids to ... in a period of 4 years to three sections of 64 kids. And I do think part of it is because it is a class where kids can feel some measure of success. And I know that's true because I've had a lot of them tell me that, and one young man, this year - as a matter of fact really didn't want to be in there and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ (the principal) encouraged him to come into the class and he really likes it. He's doing good stuff.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Interview - May, 2001:**

? - Okay, then you said... I had asked you why you think the principal and the counselor think that the theatre is a good place for them (students) to be. And you said, "I think they put them in there because I think that they believe that theatre arts is a good place for kids to learn about life, to learn about responsibility, to learn to respect other student's viewpoints. It gives them the opportunity, maybe, to be exposed to a small measure of culture." And I wanted you to be a little more specific in how you think they learn about life, responsibility, and respecting other students' viewpoints. How theatre...

B - Okay. Let's start with other students' viewpoints and responsibility first. When I make an assignment in theatre arts class, you know whatever we're working on, it's the kids' responsibility to work with whoever they're working with to come up with whatever it is they're trying to create...whether it's a puppet or whether it's a scene or whatever it is...even if it's an individual monologue. The student has the responsibility for learning the lines, for doing some measure of research on who is the character...I think, I gave you that little hand-out that they use that has the questions that should help them down that little pathway. I think that just answering those questions on that particular assignment about who the character is ...that a lot of those things can ...you know, if you wanted to make that transition can be transposed into our own lives... in terms of who am I. The little silent movie scenes that we work on ...it's their responsibility to choose the music that they want to use for their scene, to decide what the scene is going to be, to decide what lighting they want to use and whether they want to use costumes, and then, ...Well, this is something that we did first semester, but I thought it was so neat that we decided to film them for you. So we did. And some of them said, "Can we do different scenes this time?" And I said, "Sure, I don't care." Whatever you want to do. Then it was their responsibility to choose someone from the class to be their camera person and to video their scene. And I said, "This is your deal." And they all got it done... so it was kinda neat.

? - Uh hum.

B - In terms of responsibility...

? - The other one was to learn about life.

B - To learn about life. I think that anytime that you're dealing with people on whatever level it is, whether you're in kindergarten or a pre-schooler in Sunday school class...or a pre-schooler in Sunday school class and both of them want the same toy. Ultimately, someone is going to step in and explain to them that they can both play with the same toy, but they probably can't both play with it at the same time unless there happens to be two of them, and since I'm a twin, I kinda understand that because when we could go visit, we always wanted to know where the other one was because my sister and I thought everyone should have two toys exactly alike so we could both have one. So, I think you learn about life, even when you're that little. Certainly in a high school class, you learn ... just dealing with people, different kinds of personalities, sometimes you just have to step back if they do something that makes you mad, makes you angry. Sometimes, you just have to step back and say, "Okay what would I do if I were that other person, if I were in that other person's shoes, ... I try to mention that. You know, it's one of my little mini-sermonettes. I try to mention that from time to time to the students that sometimes we have to look at whatever the situation is from the other person's perspective, and if you can do that, then I think you learn something about life because that is what life is all about. Dealing with other people and knowing how to do.

? - And you think...is some of that in the theatre curriculum, itself?

B - Oh, yes, I think so because if you're working with another person on a duet improv. or a duet acting scene, you have to get along with that person. You have to work together. That's what you have to do in life...you have to get along with other people, you have to work together,... If you don't ...even if you can't get along with other people...if you're a computer guru or whatever, and you don't care whether you get along with people, you still have to deal with them. And so you have to make some effort to know how to get along with other people, and I think we do that in theatre because there are so many things that they work together on and my expectations are that sometimes I let the kids pick the groups they are going to be in, and sometimes, I pick the groups for that reason because if I didn't, they would always want to work with the same kids, and I don't think you learn anything from that. I think you have to work with a lot of different people in order to have a total understanding of the differences in people and well... "I'm a high school kid and I really don't think I like these kids over here. But if I'm put into a group situation with them, I might change my mind." And, I've seen that happen in my classes a lot of times.

? - This was your answer when I asked you about cutting theatre from the curriculum to save money. You summed it all up by saying, "No, definitely not, there is just too much that kids can learn. I think they learn about each other. They learn to respect each other. I just think you learn a lot about people that you couldn't learn anywhere else. And it's

more about the internal person as opposed to the external." I just wanted you to explain that, to clarify that a little bit.

B- That internal, external thing? Okay. Well, of course, I feel kinda silly saying all of this to you, but your external are all those things that sorta happen on the outside, or if I look in the mirror, it's who I see looking back at me, physically speaking. And internal - the internal person - that's who we really are, and we don't necessarily always share how we're feeling on the inside. It's like, you know, when you're reading a piece of poetry and someone tells you that you need to internalize that...to me, what that means is - "Okay, take a look at these words and slurp them up and then, tell me what's the writer's intent with that. Where is that, where is the feeling, where's the emotion, where are you going to go with that?" And so when . . . I think when we're taking a look at internal - it's all of those feelings and emotions and everything that we don't always express but are there. When I taught English for a 102 years and I used to tell my kids, "You know, we're all poets because we all have feelings. Some of us can express ourselves poetically, and some of us and some of us cannot, but we are all poets." So, I think the internal thing is trying to reach out and understand and grasp where other people are coming from. And I think in a theatre situation because you are thrown into that situation with a lot of other people, that... You know, if you're taking one of my theatre arts 1 classes, there are a lot of people in that class that you've probably seen in the hall and never spoken to until you get into that class. So you're thrown into a situation where you physically and mentally and emotionally and even, spiritually sometimes where you need to reach out to those people. And that's kinda what I mean by the internal because to me it is a matter of understanding and of knowing yourself and of being able to share your feelings in order to try to understand how other people are feeling.

## Teacher C - Selected Interview Segments

### 1<sup>st</sup> Interview - February, 2001:

? - Describe the dynamics involved in mounting a production in your theatre arts program. When I talk about dynamics, what I'm really talking about is - not the steps you take so much as the relationships. What are the dynamics like?

C - You mean with the kids that work with you and so on and so forth?

? - Uh hum. The kids working together.

C - First of all, this sounds so vain and so arrogant. When I go to convention, state conventions, I always hear horror stories about how . . . And they ask me questions. They'll say, "How do you get kids to come to rehearsals, how do you get kids to . . ." And I'll hear horror stories where somebody will say, "Well, I had a kid who had a date one night and didn't show up for a performance or they didn't do a dress rehearsal". And this sounds so . . . Please . . . I hope this doesn't sound arrogant, but I don't have that problem. I can't fathom that for one thing. It's like me trying to figure out how many grains of sand are on a beach. That is how foreign it is to me. Our kids . . . I always tell the kids the first time we get together for a play, I said, "First of all, my goal is two things and this has nothing to do with the play itself, okay? My goal is for us . . . my philosophy has always been if you play, you play hard, and if you work, you work hard, and you have the wisdom to know the difference". I think it's like that other little popular phrase, and that's our philosophy going in. And I think setting up a production that way and telling em' that I want - not only do I want a good show - that's obvious, that's everybody's goal. I said, "We have an obligation as a group and that obligation is not to your mom, not to you, not to me - our obligation is to the playwright. Playwright gave us this and we have an obligation to make that playwright proud when he walks in - if he walked in and saw the play". And I think that's one of the things - when we do one-act - I guess if we're going to say it was successful - I guess that's one of the things we always do. Our obligation has never been to the judges or to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ or to the whole deal. Our obligation is when we did *Playing for Time*, when we did *Rimers*, I mean, Lanford Wilson - we're gonna make him happy. He's not going to see it, but we're going to try and make him happy. We're gonna make him feel like, "My god, I can't believe these high school kids and they actually got the thread of this play". But one of the other things that I want, that I always tell the kids is that I want you to be really almost depressed when this play is over because we've: (a) had a lot of fun; and (b) we've worked hard to accomplish. I make it very open with me, and of course, my directorial style has to come into this, too. And that just means, you gotta make them feel comfortable with what you want them to do. And not make them do anything that you wouldn't want to do yourself. And I also believe, too, and we had some problems... I don't want to get into that, but we had some problems with some of the rest of the directors in this department a lot of times. If I say a certain time, I mean a certain time. And that sometimes... trust is the big thing with me. And the kids like that. If I say 6:00, I'm gonna

try really hard to do it at 6. That doesn't mean 7. And they like that - that's part of it. I guess that's part of the dynamics is trusting one another. Because you gotta face it when you're in production . . . I always tell the kids that trust is the biggest word in theatre because the playwright's trusting that you're going to do his work like he wants, you're trusting that that actor's gonna be on time for his next cue, you're trusting that that sound person is not going to let you down when you got this, you know, and I said, "That one moment . . ." And I stop the play sometimes. I'll stop the play sometime right in the middle of dress rehearsal when there is a big moment and there is this person coming up and this music comes on right on cue, and everybody's in gear. I said, "Stop! Right there is what I mean about trust. Can you feel it in this room? Can everybody feel it in this room?" And everybody's going . . . "yeah, I feel it", and this one kid in the back's going, "I feel it." But everybody feels that trust, that's what happened, "did you feel that beautiful moment right there, everybody - that's what theatre is all about because at that one moment, everyone felt it. At that one moment, everyone felt a part of it when it was fascinating to me. And, I guess that's what you mean by dynamics - just trying to get kids to - really just trying to get the kids to do what you ask them to do and I don't have to beg them. If I have to motivate em by anything, it's just...I'm not saying that sometimes I don't get mad. I'm not saying that sometimes I don't slam my hand on the . . . I don't do that very often, but when I do, it works. And I tell em' - I'm real up front with them. If I'm short with you, it's because I'm usually mad at myself because I'm not getting what I want out of my vision because we gotta remember when we direct, it's the playwright's vision, but we have to make it come to life. And sometimes, especially when I did *Rimers*, which to me is the toughest play ever. That's my opinion - it's the toughest play. I don't know if you saw my room, but I put *Rimers of Eldritch* on the top - above the door, before I walk out of the room and there's a reason for that. Because that's the hardest play I ever directed. I said if I can direct that, I can direct anything. So, when I walk out of that room, I said, there's not anything that can beat my rear end just like that play. So I keep that as a little reminder because it is . . . I don't know . . . Have you done *Rimers*? Marion will probably tell you . . . *Rimers* is a tough . . . If you read the show, it's crazy . . . you never know where people are gonna be. It's like . . . I'm walking a dog here. It's a tough play...it's one of the toughest...it makes no sense, but it does make sense. But when you're directing it, it's frustrating. And there's a story on that, too. When I was directing that show, and this will have something to do with how kids relate to you when they see your frustration. I was so frustrated and there was a scene . . . And those poor kids, they were frozen like trees or something. I was sitting there . . . hold on and I would, I would...I would just be frustrated. I thought I did my homework and I came in. I finally said, "you guys . . ." and I wasn't mad. I said, "Guys, I apologize for taking your time. I am not prepared. I am not ready. My mind is gone. You're through, just go home." And it was pretty early in the rehearsal. And this one girl tapped me on the shoulder, and I looked back and she said, "You know, the Cistene Chapel took a while." And I looked at her, and it was just exactly what I needed and that's camaraderie and knowing . . . that's when you know that you've got a good group. They know when you hurt, and when you feel pain, and they know how to fix it. And hopefully, I, you know . . . a director can do the same. But . . . I don't know if that answers the question, but that's part of it.

