Drama Australia
Monograph No. Twelve

Drama-rich pedagogy and becoming deeply literate

Robyn Ewing

ISSN: 2204-0730

Published by Drama Australia
PO Box 320
Indooroopilly Centre
QLD 4068
AUSTRALIA

Drama Australia Monograph Series
Number 12
Series Editor: Susan Davis, Director of Publications, Drama Australia

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Citation details:
Ewing, Robyn. (2019). *Drama-rich pedagogy and becoming deeply literate: Drama Australia Monograph No. Twelve*. Brisbane: Drama Australia.

ISSN: 2204-0730
ISBN: 978-0-949131-91-1

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Edited by Jo Raphael & Michelle Ludecke
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A note from the editors

Drama-rich pedagogy and becoming deeply literate makes a significant contribution in current educational times. The federal Education Minister in this country recently flagged a review of what he describes as the crowded curriculum, like many others, he is calling for a return to core subjects of mathematics and English. In a news report he bemoaned the sacrifice of 'quality over quantity' and called for a concentration on 'essential content' expressing wariness of so called 'soft skills', of 'problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and teamwork' (Hunter, 2018). Pervasive attitudes like this have led to a regime of standardised testing that disrupts the culture of teachers' classrooms, taking time away from more creative approaches to teaching and learning. This monograph provides a sound rationale for a powerful drama-rich alternative.

Robyn Ewing describes drama as a pedagogy to develop deep literacy skills when engaging with quality children's literature through drama. She describes the potential to lead to deep understanding of thematic content as well as learning in drama as an art form. In other words, this is pedagogy that provides quality as well as quantity. In addition, it also engages learners in those other essential skills for the 21st century that should not take a back seat, such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and enhances empathy and compassion.

After leading readers through the field and relevant literature in the first half of the monograph, Robyn Ewing illustrates the theory by providing a series of snapshots of drama-rich learning initiatives concluding with a description of the School DramaTM program which she has developed in a partnership with Sydney Theatre Company and the University of Sydney.

Over the past three years one of us (Jo) has had the pleasure or working alongside Robyn and John Saunders in the presentation of the School Drama Hub in Melbourne, just one of several School Drama initiatives. Each year around twenty teachers have met for three hour twilight professional development workshops, occurring seven times over three months. With a space of two or three weeks in between each workshop, the drama specialist or generalist primary teachers have time to try out some of the drama strategies experienced in the workshops in their own settings. Typically, each workshop begins with a check-in, with teachers reporting back on

the surprising moments of success and often profound learning occurring for their students. They shared via email their reflections and examples of writing produced by classes in response to the drama pedagogy. The hub is a positive community of practice, with drama teachers, non-drama specialists, and recent graduates doing drama and reflecting together on drama-rich pedagogy in teaching practice.

This kind of practical engagement is important for developing practical skills in using drama-rich pedagogies, and this monograph provides the significant theoretical accompaniment to practical teacher professional learning.

Drama Australia is delighted to publish this monograph that shines a light on the potential of drama-rich and arts-rich pedagogical practice. It supports and encourages us to help others to understand – education authorities, policy-makers, colleagues and parents – with an aim to change the education game.

Dive in and be inspired.

Jo Raphael & Michelle Ludecke
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Foreword – *Time to 'Walk the talk' or 'If not now, when?' or 'When may be too late?'*

In this short monograph, Robyn Ewing offers us a comprehensive perspective on how learning through embodiment results in greater understanding. As she points out through her extensive research that spans the last thirty years, we learn best when we are given the opportunities, time and means to process our experiences through a drama-rich pedagogy. That pedagogy recognises 'that there are multiple ways of knowing, doing [and] interpreting the world …' by valuing the power of *feelings* – 'curiosity, compassion, connection and courage'(p. 23; p. 9) – as natural components of learning. 'Children,' she writes, 'who think and feel deeply will continue to build on their innate imaginative and creative capacities' (2013, p. 18).

In our day (some time ago now) to be literate meant we could read, write and do sums. Today we now realise there is a literacy for just about everything and 'if we are to understand the information we receive from computers, mobile phones, photographs … and podcasts … we must be able to intelligently sift this myriad of information … to turn information into knowledge and knowing (p. 39). As humans we *are* our technology; it is the lens through which we see our world (Alang, 2019), a world in which there is less and less time to dig deep beneath the surface of things: to think critically and reflectively about what matters both as individuals and in community. We do that best through face-to-face dialogue and classrooms provide safe spaces for those conversations to occur.

Literacy and drama are, for Robyn Ewing, inseparable; it is that living practice that makes the pages of her writing come alive—helping even the most novice of teachers feel motivated to 'give it a go'. And while many assume that she came to drama education through the classroom, her vision was always about drama's relationship with theatre. Her innovative belief in the potential learning opportunities that collaboration with the Sydney Theatre Company could offer to support classroom teachers was realised in the creation of the School Drama. Here participants experience a 'unique co-mentoring partnership' with professional artists to develop their own teaching artistry. Throughout this text, there are other equally wonderful examples of the power of really, really good ideas in action.

Readers of this monograph will find that Robyn Ewing is a powerful and skillful advocate, ensuring state and federal governments are continually reminded that the arts are catalysts for creative activity and imaginative thinking. The habits of mind and personal dispositions nurtured through artistic processes are urgent imperatives for making meaning in today's world. After thirty years and with Robyn beside us, it is now time for us to all walk the talk and make a concerted effort to bring about what we know in our hearts is necessary to effect positive change.

Carole Miller and Juliana Saxton

Juliana Saxton

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DEDICATION:

For Belinda, Sarah and Josh with all my heart.

Drama-rich pedagogy and becoming deeply literate

> *I believe that if we can* ***restore to our children time, trust and emotional safety*** *– so that* ***we can go outside over there, where the wild things are, they will return inspired, creative and confident****; people ready and willing to take on the world.*
>
> ***Why don't we take that risk?*** (Gavin, 2005, p. 12, my emphasis).

Introduction

Many of us would agree that we are currently living in what Sardar (2010) described nearly a decade ago as 'post-normal times' in which some of the old orthodoxies are dying and our lives seem characterised by