? - Very much so. What shows have you produced, or show that you felt was most beneficial to your kiddos and why?

C- I think any of those . . . like I said, going back to those original plays where we gave the money away. That still to me is one of the most phenomenal things that we have ever done. The AIDS play and then, we did one where we gave it to the homeless, and we had actual homeless people who were giving us their stories, and we were making those stories into words and all the money . . . I guess the most . . . I guess religious experience I've ever had was during those things because there was a time we did . . . especially the AIDS thing . . . it was so packed, we had to . . . we did a 7:30 show and the lines were so packed up, and we were just making money hand over fist. And I decided that ever money...we were just going to pay ourselves back for, you know, what we spent on it. But we were going to give that money away. We gave it to the AIDS outreach, we gave it to, to the mission \_\_\_\_\_. We gave money to that quilt. This was like a whole process. We had people who had lost their sons through AIDS. We had Kleenex everywhere; we would cry. And a kid would come up to me and say, "God, I love that story. Can I . . . can we write something based on that story?" I said, "Go at it. (you know) Get with it." And we actually got it. And it was closure to some of these people. That's what was so neat about it. A lot of these people had not talked about this. And then, they got to see it happen...got to see these... You know, I get teary-eyed just thinking about it. But they're starting to look at this. But, anyway, I was going through this...we did this show. This is a true story. We did this show at 7:30. It was like an hour and fifteen minutes show, but there were so many people that we had to turn away cause it was in the 200 hundred seat theatre and we said, "If you'll come back at 10:15, we'll do it again." Cause I asked the kids, "Do you want to do this again? It's gonna kill you". And parents . . . we had to call parents, . . . kids are not going to be home until almost midnight. Can we do it? And the kids did it. They came back, and we almost had . . . we had almost a whole sell-out again. And that was not planned. These people just came back. And they just...that's the best thing... and here I've been in a situation. I try not to sound vain because I don't mean to do that. I'm talking about the kids and it's not about me. But you know, we've won a one-act, we've been to one-act, but I'll throw it all out for that cause that was . . . to me that's pure . . . that's the best thing we've ever done. That's my personal opinion, and if I quit today, that would still be the best experience that I've ever felt. And it was not only that...we did one on AIDS, we did one on child abuse, and we ran out of causes. We cured everything, basically, nah, I'm just kidding. But we got a lot accomplished with that. That was the best because of the research, because of the writing, because of the ...Oh, it was amazing, the whole thing, it was just perfect to me...the whole thing. Not a perfect performance, there is no such thing, But the experience.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Interview - May, 2001:**

? - Okay, to the journal and I don't have a lot of questions because it is really pretty strong, but you have you your shirt on today and I noticed it in the other classroom, too. That your motto is trust, excellence, and tradition. Can you explain what that means?



C - Well, actually trust is the biggest thing in theatre because every play relies on the trust that they're going to be in the right place at the right time. The light person trusts that you're going to be in that area that he lit, the prop people trust that the actor is going to be at the same place he has a prop and the actors got to be trusting that the prop is... That is to me has always been and we've talked about it. That word, trust, I think is the biggest word. If you've got one word to theatre, it's trust. A story goes with that. In *Musical Comedy Murders of 1940*, ...I tell this story a lot...the scene where she's like mummified, they've taped her and she falls out of (I don't know if you know the show), but she falls out of the closet. Somebody is supposed to catch her and you know where this is going. We mummified this girl and she walked ...she falls out of the closet, and we had talked about the fact that you have got to catch this girl... And there was this girl that supposed to catch this other girl coming out. Well, we had done it and then one night, she fell and hit her head. And it was bad. It sounded horrible. And that's when we had this big discussion and this girl who let her drop, felt guilty, but more importantly she knew that she had lost the trust of a fellow performer because we were ...honestly...I talked to the girl who fell out, and I said, "Will you ever trust her again?" And she said, "No". And that's ...there is the problem. I always use this analogy - a broken vase is still broken, you know?. And there's a life tile. It goes back ...we talked about this. If your boyfriend cheats on you, do you ever trust them? And they said, "No". You really don't...the relationship is broken. I mean you can put glue on that vase, but .... Is it still broken? Yes. To this day she's graduated, she's a theatre major, she's going and getting her doctorate...I don't even know where ... she went to U.T. then went to U.T.A. in Arlington. When we talk, she always says, "That is the worst experience of my life because we had been talking so much about trust and here I was a senior and I just let her down. I just looked another way. I wasn't thinking." And that's when you know that trust is the most important element and that's why it's first.

? - Okay.

C - Tradition because we have a standard of excellence that we keep...excellence, I'm sorry...excellence is just a standard of excellence. We...we...every show we get...I'm sick of...I think that the thing I tell the kids is that I have a problem in the fact that I'm always...my biggest fear is failure. That's my biggest fear...always has been all my life. And I think a lot of kids feel that way. Not that we've had what I call an unsuccessful play, yet, but I always think this is going to be it, this is going to be the one. And I'm a bear to live with about a week before the show. Like we said earlier, it always works out, but it's like you have this fear and it keeps you up at night. I mean I get up at 4 in the morning, and I'm thinking about this next scene, and how can I get this scene to work and so forth. It's just ... the standard of excellence is so high really that it's scary because we set that up a long time ago. A lot of blood, sweat, and tears have come into this and it's tough. I always think it's tougher to maintain that it is to start because the expectations are so high that people put you on a different scale. It's scary to me. And tradition is basically based on ...we have so many traditions, so many little things. I mean there is a little thing that we do, fun things, like the kids always traditionally...this has been going on for years. The first show, the first opening night, everyone dresses up, everybody wears their best clothes. It's been going on every year for the last...well, ever since...We always go

to lunch at the same place, we always have circle, we always...there is a deal. There is a story that goes on...it's a prop...it was the ugliest prop I've ever seen. It looked like it was a half-mule and half-dog so we said it was a muledog.

? - (laughs).

C - So it's like half-mule and half-dog with a mule face and a dog body. And we're going like that's the ugliest thing I've ever seen and we laughed about it. Now, the guy whose like.. the person in the department that's really kinda the...he's not really the dumbest ...he's just like the guy that everybody likes, but he's just always in the wrong place at the wrong time and it's kinda a nice tradition in the fact that they like it. It's an honor, you know. So, we give them this muledog and it's been going on for like twenty years. And also on Saturday night, and this is something we've always done and this is where tradition comes in...on Saturday night, we have alumni come just specifically. This is just really bizarre, but they say that word somewhere in the context of the show and it is something that the kids decide. And they say, Okay, we're going to say the word, muledog, at some point. So it could be a line like in *How to Succeed* instead of saying "I was a chipmunk, you say I was a muledog". And it's just real subliminal and the only ones that will catch it are the graduates. And they'll just crack up. People in the audience are going like what the heck? It's little things like that and what I say tradition...there's our tradition as far as wearing the clothes and stuff, but there's some kid traditions that I think it is important for the kids to have. Is it a discipline problem, is it professional to do that? Probably not, but the kids need those traditions, I think, to keep it strong. And it keeps them interested.

## Teacher D - Selected Interviews

### 1<sup>st</sup> Interview - February, 2001:

? - What do you think a theatre educator is?

D - Priest, nurse, mother, father, father confessor, mother confessor, nurse, best friend, worst enemy, task master, authoritarian, caretaker, caregiver...we're all things because it is the human element in touch with the human spirit. And it goes beyond just printed facts on the page. Theatre is life. It is an imitation of life, yes, but it's our way of expressing ourselves and extending ourselves beyond just the norm - the hum drum. We rise above to greater glory so to speak. I know that probably sounds hokey, but to me it raises the spirituality of the human being above the average, above even almost to the ethereal, to the universal. How's that? (Laughs) I really am very passionate about this. (Continues to laugh) You ask me for a minute, I'll give you five so please forgive me.

? - No, that's fine. No, that's fine. Describe to me the day to day dynamics in your classroom. I mean in terms of what you do, but also the dynamics between you and the kids and the kids and each other and...

D - Each class is different...

? - We're specifically talking about theatre, too.

D - Yes, I've got those two classes. My morning class has a greater number of performers in it, fewer techies. We work very hard, or I work very hard right at the beginning of the school year or the semester; and if we incorporate new students that come in the semester, you know, the spring or whatever, to create la familial because it is so vitally important for these people to understand that the single person is important, but the individual is not greater than the whole. And to use a cliché, but it is so true - we're only as strong as our weakest link. And so, my greatest desire is to reinforce every student where they're at and try to build up their confidence in themselves - in their ability to express themselves to each other, in their ability to express themselves in front of each other. Learning better communication skills, better leadership skills, or even, better team skills because not everybody is going to be a leader. We also ... the kids interact with each other, too. I am a disciplinarian. I'm a firm believer that students are only as good as the management or their directors. An attitude the director has is picked up and magnified by the students, multi - you know, many times over because you've got more of them than you do the director. And so, I really work on good audience etiquette, critique, awareness. We usually begin with the acting aspect - improvisation and stuff, early, but before we even do that, we do reinforcement, positive reinforcement games-activities that get the students comfortable with each other because they are looking for the good things in each other, even if it's a superficial as, "Hey, those are cool glass frames that you have". You'd be amazed at how many students are either not comfortable or used to giving compliments and/or receiving them. In order to be an effective critic and be able to

accept criticism, you've got to start at those very basic levels of esteem building and reinforcement. Now, I understand that the world out there doesn't care a flip about a kid's esteem. By that time, they're expected...you should be ...bah, bah, bah. But I start all of these students right at ground zero, and then, they grow and I grow with them based on where they are. We learn about each other, and they learn about me, too. As we progress from improvisation, we go into acting, characterizations, all the basics - staging, stage directions, stage areas. We do voice, we work with voice, we do storytelling - learning about vocal dynamics and those kinds of things. And then from there, we move into theatre history- the beginnings of theatre. I love teaching ancient Greek theatre just like I love teaching classical rhetoric in public speaking. And I think when I come back in another life, I will come back as a historian. But we go from there and then, we move into technical theatre. We move into costume design. I try to vary it because I do have the same students coming back- a lot of times - year after year, and so for their benefit like advanced students this year, are doing - the ones that are doing Greek theatre are doing that, and then there's a small group that are doing medieval theatre. They just progress as the years go... And then once again, like last year we did costume design, and I had students that literally designed. ... They got in pairs and from scratch- from old things from Goodwill or whatever, they made complete costumes from their hats to the shoes with all the accessories. And it was so exciting because I had things from restoration; I had things from medieval. I had things from Greek. I had things from the Romantic era. They did it. I put boys and girls together, and the boys were as good as the girls were. It was exciting. Another year we did set design. What we did with that is I taught them how to build a small frame like a frame for a flat, and then, they covered it and they made a painting canvas. And then I taught them how to grid it. They got a picture, they drew it, and I even, taught them how to mix colors from basic colors. I said you only have these colors you can use, but you need these colors. So, I taught them how to mix their colors, and we had some of the most amazingly wonderful designs that these kids -??? And I let them take them home if they wanted to. I've got some kids who still have their designs on the walls. Another time we reconstructed flats. I taught them how to reconstruct actual flats and recover them because we have to repair our UIL set with great regularity. Last year another thing that we did is when those new little 1 x stools or platforms were allowed by UIL, every one of my students built one. Some of them, bless their hearts, we went from the very talented to barely could get a nail in the wood kinda thing. But, it was an experience for all of them and they all successfully did for better or worse, and as frustrated as some of them were...some of the boys had as much trouble as the girls - they still were able to do it. Now some of them were a little off kilter. Then, I took the four best ones and we use them in our UIL set now. They painted them and everything. So we do that periodically - it just changes out year after year. We've done masks. We're going to do that again this year. They used the chicken wire frame originally and then they had designs and covered them with paper mache and painted them and used all kinds of neat things like yarn or mop heads, you know, the material off that, or shells or whatever to create these character faces. They had to be designed so you could wear them on stage. They had to be constructed well. We entered a couple of those into a regional festival one time. Both of those students got superiors. I was very proud of them. What else have we done? Oh, props. I have them build picture frames and then, they could either draw their own picture or come up with one out of a magazine and then...But they

constructed a frame - something that could be used on the stage. It had to look like a real ornamental picture frame from a distance. And that's some of the things that we've worked on.

? - In summarizing that - all of those different things - what kinds of things do you think kids gain beyond or as a by-product of actually completing a project or working on a project?

D - Well, the obvious is self-esteem. That 's the first thing that comes. They learn things about themselves. So many students have a tendency to think that because their kids, they can't do anything. Or, because they're not in athletics, they're worthless. Or because they're not really smart and don't make 100's in math and science that they're stupid. Theatre class with all of the things that we offer them gives kids who've always felt just a little strange, a place to belong. I had a student tell me that four years ago. She's moved. They moved out of state, but she said to me, "You know all my life (and she said this when she was a freshman) all my life I never fit in. Ever. And I always thought it was me - something terribly wrong with me until I came to theatre class. I have friends now; I'm accepted. I belong. I found out there's nothing wrong with me. I just had to find my place." And so that's part of what theatre does because there are a lot of children out there who are so incredibly creative and because of their creativity, they see the world in a different way from Joe Blow. Their perceptions are not always acceptable to status quo. As a result, the children go through life feeling like they're wrong when actually they're not wrong at all. They're so incredibly right, but they are right according to their own drummer.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview - May, 2001:

? - I think I want you to be more specific about what a positive reinforcement exercise is.

D - Okay. One of the exercises that I use specifically is - it's a name game kind of thing. It's a way to get the students and me to remember each other's names. To know each other's names because a lot of students come to class and they don't know each other. And I don't know them either. So, what they do is we get in a circle in desks or on the floor - whichever is more comfortable. Lot of times kids will sit on the floor and I'll sit in a chair because of my back. Exercise Explanation: *And I'll be a part of the circle, and I'll usually start with a student on my left, and the instructions are this: I want you to look at the person on your left. Look them in the eye and with a positive facial expression and with a positive tone to your voice, I want you to say their name. If you don't know their name, ask for it, and then, they will give it to you. Then you say their name and say one positive thing about that person - something about the way they look. If you don't know them personally, you might comment positively about something you noticed in the classroom, this period. Or, you might say something nice about them cosmetically, superficially - one positive thing. Don't do anything to negate that. Then, I tell the person who is being spoken to when you have received the positive reinforcement, say, "Thank you." And then the person to my left goes to the next person, and each person says one positive thing to every single person in the room including me. When they've done that,*

*then we go to the one on their left and they do it. Everybody gets an opportunity around the circle to say one positive thing to everybody and to receive all of those positive reinforcements from everybody including the teacher, and it is amazing what that does. Kids will go out even if it's the fact that their hair looks nice, they like the color of their hair, cool. Maybe, they never thought their hair was a nice color, they were always ashamed of it, and all of a sudden, all of these kids are saying nice things. Or maybe about the way they dress - the way they dress is important to them and that just reinforces that - you know that kind of stuff.*

? - You led me to another question? Why...would you do that in an English class?

D - Yeah, I think you should. I think that the la familial - the moral community shouldn't exist just in theatre - it should exist in every single room in this building across this state throughout this country. The moral community should not just be amongst the creative types. Moral community is moral community. I mean we expect them to be part of the moral community out there in the great big world, don't we? Why should it just be theatre kids?

? - Ok.

D - You know you just did something great. You just brought up a point to me that I am going to incorporate in the department. I am a part of the English department, and I am going to bring that up.

? - Well, Lickona is certainly not writing about theatre. He is writing about school as a whole from elementary all the way up.

D - I think it is wonderful.

? - We talked about the intensity - I used the word intensity. You used the word condensed when we were talking about mounting a production and that becomes a little bit more... And I said, "Is intensity a good word?" And you said, "I do. I think they understand time schedules, deadlines, teamwork, essentially and personal responsibility, tolerance, understanding..." And I ... just one more time - I know you're going stop asking me this, ( D giggles) but can you give me specific examples of how you think they've gained tolerance? Or not even specific examples, but what aspects of that helped them to gain tolerance - of the curriculum - of mounting the productions?

D - Good example. A wonderful young lady from our one-act play, a junior this year - been with - this is her third year. She'll be with me next year. She's the president of the International Thespian Society starting next year. She's very intelligent and doesn't suffer fools gladly, and as a result, over the years has had to learn to accept that not everyone works at her level. And not everyone even cares about working at her level. They aren't as motivated as she is, they aren't as intensely involved in a quality product as she is. And that you just gotta pretty much accept people where they're at and get the most out of them where they're at. She's still very young and she's still learning that, but this year in particular as my stage manager, she had several...well, my leading lady didn't learn her

lines, didn't learn her lines, finally stepped down. And in the 12<sup>th</sup> hour, I had to replace her, and we go alternate at district so I was ... I thought we did pretty good under the circumstances. That was 16 days rehearsal with my new leading lady. And lines, you know. Anyway, my stage manager had a real problem with that, but the girl that stepped down didn't leave the group which absolutely delighted me. Didn't leave in tears, didn't leave in, you know, (makes a growling noise). She stayed with the group. She said, "I owe it." And she took an alternate position. And she became the substitute for my stage manager when she couldn't be there and stepped in for everybody else when she needed to which showed great character and quality on that young lady's part. And was actually was an example to this stage manager who has had some difficulty with tolerance because she discovered that this person wasn't a worthless piece of dog meat who didn't deserve to live because she couldn't learn her lines. (? - laughs aloud) She was just at her level of incompetence - it was too much for her at that time. But she didn't blame everybody else. She took the responsibility in spite of her family. Her family was telling her, "Quit, quit, how dare that director do that you? Bah, bah, bah...Rah, rah arah..." And this girl winded up when we did public performance was my house manager. Family still gave her a hard time about it, telling her "Oh, you'll just take anything they put a name to...dah, dah, dah..." And I needed a house manager, and she did all these different things and stayed with the team. And I told her, "I said, you can work for me any time." Great character. Great heart. I was so proud of her, and I bragged about her. I bragged about her. I'm bragging about her now even though, I can't say her name. I'm so proud of that girl. She rose above everything including her environment. So, there's an example of one student teaching another student and learning to work together in spite of adversity.

## Teacher E - Selected Interview Segments

### 1<sup>st</sup> Interview - February, 2001:

? - Okay. This is kinda totally off the subject and I may eventually come back to this one, but a lot of people maybe not as much now as they were a few years ago, but they do still talk about it. Well, we need to save money, we need to cut the budget, we don't need to give the schools so much money. So what can we cut? Well, let's cut fine arts and let's start with theatre. How does that make you feel or how do you respond to that? What would you say to those people?

E - Uh, the . . . I think as theatre people . . . we didn't do our job early on and promote ourselves. Music people are very good at that. They always have been. And, you know, music, I think maybe more universal or worldly accepted especially in the Southwest than say theatre is or even choir. I also think you have a lot of theatre, I mean a lot band stuff, music stuff, choir stuff in churches. I think that's where a lot of our people get started. You know, you're in church choir, you're not in the church drama group when they're little kids. Elementary, you know in elementary, you always went to music time, you didn't go to drama time so I think that's where we have missed the boat. We can come up here and spend all summer doing something with our kids, but you know, band is up here two weeks extra before school starts and they're getting compensated for that and you could go ask for compensation for the two weeks you wanted to work on something, and with your kids. I think it would be a hard battle. So I think that's where we've kinda missed the boat, and I don't know if we can regain that necessarily at this point in trying to put our best foot forward and set out there. . . I think a lot of schools especially with the UIL and doing other stuff, you get a lot of mus, you get a lot of theatre exposure now and I know growing up at a small school that's how I got the exposure because of the competition aspect of the theatre and getting to do it. So, I think we just . . . I think every single thing . . . something I've really tried to do since I've been at this school is for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year is try to do every single positive thing you can possibly do that's positive and you've got to promote it and you gotta promote yourself and anything your kids do that's great and anything you've done for the community you have to really promote, you know. Like we invite all the 5<sup>th</sup> graders to come to our Fall musical and so, this year . . . we don't charge them an admission charge . . . so this year we charged them a canned good to come in and we donated to that to a local shelter and so we plastered that all over the place we could possibly put it. We also do a fund. . . one of our major fund raisers is a k-6<sup>th</sup> drama day where we accept . . . we charge \$35 for the kids to come and we have four hours. Our advanced students teach it. They rotate through and it's incredible. We get about 75 to a 100 kids every year we've done it. And it's a great fund raiser for us, but it's a great promoter and not only are you getting to make money that way, but you're doing something really positive for the community that you can expose so we've done a lot of publicity, told the newspapers, and you know, we got all sorts of publicity shots in the newspaper, and I think that's something positive. As long as you're doing stuff for the community, we've got to keep promoting that. Band is at the football games every Friday



night, choirs are always singing at something, and it's not so easy for us to put together a piece of theatre and take it somewhere and perform it necessarily so I think anything we can do like that we have to do and really publicize it. I think as theatre people and as ego people, sometimes I think we sorta stand around and hope that someone notices how great we are and I think we have to learn to toot our own horns ever now and then.

? - What do you think it does for your advanced kids to work with those k-6<sup>th</sup> kids?

E - Oh, it's incredible. Number one I think it's the best form of birth control ever invented. (Chuckles) Second of all, you know kids really think - kids that are in theatre programs want to be teachers, and a lot of them want to be theatre teachers cause in the theatre profession - what else are you gonna do? You know if you're not one in the fifty that make it, you're gonna end up teaching probably, if and a lot of them love doing theatre in high school and they love that whole setting sorta like I did, and they want to be teachers and working with kids is not that easy. That gives them the whole idea and their short little forty minute classes that they teach with them and they're just exhausted after they've done two or three sessions, you know, and they're just, "How do you do this all day long?" I think that's a great opportunity to do that also. But also, it gives them something to look forward to...now here are all these little bitty kids who are looking up to them and admiring them and thinking they're wonderful. It's a great thing for them to see that, and I think, maybe, if that kid is going to go out and party that week-end or something that Saturday night after they've done the drama day, they can say, you know, if you go and mess up and are killed in a car wreck or whatever...you know, look at all these little people who admire you and make you feel good and think you're great. You're disappointing them. I think it also does a lot for the self-esteem of the students who are involved in it. And we do this thing in theatre 2 classes, before we bring 5<sup>th</sup> graders into the musical, we go out and do classroom visits. They just do a little thing on poster board and talk about audience etiquette. And the difference between

? - How neat!

E- television and theatre and film and they talk a little bit about the play that the kids are going to come see and tell them a little bit about the plot so that they're not just lost. And it's one of the most ... you know, it's five to ten minutes and it the most exhilarating, fun, exciting thing...most of them after four years of theatre, the most funnest thing they ever done is gone to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes and talked to them. You know, you have all these little eyes staring at you, how can you not feel good about what you're doing and work at it.

? - How neat.

E - So,

? - That's a neat thing. I didn't know you did that. Okay, this is sorta along the same lines, but if a parent came to you and said, "My child is thinking about taking theatre arts. Why should they?" What would you tell them?

E - I think it's great because you get them in the ... #1 - it helps bring them out of their little shell because it's a very safe environment that we create. I think all theatre teachers do that...they try to create this trusting atmosphere that no matter what people do other people are gonna accept that and be okay with it. And, you know, they have to be...not that we necessarily do this anymore, but they have to be an ice cream cone melting (chuckle) or something, you know. And I think they have to create this atmosphere where it's safe for them to flop on the floor and kids are going, "Wow, that was great - he really did melt or something, you know." And so I think #1 creating that safe environment and getting those . . . getting the kids to perform in that sorta atmosphere is, I think, #1. I think it's a tremendous - the greatest thing about is the self-confidence, self-esteem builder that it does. Probably the most unadvertized thing we do is everything that major business are looking for in college graduates is cooperative learning, you know, problem-solving. When we were doing auditions for the show we're working on now, we sent them off in groups during auditions to cast - we would them in little groups and they would have to go and solve the whole... you know, go put this scene together and let's see what you come up with. Well, you know they're working together, it's group learning, they're cooperating with others, they're problem solving, they're, you know...higher level thinking skills trying to figure out how would you, you know, how do you become this scene or make it work and that sorta thing. And I think that's something we don't . . . the greatest thing we probably do with kids now. We don't speak about that and it's . . . we don't get that out and we don't realize we're even doing it, I think, a lot of times.

? - Until we stop and somebody asks us and we think about.

E - Yeah. So you have to do . . . that's what it's all about. Also, I think, it's one of the greatest things . . . I think kids become grounded in school and sometimes, especially with everything that kids deal with now and it just gets worse every year with what they're having to deal with, it gives them some place to go to and escape. And you know, we don't necessarily have a lot of homework and if you do have homework, it's fun, usually, or it's something you're gonna want to work on because you want to impress the other people and I think we force kids to work a lot harder because they're going to have be produced in front of their peers and show it. It's not turning in some blank sheet of homework paper because they were just too tired to do it. So, I think those are...that's important, too - an important part of it is that they have a break from their normal everyday high school routine, and it's just a form of, you know, escaping and getting to do something and then because it's so fun and they're so much other stuff, it's ...they're learning all those other qualities we talked about previously.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Interview - May, 2001:**

? - Okay. Then I asked you what would you say to a student who came to you with the same question, "Why should I take this, why should I enroll?" "I tell them because it's a lot of fun. And they would learn a lot about themselves and they would...they would learn a lot about themselves and get to have a great time and you know, just see if they

enjoyed theatre." What do they learn and how do they learn it? If I was this kid and I said, "Okay, what am I going to learn about myself and how is that going to happen?"

E - Uhm. I would just tell you that we're going to play a lot of theatre exercises, do a lot of games, a lot of exploration - the first exercise you're going to do is make an entire collage of magazine articles - of pictures and stuff about yourself and you're going to talk about yourself in front of everybody. And it's not going to have to be things that you don't want people to know about, but great things that you've done that you want people to know about you. Things you like, favorite colors. And I think we don't ...how often do we sit down and say, "My favorite color is blue. I like Big Red gum. My car is a 1980 Buick that was my brother's..." And we don't ever sit down and discover that about ourselves. It is just something we take for granted like breathing. I think that's important that you go back and look especially when kids are talking about good things they've done - a lot of times we're only dealing with what's the pressure on us right now and usually the negative pressure. Very seldom do we focus on what's great and wonderful around us, and I think that...when they have to sit there and do a collage about themselves, they do. So, I'll talk about that. I'll talk about how we'll do a lot of plays and we'll do character studies where you'll portray how you think this person feels about this situation. It just gives the student an opportunity to discover that and to pretend...it's all the games we played when we were little and you know, we were the train engineer and we ran over our little Tonka truck and crushed it because it was a train wreck or whatever. (? Laughs). Or when little girls are Cinderella or they're having their tea party or whatever. I think that's all ...I think kids do that or little kids do that because we're learning who we are, and we're figuring out...we're playing all those roles to see what we want to be. We're developing who we are in that very vital playtime.

? - We talked a great deal the last time about auditions and the fact that you weren't looking just for talent but that you were looking at other qualities.

E - Yes.

? - In fact, I said, "You're looking at other aspects of their character and their personality and what they're learning." And you said, "Exactly." Do you see these in their personalities develop during their high school theatre career? I realize that some of them come in with it, but do you see some of them actually develop those traits?

E - Yes. Take for example student A3 or whatever - leave them nameless. She came in her freshman year and was the most bitter, angry at the world, chip on my shoulder person I think I have ever dealt with. She wanted to do theatre, she was here to stay, and there was no way to get rid of her. She was one of those that walk in the door and you're like - "You're...I don't want to have to deal with you." This is her 3<sup>rd</sup> year with us...that was her freshman year and this is her 3<sup>rd</sup> year in the program. I was watching her, actually, yesterday in class thinking how much she had changed. She was sitting at a table with a group of not necessarily popular kids, but she was sitting there talking having some, you know, decent conversation about life and everything that went on. And I remember her freshman year, she wore black. She tried to dress different. Anything that

she could do that the administration might curl their nose up about or might call her in about, she would try to do just for the attention, I guess. Or, you know whatever it might be, she just wanted to be different. She didn't want to be like everybody else. They had recently moved to this area where people are basically very affluent, and she didn't want to be a prep. She didn't want to be this...she was different and that's what she wanted to be. There have been many of times we have said, "You can't talk to the administration like that. You can't do that. You can't draw attention. You're now a part of this play. You're now a part of this production, or You're in a theatre class and you're representing the theatre department and those administrators do nothing but support us and give us great stuff so I think..." I don't think that's the only thing that has changed. I think she's grown up and decided she doesn't have to be different. It is okay if she is who she wants to be or who she is. But, I can't help but think if she wasn't in theatre or hadn't done some course work with us or been in our plays, she would have no reason to not come in and get into trouble. Maybe, hopefully, she's getting the attention she needs from us and our program and the other students and the way we want them to behave. She's not having to go out and create that all on her own because she's not in a class. She's just in a regular reading, writing, arithmetic class that everybody else takes and stuff.

? - Okay. You use this term a lot. And we were talking about what aspects of the theatre arts curriculum you see as beneficial to students and why and you were talking about the humanities and theatre history and everything and you said, "You just have to expand their minds..." What does that mean when you use it? When you say expand their minds? What are you meaning, actually?

E - Give them a different experience than what they deal with in their little bubble of high school and the city that they live in. You know I think I learned more and became more understanding about the world when I traveled abroad and did some stuff. And you know a lot of kids will never have that opportunity so you've got to get them as close to that as you possibly can with sharing stories with them, showing them stories and telling them and helping them and doing what you can to talk about these places. So maybe, one day they will have the chance to go to Germany. Well, if we talked about Brecht and all the things he did in Germany, maybe that's ... that gives them a reason to go there and makes them more interested in what they're doing. You know, the last play we just did was set in Italy, and we talked all about ---Genoa and you know all these places in Italy. It has this great ring to it, and I heard the kids talking about it would be great. We need to just go there on a field trip to see if we could some places he (the character in the play) went to and stuff. So, it makes it relevant to them. It makes them interested in knowing what else is out in the world. And I think that's what...it wasn't until I was twenty or twenty-one that I went to overseas, and...

? - Try 43...

E - So, I was sitting there in England and Ireland and I was sitting there thinking if this could have been fifty years earlier, these people could have been my enemies, and I could have been over here fighting and killing them and maiming them, and now, we're all sitting around having a great time at a pub and talking about things. Another trip I took

was I went to the Grand Canyon by myself, and I stayed in a youth hostel in El Paso. And this guy from Italy was there, and we were just chatting about things. He couldn't talk very good English. He couldn't understand it very well, and I was trying to draw out pictures and explain things to him, but we were talking about fairy tales and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and he'd never heard of it. So I started telling the story and he said, "Oh", and said whatever it was in Italian. It was amazing. That's what I think...otherwise, he would just be some guy on the street, some foreigner getting in our way here. When you get to know people and you understand what they're situation is, that's important. I think expanding kids' minds and letting them know what's there. That is what I mean by that. It's just let know about the rest of the world, letting them know what's in the world. I think only through knowledge do we have understanding. Understanding...when we don't have knowledge, or we don't understand other people, when we don't explore that, that's when we're stupid and dumb and live in our little worlds and don't understand anything else that's going on in the world.

**Appendix O**  
**Journal/Artifacts**

## Teacher A – Selected Journal Entries

Thursday, March 1

How does the young man playing the slave retain his dignity while stepping into the skin of this downtrodden man? How do I reach the “red-necks” in my cast who actually fly confederate flags in their bedrooms? Can any of us grow to understand through this experience the delicate balance between “Southern pride”, heritage, and self-determinism and the oppression and hatred it represents to so many others? This experience will be bigger than all of us. The question is: Will we change?

Monday, March 5

I have a core of wonderfully talented, committed actors who are in love with this story. I have an equal number of young actors who I’m convinced auditioned so they can make-out backstage. I have to teach them how important each of them is. Yes – it matters when the water girl breaks character in the battlescene. I see her. She can’t break the spell and remind the audience it’s just a high school play.

Monday, April 2

This play is a living, breathing thing. This cast is a family and each performance we’re confronted by the fact that it could be our last. It’s like a family reunion where you memorize the faces of those who may not make another one. It sounds melodramatic but it’s true.

Thursday, April 19

I start rehearsal with a company meeting. We remember why we do theatre, talk about what we’ve learned about ourselves, each other, our history... I talk about

losing...it can happen – I don't think it will – but it can. We will face that possibility with poise and dignity. We will behave like ladies and gentlemen - no matter what.

Saturday, April 21

Then the results ... We are announced as Alternate. An audible gasp across the auditorium and an uncomfortable pause – I walk to the stage – my kids join me and give me flowers. They are so beautiful – Heads up – shirts & ties, dresses & heels – They're a class act.

### **Teacher A – Artifacts**

One Act Play Production Handbook (selected portions)

#### **5. YOU AND THE DIRECTOR**

Remember that the director is on your side. Your success is the director's obligation. If you have problems or questions, ask the director at the appropriate time. ...

...Respect the director. If you must be asked to be quiet or to end horseplay, you may be sent home from rehearsal. Students may be dismissed from the company at the discretion of the director.

#### **6. YOU AND THEM**

Every member of the company is equally important to the success of the production. There are no "stars" or "prima donnas". Cooperation is essential.

... Give your best at each rehearsal and expect the best from those around you. Work up to your full capacity, rather than "walking through a rehearsal", so that everyone knows what to expect.



The company is only as strong as its weakest link. Make sure that you have lines off and all costumes and props on schedule.

### Teacher B – Selected Journal Entries

Because I am such an “up-front”, no surprises type of person – over the years I have had an extremely limited number of confrontations within the classroom. Each one I have had – I tried to deal with in an equitable manner – based on my classroom rule – the seven letter word respect.

Respect is my classroom rule because I believe if you respect yourself and others that everything else falls into line. All of my students know that I respect them as individuals but do not necessarily agree with everything they do. I do place a great deal of responsibility on my theatre students. For example: I tell my props crew what we need for the production; then it is their responsibility to take care of props. My light techie does the lights for shows; then I make suggestions for improvement if necessary. The sound techie does the same. My stage manager figures out all of the traffic patterns for back stage and on stage. ... Basically I am an observer/suggestion-maker. The students make all of the decisions. Each crew person has a specific responsibility which he or she is expected to do.

Theatre arts definitely impacts students’ understanding and practice of respect and responsibility. Another example of this is when we travel, my students know that they must leave the dressing room and the activity bus clean, and they always do. These theatre students even say “thank you”, “please”, “yes sir”, etc. Any time students can take a task and run with it – then it certainly teaches responsibility and respect. The rewards of doing a job well always gets a positive response and that enhances self-esteem.

I try to make Theatre Arts a “warm-fuzzy” class as much as possible while emphasizing that effective performances require concentration, creativity, and hard work.

Last spring we did the *The Miracle Worker* for the OAP competition. First of all, it is a very challenging show for young actors; therefore we did lots of research for the show including the actual people, the time period, sign language. This show also requires many levels of emotion, and that presented a real challenge to the students. Two weeks before district one of the actors who was disgruntled because of the casting of the show decided to quit. We simply did some shifting and moved an alternate into a role and continued to rehearse. The company became a united, tight-knit group after recovering from the initial shock of the actor who quit. The show was outstanding and received praise from everyone who saw it. The students who were in this company managed to overcome an unexpected obstacle, achieve success, and have fun too. Great senior leadership created a unified group.

## Teacher C – Selected Journal Entries

Sat. Feb. 24

Dear Journal,

I have always been a believer that sooner or later persistence pays off and I preach this to my students every so often. “Sometimes”, I tell them, “You work and work and work. You take baby steps and then move to larger strides and you think that nobody sees the results of your struggles except you”. I know that this must be a frustrating thing for students in theatre who audition for every show from their freshman year through to their senior year only to end up not seeing their name on the call board cast list. They never give up, they do crew, they wait in the wings for the opportunity that always seems to elude them...

We auditioned *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying* and today was the final callback audition. I am pleased to announce that a senior who seemed to be overlooked for so many auditions was chosen as one of the leading characters. I didn't see his face when I posted the cast list because I usually post it near a growing group of wishful auditioners and get away as fast as I can, but I bet the aura of his smile was felt a long way away. His persistence paid off!!!!!!

On a side note... The two things I despise as a theatre teacher are (1) auditions (because I know I am about to reject a student... and (2) losing seniors to graduation.

Thursday, March 1

I am a strong believer in “intrinsic motivation” and have found that my best students are those that do their acting scenes simply for the joy and love of the art. I know that I have a true artist when he/she is more interested in how to improve his/her skills than to what grade I attach to the scene. I always say, “The doing should be the reward.”

Friday, March 2

On a side note... I love the quote “Theatre is a safe place to do unsafe things.” I think it was Jean Paul Shandley (spelling?) who said this, and I really live by it. I used it today when a female student who is a very shy, sweet natured, compassionate sociocentric who seems to hide in the shadows portrayed a role that totally went against her personality. She could have easily played the softer less-spoken ingenue in the scene, but she took the part that went against type. No, she really didn’t hit the mark with the character, but she chose the “unsafe” route and she grew as an actor.

### Teacher C – Artifacts

#### Theatre Arts II Course Information

##### Classroom Rules:

1. Follow all directions (written or oral) **the first time** they are given.
2. Be punctual and prepared for class with all supplies and assignments.
3. Display respect for yourself, others, and the work space.
4. Practice appropriate audience etiquette.

Student Journal Entry – February 15

My feelings toward acting have changed some because I feel like I have grown in certain areas. I discovered a little bit of the difficult acting that I don’t like. But even though I didn’t like it at times, it provided me both a challenge and insight into the

people/actors around me. I feel like I have learned so much about my classmates as people. That is the best part about acting in my opinion. Learning the hopes and fears of the people around you – and then discovering how truly similar we all are.

### Teacher D – Selected Journal Entries

Improv [improvisation] is one of the first activities we work with in my theatre classes. The poor girl could barely speak in front of the class. She had no noticeable ability as far as acting went – I actually felt sorry for her. What she did have was tenacity. She did every assignment without excuses – except to express self-depreciation. I wasn't sure that she would stay in class after the first semester, in spite of the fact that she received A's every six weeks. Then at the end of the fall semester, she said she was going to continue with the class. I began to notice a difference in her performances. She spoke with more self-confidence and began taking risks – taking on tasks that challenged her, not just in my class, but in other activities as well. She joined the golf team and got involved in Lincoln-Douglas debate. She acknowledged minimal competence in both of these activities, but tried them anyway because she wanted to learn how to do them. I find this attitude courageous.

Sixth period is full of students who are not actors/actors. ...I really did not enjoy the class very much at first because they behaved like undisciplined ruffians. ... I took the challenge, however, and began using discipline (theatre-style) on the students. We did a lot of positive re-inforcement activities and group theatre games to get them used to the idea of working as a team. When they came into the initially, they didn't have a CLUE!! After about six weeks we started doing improv – which most of them resisted and then scenes, which was a total failure! You would think that after 15 years of teaching I would have already come across a class like this – but this was my first. I began to question myself as a teacher. After beating myself up – I stepped back

– got realistic and decided that if I wanted to reach these kids, I’d have to stop trying to fit square pegs in a round hole. So – we began doing more “hands on” activities, doing tech type activities like set design and costuming. This was much more successful and the “personality” of the classroom lightened up quite a bit.



## Teacher E – Selected Journal Entries

2/28

Casting last batch of Shakespeare directing scene. Everyone has to be cast. I explained that usually we get one person we want and one we don't. One student director cast both of the most unpopular kids. She knew it would be difficult, but I was proud of her. She took on a challenge and made lots of people happy. Her scene turned out relatively great as well.

On this trip from hell, we took the students to several small quaint places to eat. One was the \_\_\_\_\_ Restaurant where the waitresses still have their hair stacked to Jesus and chew gum and stick pencils in their hair after taking the order. I gently reminded them of their manners before entering and "yes maam," etc would be in order. If they ordered bacon, but got sausage, they were to eat it or just leave it – no complaints. Each table was paying separately and I asked the waitress to add 20% gratuity on each bill. The kids decided it wasn't enough and gathered an additional \$12 up. They had a blast and thanked us for going to such a cool place. These are memories that will last a lifetime – teaching the big city children how to behave in the country.

After Regionals, we had done a fantastic performance and the audience was great. Standing ovations, lots of response, and best we could have done. The kids were flying high and on top of the world. Being familiar with the contest situation – I reminded them that no matter what decision was made about the contest outcome,

they must keep this feeling and memory about the show. One student said – we don't care about winning or if the judge liked us or not – those people out there loved us! It was an incredible “break-through” moment of success for me.

### **Teacher E – Selected Artifacts**

Student responses to contest show experience:

For four months of my life I lived and breathed that show, and the people in it. They showed me a facet of life I had never experienced; a facet I was totally unprepared for. What they showed me was that it is possible for a group of people to be so dedicated to something that they begin to share a collective mind. We began to think and act as one. In this way, we were closer to each other than any other person in our life. ... The company taught me more about myself that I had ever known. We forged a passion for the art in ourselves and in each other. As individuals and as one body and mind, we were able to reach up and touch the stars.

I just want to thank you guys again...this play made me become more responsible, have more respect, work harder, become a better actor and see through the eyes of a director. Thanks! See you next year!

You have not just taught us lessons in theatre either but life lessons also, things that we can always have with us.

My experience in this grueling five months of rehearsals and competitions was far better. I was beginning to understand the meaning of hard work, I learned to take

risks and got better because of them even when they weren't the best decisions, and I got to know people who taught me the meaning of trust and loyalty on and off stage. I went through a transformation that popped my safe, sheltered bubble and opened my eyes to all the life theatre embodies.

**Appendix P**  
**Selected Student Surveys**

**Appendix M  
Student Survey**

**Survey Questions**

**Directions:** My name is Terri Castleberry, and I am working on my doctorate at Oklahoma State University. I am conducting a study to understand theatre arts, and I need your help. I am attempting to honestly ask questions about the value of theatre arts in the high school. Your answers are important to helping me understand how you see theatre arts. Please do not put your name on this survey. It is important that you remain anonymous. Please answer each question in your own words as completely as possible. It is important to give your honest thoughts and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. No one except me will see your answers. This is voluntary. If you choose to answer the questions, please answer them, fold the survey, and place it in the envelope provided you. Please seal the envelope, and do not put your name anywhere on it. When you are finished, please hand me the envelope. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

**1. What theatre arts class are you currently taking?**

Theatre Arts 1 (examples of answers from four Theatre Arts 1 Surveys are included here)  
Each answer is grouped together and the same person speaks in the same space (1, 2, 3, or 4) under each question.

**2. How many years have you been in theatre arts?**

One

**3. What are your favorite activities in theatre arts class? Why?**

Doing nothing at all, so I don't have to do stupid things.

Group projects because it is fun to work off each other.

I like the group acting because no matter if you have a scrip or your improvising, there are people working together to present a story or idea.

When we don't do anything because I don't like how our teacher does things.

**4. If this is your first year in theatre arts, will you take it again? Why or why not?**

No, I don't feel comfortable here.

I would take it again if I had the opportunity.

Yes, I love performing and being in the spotlight. \_\_\_\_\_ [teacher] also makes everything that much more enjoyable.

No, I am graduating, but I wouldn't take it again because of the reasons above.

**5. If you have been in theatre arts for more than one year, why did you choose to enroll in it for a second, third, or even, fourth year?**

**6. What would you tell a friend who was thinking about taking theatre arts next year?**

You won't see me there

That they should because it is really fun and it is a good experience.

I would definitely tell them to go for it. Theatre arts opens so many new doors. When your in the classroom, on stage, you can be anything. You are somebody completely different. Besides, this class is a blast.

I would tell a friend to take it only if \_\_\_\_\_ [teacher] was retiring.

- 7. Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from the schools to save money. What would you say to these people?**

Do what you want, it's not like I get to see or use the money.

I think it should be kept because it is beneficial to the students in so many different ways.

Theatre arts is a very good program. Through the year, in this class, I've noticed that being in this class has helped many people come out of their shells and open up. Some aren't so shy, some are more confident. Not all students can be athletes in or order to open up and become confident, but all students deserve the chance to be. Theatre arts does this.

More power to you!!!

- 8. Do you have a favorite play? If so, which one? Why?**

No, I feel sick when I watch one & dead when I have to be in one.

Much Ado About Nothing because I love the characters and the plot.

I have many plays I like. There isn't just one.

NO

- 9. Describe what it is like to work with your classmates when you are rehearsing a scene or a play for performance. (This can be as an actor, director, or technical person.)**

I talk to myself until I'm told just to act dumb & not serious in any way.

It is fun to work with each other because everyone gets along pretty well and it feels like we are like a family.

As in sports, it is a team effort. Its very rewardful to work hard and then see everything come together. Everyone has a job and when its all done, it is awesome to have people laughing or crying or whatever you are trying to do.

It is fun, but I have never really taken it seriously, so I guess I don't really know.

- 10. Did you learn anything about yourself from being in theatre arts? If so, what?**

Yes, I feel like I'm more mature when it comes to activities that only humiliate you.

I learned that I can do things that I never would have even dreamed of before.

Yes, you learn who you really are. In most schools, you never act like who you really are, you who everyone else wants you to be. In many cases in theater arts, you learn who you want to be by being that person or being who you don't want to be.

I have learned that I can't get along with hard-headed teachers.

- 11. How would you describe the theatre arts classes you have taken in high school?**

We played shirades a lot & acted out skits on stage.

They are so much fun because we are allowed to act anyway we please or in any character and we can work off each other and just have fun. This is one of the only classes that does not the pressure of a lot of homework or tests.

Rewarding, fun, and irreplaceable.

In my theatre arts class, my teacher only liked the few people that were in her one act play and the musical. She had her favorites and didn't like anybody else. She was also very grumpy most of the time, so I guess I didn't like it too much.

**Appendix M  
Student Survey**

**Survey Questions**

**Directions:** My name is Terri Castleberry, and I am working on my doctorate at Oklahoma State University. I am conducting a study to understand theatre arts, and I need your help. I am attempting to honestly ask questions about the value of theatre arts in the high school. Your answers are important to helping me understand how you see theatre arts. Please do not put your name on this survey. It is important that you remain anonymous. Please answer each question in your own words as completely as possible. It is important to give your honest thoughts and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers. No one except me will see your answers. This is voluntary. If you choose to answer the questions, please answer them, fold the survey, and place it in the envelope provided you. Please seal the envelope, and do not put your name anywhere on it. When you are finished, please hand me the envelope. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

**1. What theatre arts class are you currently taking?**

OAP (One Act Play) 3 years

Theatre Arts II

Theatre Arts IV

Theatre Arts III & Tech Theatre II

Theatre Arts III & Tech Theatre I

Technical Theatre IV

(Answers are given in order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 as the years of experience are given above.)

**2. How many years have you been in theatre arts?**

1 – Theatre Arts 3 OAP

2 years

four years

5 years

three

8 years

(Those who answered above four years were involved in middle school or community programs.)

**3. What are your favorite activities in theatre arts class? Why?**

Impromptu scenes, lip syncs because they let you use your imagination & display your creativity. I love doing anything spontaneous.

I enjoy doing duets and group scenes because it gives me an opportunity to work with other people and their acting skills.



I absolutely love improv because it makes you think on your feet, and I love working with other actors because of the family it gives you.

Improvisations. It gives me a chance to express myself.

Improv, monologues. I like improvisations because I think they allow for the most creativity and open the door for clever thought. I enjoy working on monologues because I like finding the thought process behind characters.

I like to participate in everything because all aspects of theatre are fun.

**4. If this is your first year in theatre arts, will you take it again? Why or why not?**

Yes – next year I'll be in Theatre Arts II because it helps me with characterizing my character in OAP – I learned lots of “little” things about acting that I did know before taking it.

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**5. If you have been in theatre arts for more than one year, why did you choose to enroll in it for a second, third, or even, fourth year?**

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I enjoyed it my first year because it seemed to help me open up and not be as shy and of course because it is a lot of fun.

It gave me a chance to open myself up to others, and discover who I really was. It gave me an opportunity to be in front of people without being nervous, and has made me a stronger person.

Because I love it. It gives me a chance to have a release from the world. I can become someone else for a little bit or build a set or focus lights. Whatever makes me happy that day.

I feel most confident when I am in a theatre class. I find theatre causes me to think and be more imaginative than any other class in high school. Also, it is fun to see yourself and then people around you grow as actors and to take risks.

B/c I love it and it gives something to do; if I weren't busy w/theatre, I might choose a path that's not very morally supported. I might've taken drugs or something b/c w/out the support I get from the theatre guys here at school, I believe I would be more susceptible to peer pressure.

**6. What would you tell a friend who was thinking about taking theatre arts next year?**

Go For It!!! I love theatre & OAP. It is demanding yet fulfilling. It is hard work yet fun.

That is was a very enjoyable class and that as long as you did everything you were told it was fairly easy.

I believe that it is an opportunity no one should pass up. It teaches you so much about life and people.

Hell yeah, go for it. It'll change your life.

Take theatre! You will learn you have talents that you thought you could never possess. You will become more confident and learn to think on your feet, two things that will help you in everyday life.

“Go for it, you will have a blast!”

**7. Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from the schools to save money. What would you say to these people?**

NO!!!! Through theatre students learn more about themselves & find abilities that they never imagined they had w/in themselves. They learn teamwork & sacrifice. Many valuable lifelong lessons are instilled.

I don't feel it should be removed because it lets students express themselves without being judged. In academic classes you cannot be as free spoken as you can be in theatre. I feel that if they would take the class away it would limit the students greatly.

I do not think that theatre should be removed. It is just as important sports because it teaches you comradery, communication, and skills that are essential for the real world.

Umm... it wouldn't be appropriate what I would say to them. It would be like putting me out on the curb. Some people are good at sports, or science or read a lot of literature, I act, I create new worlds, that's my thing.

I would tell these people to sit in on a theatre class one day. If they can walk out of that classroom and say that they did not learn anything, then cut the program. My guess is, these people will give the theatre department even more funds.

Why don't you remove football, that would save a ton of money. (actually I love football, but I think saying that would get my point across the best.)

**8. Do you have a favorite play? If so, which one? Why?**

Confederate Letters b/c we put it on this year & should have made it to state. It covered so much morally in just 40 min. It had a really impactful meaning & meant a lot to our cast/crew.

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I have many favorite plays, but I really enjoy “Ordinary People.” It is dramatic and brings to life so many points which people forget exist to others. It shows survival and stamina.

Paganini cuz it's thinker play. After you watch it you just sit there for a minute in awe of what it's saying. Also I was in it and it had all new meaning for me. Plus we won state with it.

As of this moment, my favorite play is Paganini, however, I am extremely fickle. I enjoy Paganini because the playwright has written a play that allows actors to take risks and make bold choices. Also, the play is like a maze with many trapdoors and secret panels, the actor must take the right path.

No, b/c they're all best in their own way, I do however have several favorite movies including “The Usual Suspects” at the top of my list.

**9. Describe what it is like to work with your classmates when you are rehearsing a scene or a play for performance. (This can be as an actor, director, or technical person.)**

It is a mixture of lots of things... fun/hard work/bonding/satisfying in the end.

It is very enjoyable. Some people may think that it would be scary, but the truth is, is they want to see you do well. They are very understanding and that's what makes it a positive experience.

Over the past four years, certain people become essential to you when doing a play. When you work with your peers and friends you can rely on them to assist you anytime and you never have to worry about being bad because they help you improve.

They're no longer your classmates, they become a family. I know it sounds corny, but it's true. You become so close to them that it's literally painful when the production or even year is over.

I am very lucky in the fact that I am surrounded by some of the most talented actors in the state. Working with my classmates, I am constantly learning new things and discovering more about acting that any one book or person could teach me about.

It's indescribable; the feeling I get is wonderful, but no words could actually help anyone understand who hasn't experienced it themselves.

**10. Did you learn anything about yourself from being in theatre arts? If so, what?**

Yes – I found skills that I never knew I contained. I think my character development of Ma Havard in the OAP is largely b/c of theatre arts I.

I learned that I was not as shy as I thought I was. I also learned that I have great potential to take theatre further in life.

Absolutely, I have learned that there are limits and boundaries to who I am and what I'd do, and theatre has helped me cross some of my lines for the better.

Yeah, I'm good at something, and I found the emotional part of myself, before I was afraid to cry or show any weakness because I was afraid of getting hurt, but now I can really feel like myself.

I learned that I can not be a turtle and stay in my protective shell all day long. If I want to make a difference, I have to step out of my comfort zone and take risks.

Yes, I learned that I'm good at problem solving (I never dreamed that possible) and multitasking; I also learned some things that I believe will help to better prepare me for life, like working w/people you don't particularly care and they mutually share these feelings, but you work together & get along & put aside your differences anyway.

**11. How would you describe the theatre arts classes you have taken in high school?**

I learned a lot while thoroughly enjoying myself. There were well worth taking & I plan on taking another one next year.

Fun!! – they can be nerve racking at times but at some point and time everything can. I learned a lot and it was an excellent learning experience. The teachers were excellent and I got to meet a huge variety of students. That's one thing I enjoyed the most, theatre attracts a diverse amount of people and personalities and it is great to be part of that!

They have been essential to my survival. Without Theatre I would be hardly as involved as I am because I would not have had the courage I have gained through my theatre experiences.

An amazing experience I'll never forget.

My theatre classes have been havens for creative thought, hard-work, and surprising occurrences. I have seen the meek take the stage with a vigor I did not see in them and the most experienced shy away from a scene. I have not only learned about theatre, but about people. Theatre has taught me more than I have learned any all of my other high school courses combined.

They are wonderful, I learned all kinds of building skills and cool things for sewing.

## **Appendix Q**

### **Former Student Interviews**

## Former student Interview A1

?- How long were you involved in theatre arts?

A1 - I was involved in theatre arts from close to birth because my mother is a theatre arts almost from birth. My mom was a theatre arts teacher in school and church. And I majored in it in college... so probably 18 years.

? -Why did you choose to take theatre arts in high school?

A1 - It was the one field that I felt that I personally could excel in.

? - What would you tell a high school student who was thinking about enrolling in theatre arts?

A1 - Do it! Absolutely!

? - Why?

A1 - More than making you want to be a movie star or a famous person...it teaches you to appreciate lit. It helps encourage you to be more comfortable in front of a crowd. It helps with speech problems...dialect. It spawns creativity in other areas, I think, because I know so many other people who began as actors who are now costume designers. It's an open door into the arts.

? - How would you describe the theatre arts classes or theatre arts program that you were involved with in high school?

A1 - I would describe it as mostly built around competition...one-act play. It was the competitive part of it that got otherwise uninterested people involved because they liked to travel and compete, to win medals and go to state.

? - Why do you think they enjoyed the competition so much?

A1 - It's the coming together of different school and being passionate about your play, loving your part and being willing to work for another to chance to do it again. No one wanted to see their character put to death.

? - Do you think that the competition had the potential of being a harmful thing?

A1 - Yes, because when I got to college, I realized that theatre wasn't meant to be competitive.

? - What did you think it meant?

A1 - Theatre is a vessel for...I always thought of myself as a tour guide taking the audience to different places and new circumstances.

? - Did you think that was important?

A1 - Yes.

? - Why?

A1 - Because every good play should have a message behind it that an audience will take home and ponder later. Something they can keep in their pockets...opening them up to new ideas about racism ... a peep into funny or serious situations that they can apply to their own lives.

? - Does that idea translate to the actor?

A1 - Yes.

?- Do you think you learned anything about yourself from being in theatre arts? If so, what?

A1 - For one, I realized that it was my personal ...not just my physical being, but my emotional and mental being were valuable. As I took on a part, it was partly me and no one else could play the part exactly as I did. So I felt like a unique tool, a painter's brush. I stopped trying to be like everybody else and started to appreciate my own uniqueness.

? - What, if any, are the benefits of taking theatre arts in high school?

A1 - For one, it is a fun class unlike math. It encourages creative thinking. Spontaneity, it is an opportunity for those non-athletes to excel. ...it is a good place for people who don't know how to express themselves to learn how to express themselves.

? - Describe a favorite production that you were involved with in high school.

A1 - Would have to have been...*The Diary of Anne Frank*...I played Anne. I kept a journal during the whole production...a diary of my own. We had to do so much research, and I had to read so much about Anne that I couldn't help and the rest of the cast couldn't help but feel compassion for those who went through the holocaust. The whole cast was moved by the story and we desired to move the audience because of it.

? - Do you think you took any one specific thing away from that show?

A1 - The main line is eternal optimism. "I still believe in spite of everything that people are really good at heart". It made me have an optimistic outlook...to have courage to hope that things will always get better.

? - Some people say that theatre arts should be taken out of the schools to save money. What would say to these people?

A1 - I would say that you better get ready to get rid football and band and every other extra-curricular activity because to some people, some students... it is something that we can't bare to sacrifice.

? - What is it about it that makes you think people would stand up for it like that?

A1 - Well, for living in a town where football is basically almost god, our town is equally excited about UIL one-act play. Because I believe people want their children to understand and value theatre because it teachers them things they can't learn in sports or band maybe.

? - What things does it teach?

A1 - It's an open door into the arts. Theatre encompasses every other aspect of the arts... design, lighting, costumes, literature. So many parts that can be translated into the work force...reading, speech in front of others. It also...the most important thing that I think theatre teaches is...I don't know how to word..."What's in your pocket" theory. Good productions teach life lessons that you can't teach with a list. You experience it ... you get into the experience of the person in the play and it becomes heart knowledge and heart knowledge doesn't fade. Proof is in our movies and the influence they have on our society just the way a school play can change the whole atmosphere of a school.

? - Can you give an example of play changing the atmosphere at a school?

A1 - My mother directed *Confederate Letters* this last year, and I went to several rehearsals. The school and the parents seemed to bond together. Looks at racism....opened some eyes to show us that we are kinda stuck there in some ways. The school seemed to rally around that play and I would say that \_\_\_\_\_, Texas. You can't distinguish between white and black kids because Mom does plays like this. It made our town feel good because we embraced each other. Our teams are very conscious of that and proud to have the different color people that we do.

? - Anything you wish to add?

A1 - No

? - Thank you.



### **Former Student Interview - B1**

? - How long were you involved in theatre arts?

B1 - All four years.

? - Why did you choose to take theatre arts?

B1 - I saw performances when I was younger - thought it was neat and wanted to do that.

? - Why did you stay in theatre arts?

B1 - It was fun!

? - Why was it fun?

B1 - It was a chance to explore a different way of thinking - figure out somebody else's thinking and project into their views - different way of walking in somebody else's shoes. I gained confidence - learned teamwork - a production takes a lot of that. I've been on a few really good teams, but every one of the production teams was good.

? - Why?

B1 - Lot of it had to do with the director. We shared a goal - all wanted a good show. In the professional world, everyone competes for the raises, the promotions, etc. In shows, everyone wants a good show - focus on one common goal.

? - What would you tell a high school student who was thinking about enrolling in theatre arts?

B1 - Do It!! Teamwork, a chance to explore the creative element. It opened up a different side of me. In the fifth grade, I had an English teacher who discouraged me from reading, thinking - I hated it. Through theatre, my passion came back and I realized I could do it. It was a different way to get into the literature - lot of freedom - no multiple choice test. You might get screamed at, but theatre wasn't graded in the same way - opportunity to experience and try - non-threatening way to experiment - fits the way I like to think.

? - How would you describe the theatre arts courses that you took in high school?

B1 - There was no course then. It was all extra-curricular.

? - What kept you doing it above and beyond the school day?

B1 - It was fun.

? - Do you think you learned anything about yourself from being in theatre arts? If so, what?

B1 - Absolutely! I learned about myself! Lots of different things.

? - What?

B1 - If you want to, you can set a goal to try and work to achieve that. I saw that happen several times through theatre. I learned to be creative - I could perform in front of an audience.

? - What, if any, are the benefits of taking a theatre arts course in high school - being involved in theatre?

B1 - Benefits? Confidence. The exposure to literature - the teamwork - exposure to working in a team. Exposure to diversity - different opinions, viewpoints - modern interpretation of a Shakespeare play - the different ways people think.

? - Describe a favorite production that you were involved with in high school.

B1 - Probably Shenandoah, a musical we did one summer.

? - Why was it a favorite?

B1 - It was a two week production - it was fast, a musical which was fun. Good characters who were well cast. My role fit me. It was fun.

? - Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from the schools to save money. What would you say to these people?

B1 - Evidently, they weren't in it. Looking at the extremes of theatre arts and every organization has extremes which gives a bad reputation to the whole - that's probably the concern of those who say that. Teamwork - the greatest teams I have been a part of have been shows. It makes me a better team member on the other teams even now in the professional world. I know what a good team feels like and how it should work. Those who aren't good team members haven't been on a good team. A good show equals a good team.

? - What does a good team feel like?

B1 - You all do more than you can. Everyone is contributing - there are suggestions from all. No one is more important than anyone else. A collaborative effort equals everyone does better.

### **Former Student Interview B2**

? How long were you involved in theatre arts?

B2 - Three years - 10, 11, 12.

? Why:

B2 - It was something to do because I had stopped playing basketball.

? - Why did you stay in theatre arts?

B2 - I enjoyed it. I fell in love with it.

? - What did you fall in love with?

B2 - I fell in love with the competition, the speaking, the being on stage.

? - What about being on stage made you fall in love with it?

B2 - It was the being able to become a character - to get into someone else's shoes and present that to an audience... to get that feeling across to them.

? - What would you tell a high school student who was thinking about enrolling in theatre arts?

B2 - I would tell them to keep an open mind. That it is okay to be nervous if you are. It is a place to express yourself - a form of expression - interpretation. No one will think you are wrong. There is not a wrong answer.

? How would you describe the theatre arts classes that you took in high school?

B2 - When I was in school, there was no theatre in school. It was all extra-curricular. We did the plays on our time - developed the musical in the fall, the one-act in the spring. It was a tight knit family - we worked at being a unit - crew, actors - interdependent on each other. Internalization flowed in such an amount of time - it started to come naturally. We wanted to be there.

? - Why did you want to be there so badly?

B2 - It was something I enjoyed - looking back on it- theatre and speech are the two things I have taken from high school. It helped me in the university - it helped me not to be afraid in front of others. It helped me in meeting new people. It helped with competitiveness. Basketball was gone, and I needed to compete.

? Why needed to compete?

B2 - It's in my genes somewhere.

? Do you think you learned anything about yourself from being in theatre arts? If so, what?

B2 - It gave me a sense of independence. I could take a situation and even though, they were fictional characters ... imaginary shoes/situations...it gave me the ability to think for myself ... to sorta see things from others' points of view. It gave me confidence about myself. I could take a situation ... think through a situation ... even at a social or professional level and decide - how am I going to present my point.

? - How do you think acting helped you to look at a situation like that?

B2 - Using lots of internalization. See a character in the play with you. You both have to know where the other person is coming from ... take the time to see where the other person is coming from... helps you take the time to see where the other person is coming from. It takes an effort and I probably wouldn't have thought of that without theatre. Eventually, I would have gotten it, but not as quickly as I did.

? - What, if any, are the benefits of taking a theatre arts course in high school?

B2 - Becoming a more well-rounded student - the different playwrights - the liberal arts.

Different than in any other classes. You have a time to express yourself - to act wacky. It is a wonderful and healthy outlet. You act wacky and crazy and have an excuse for doing it.

? - Describe a favorite production that you were involved with in high school.

B2 - That would be one-act play during my senior year - *The Trojan Women*. I played Andromache. We were a close knit cast and crew - we really worked hard. We made it to area. The production was wonderful - we did it twice after we didn't advance - it was very dear to all our hearts.

? - Did you take anything from the production away for yourself?

B2 - My particular character gained a sense of what it was like to lose a child - the sense of being a woman - the strength of those women - how they carried through with all that tragedy. There were lots of girls, maybe six boys ... good people.

? - Why was it a favorite?

B2 - I loved doing it. It was pretty deep and I liked it.

? - Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from the schools to save money. What would you say to these people?

B2 - They have probably never been involved in the program. I don't see how any other activity can be as beneficial - I mean football, etc. Children can express their views - In theatre - you are a vocal voice - able to express how you feel. What more can you ask for to send these kids out than to be able to express themselves. In the university or the work force, they need to be able to speak their minds.

? - Why does theatre help them to speak their minds?

B2 - The world is political and if you can express yourself, you will advance more than those who can't. Theatre shows you how to work and be dedicated - how to express yourself on paper, or to another person. There is not another activity, which is as beneficial - it gives students an outlet where they are safe to be a little crazy - to be part of a group of children who enjoy theatre. It's healthy for them.

? - Could you say that it is in a sense - a community?

B2 - Yes, it's a community where you're willing to accept others - open minded people.

? - Do you have anything to add?

B2 - Not at this time.

## **Former Student Interview C1**

? - How long were you involved in theatre arts?

C1 - I started when I was 13 years old and through acting and film, I was involved until I was 23. About ten years. All four years in high school.

? - Why did you choose to take theatre arts in high school?

C1 - I found it very therapeutic - a creative outlet. I could get rid of my problems - it affected my life. I could vent.

? - How did this venting work?

C1 - Identify with characters - in acting, I could identify with the characters. They could rage. I wasn't allowed to...I mean, I couldn't rage at my parents, but I could do it in a role.

? - What would you tell a high school student who was thinking about enrolling in theatre arts?

C1 - I would encourage them to do so - especially if they are trying to find their interests. Some of them might not have an idea what interests them so try it - stick it out for a year - try the technical side or acting...

? - Would you say it provides an opportunity for exploration?

C1 - Yes, exploration.

? How would you describe the theatre arts courses you took in high school?

C1 - We focused on performance - separate technical classes. Some theatre workshop atmosphere - rehearse, perform - it was essential to get feedback from peers and teacher - to learn there are no bad choices just better choices. We learned what makes a scene work and to take criticism from our peers.

? - How did that work - taking criticism from peers?

C1 - From the beginning rules were established that required us to be positive - nothing negative.

? - Do you think you learned anything about yourself from being in theatre arts? If so, what?

C1 - Yes, I discovered what kind of personality I have. I'm a nurturing person - I need family and friends. I'm not as ambitious as others - it helped me to realize that about myself and made it easier to retire (from my acting career). I learned how to be more introspective and empathetic. I learned to observe and analyze - to look at something from more than one angle. People - watching their little quirks and conjecturing all types of reasons for why they do what they do. To look at all angles and the multitude of motivations that people and characters have - different from each other. It helps to be more empathetic and it helps you to make better choices - have more options that work for the scene.

? - Does the acting process you are describing have anything to do with how you look at people in the real world?

C1 - Art imitates life - If I can understand it in the script - then hopefully, I can handle it when people have those feelings in real life. It goes back to being introspective - to get out of knee jerk reactions.

? - How did theatre help you to this?

C1 - The acting process, but also partly intuitive. I think it harder to teach if it is not intuitive. I mean you feed them (students) the options and then the light goes on for them and they know what questions to ask. For example, when I was student teaching, I would show transparencies of pictures from wars and poverty - copies of weathered faces and have the students write down their observations - try to get them to imagine the story behind it - what are the questions, what is she thinking, feeling, etc.?

? - What, if any, are the benefits of taking a theatre arts course in high school?

C1 - For me the benefits are more affective - being introspective - figuring out why I feel the way I do - how others feel. It makes me feel more well-rounded - especially at an age when I was searching.

? - Describe a favorite production that you were involved with in high school?

C1 - UIL production of *After the Fall* - the ensemble cast was stressed in our department - no one star - every one had something to contribute - we worked as a team. We gave everything we had for the production and each other. We were close. This show was the hardest we ever worked, yet, we enjoyed it the most. We

worked hard because we loved it. It was a conscious choice. We knew when to laugh and when to joke and when to down to brass tacks again.

? - Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from the schools to save money. What would you say to these people?

C1 - I think they would be short-changing the emotional well-being of their children. Lots of confusing stuff is going on and teens need creative outlets. We can't remember - I can't remember what it was like - they need the outlet. Some of them might abuse it if they consider it a fluff class, but if they use it, they might learn about themselves.



## **Former Student Interview - D1**

? - How long were you involved in theatre arts?

D1 - Four in high school and one in middle school.

? - Why did you choose to take theatre arts in high school?

D1 - I was chosen as stage manager for a one-act in junior high.

? - Why did you choose to take it for four years?

D1 - The people. I felt I fit in. It built my self confidence.

? - What would you tell a high school student who was considering enrolling in theatre arts?

D1 - It is good for building self-confidence and motivation. You don't have to be popular. You fit in. You can be yourself. Theatre helps you realize that you're just as good as everyone else.

? - Why motivation?

D1 - I used to be real shy, but theatre helped. It helps with dealing with lots of people your own age. It helps you realize that you can do things you didn't think you could do. Once in play in front of the school - it was called an ABC production where there were lots of different skits and lots of people. But people started dropping out because of grades, etc. I ended up playing 10 different parts and I said, "I can't do this". And D said, "Yes, you can do this!" And, "I did it!" Now I work for Blue Cross Blue Shield. I just taught training sessions to people I never knew before. It widened my circle of friends.

? - How would you describe the theatre arts classes that you took in high school?

D1 - Well, we learned lots of different cultures in theatre arts. We built sets and props. We learned about different kinds of music and sound effects. We painted and we learned acting. We did it all.

? - Do you think you learned anything about yourself from being in theatre arts?

D1 - Well, I grew up in an abusive family and I learned to open up to people. I learned that other people had problems, and we could share and talk with each other. It helped me have the self-confidence to share.

? - What if any are the benefits of taking a theatre arts course in high school?

D1 Well, you gain self-confidence being out in front of people that you don't know. It also helps with memorization skills.

? - Describe a favorite production that you were involved with in high school.

D1 - It was the ABC production. I'm Indian and I got to play an Indian. It was my first time to act and I got to wear a costume. It was exciting. Being behind the scenes during one-act was also one of my favorite times.

? - Why was it a favorite?

D1 - I pushed myself farther than I ever had before. I met high expectations by doing something that I didn't think I could do.

?- Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from schools to save money. What would you say to these people?

D1 - No. Lower class kids get help. They don't always have the money for cheerleading - they don't have to be popular to be in theatre. In theatre arts you can do anything from props to set building to acting and there is no cost to you. Kids enjoy it because they can be themselves and there isn't as much competition. Well, in auditions, there is competition - you're competing with those in theatre arts, but you're also excited for the other person.

?- How come you could be excited for the other person even if you weren't cast?

D1 Well, it depended on the personality of the actor and the character if you were cast. I was chosen to be stage manager because it is lots of responsibility and I was dependable. It fit my personality - it was being yourself. When I was in middle school, the reading teacher did a play. It was a real popular thing to do-everyone wanted to be stage manager. Everybody signed up for stage manager. I thought, "I won't get it because I'm not popular". But I got it. The teacher even had me take control of the auditions. She would send me to practice if her child was sick and tell me, "You take care of it". It made me feel important.

## Former Student Interview E1

? – How long were you involved in theatre arts?

E1 – Formal? 10<sup>th</sup> grade in high school. It was a system with 9<sup>th</sup> grade in junior high. I stayed in all 3 years.

? – Why did you take theatre arts?

E1 – I always wanted to do drama so it was obvious for me to take it. I had done ballet, jazz and tap. I was a dance student, and I had participated in choir and performances related to those so I was considered a ham. It was a natural elective for me. I had visions of stardom. I used to want to do *Saturday Night Live*, and I loved musical theatre. I needed a place for all of that energy and it all came together with drama.

? – Why did you stay in theatre?

E1 – I was getting positive affirmation... getting roles. I thought, “I must be good at this”. I also really like the interaction with the audience. Being a people person/pleaser, performing with an audience was very appealing to me. I was fascinated by all the artistic aspects – Scene design, etc. Even though I was not particularly skilled in those areas, I liked the collaboration and integration of all of that. Studying people and relations...psychology and learning about my character...was fascinating – relating it to every day. It was also fun ... a lot of people in our high school – two groups – the misfits and the intellectual quirky people and I found people I related to.

? – What would you tell a high school student who was thinking about enrolling in theatre arts?

E1 – I want to teach drama in the classroom so I am an advocate. I would advise it, but I think it is becoming more complicated. Harder for kids to pick. I think it is a wonderful place to combine a lot of skills – social skills .... It is an umbrella for a lot of things – self-confidence, language, visual arts, history. I love learning...period plays...other worlds. It is a vehicle to utilize without kids even realizing it. I would encourage anyone to do it. I might be worried about their motivation, but that would not deter my encouraging them.

? – How would you describe the theatre arts courses that you took?

E1 – Amazing program. I went to Muncie for a International Thespian Conference and to the state thespian conference three times. It was interesting to compare programs. We learned so much from \_\_\_\_\_ like finding out who you are and

sharing...creating a safe place. We were into learning big names on Broadway. I mean, the basics like you should know who Andrew Lloyd Webber is ...scene work. The fact that we got the overview....I was always impressed. The fact that our director was skilled in technical and acting was good. Saturday workdays – I learned a lot even though I wasn't in a technical class. Another girl I served on Thespian Board with had a director who was not interested and this girl had to self-teach herself technical aspects. We were lucky to have both. We had a strong reputation...taking shows to national conferences so we had pride in it.

? – Was it important to the group to maintain that pride?

E1 – Yeah, it was. I remember my 1<sup>st</sup> year doing *Fiddler* and we were comparing ourselves to the year's previous show – *Once Upon A Mattress* and we were challenged to live up to that. UIL wasn't really the area until \_\_\_\_\_ got there. We had a reputation to uphold and professionalism – good theatre etiquette.

? – Do you think you learned anything about yourself?

E1 – Oh, yes. Definitely, I think theatre is one of many opportunities that allows kids to experiment socially and mentally. I think it is definitely a strong venue for it. Sticking to something like a production and seeing it through and taking a risk and being vulnerable by doing scenework. I do think in high school it is a small pond and it is easy to be a big fish. That was great for my self-esteem, but I was guilty of not always pushing myself as far as I had to. I had a self-identity from it. I was voted most talented and I'm sure no one would know that if I hadn't been on stage. Mainly, people knew that was who I was, where I spent my time, and I associated strongly with that.

? – What, if any are the benefits of taking theatre?

E1 – New perspective. You have to learn something about yourself before you can play another person. Reading a play that is different from your background exposes you to a new perspective. It exposes you to the arts. That is interesting.

? – New perspective – how does that translate into the real world?

E1 – I would hope my awareness of other people has been heightened. I hope I am more observant. I hope it means that I question someone's motivations before I judge them. If you have to do a character history of someone in a play or scene, and if you meet someone...you may ask those same questions about the real person. It creates an openness and acceptance of others.

? – Describe a favorite production and why it was a favorite?

E1 – *Fiddler on the Roof* and it was my first one in high school. It...I got. I had to sing a solo with an orchestra. Big deal to have that moment on stage. I loved

learning about Jewish culture...went to synagogues and had someone explain to us the symbolism, etc. in the play. That experience made me have a better understanding of the Jewish culture. It was a huge production. Lots of people. It was fun. People liked it. We got a huge wonderful response and a part of feeling very successful.

? – Some people say that theatre arts should be removed from the schools to save money. What would you say to them?

E1 – I don't understand how that makes sense at all. I am learning right now as a grad student how to incorporate drama into the classroom. I don't think you have to have expensive sets, costumes, or royalties to have theatre. The arts are a huge part of culture. Kids need an outlet because they are high strung and emotional and the arts including theatre provide that outlet. Especially socially – you don't find those kindred spirits in your history class. I think kids really need to relate to one another. That is when your peer groups are important.

? – Anything to add?

E1 – No, thank you.

VITA 

Terri Lynn Loter Castleberry

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

**THESIS:** STAGING CHARACTER EDUCATION: INVESTIGATING THE  
POSSIBLE LINK BETWEEN THE THEATRE ARTS CURRICULUM  
AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

**MAJOR FIELD:** CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

**BIOGRAPHICAL:**

**Personal Data:** Born in Childress, Texas, August 29, 1955, the daughter of Kenneth and Nelda Loter.

**Education:** Graduated from Childress High School, Childress, Texas, in May, 1973; received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Speech and Theatre Education from Hardin Simmons University at Abilene, Texas in May, 1977; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree in Theatre at East Texas State University (now Texas A&M at Commerce) at Commerce, Texas in July, 1981; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 2002.

**Professional Experience:** Speech, Drama, and English teacher, Perryton High School, August, 1977 to May, 1980. Theatre Director, Abilene High School, August, 1981 to May, 1994. Speech, Drama, and English teacher, Wall High School, August, 1994 to May, 1997. Speech and Drama teacher at Meeker High School, August, 1997 to May, 1998. Adjunct Instructor in Theatre, Oklahoma Baptist University, August, 1999 to December, 1999 and August, 2000 to December 2000. English and Speech teacher, Waco High School, August, 2001 to May, 2002. Assistant Theatre Arts Director and English teacher, Waco High School, August, 2002 to present.

**Professional Organizations:** Alpha Psi Omega, National Honorary Theatre Fraternity, 1974 to 1977. Association of Texas Professional Educators, 1977 to present. Texas Educational Theatre Association, 1984 to present.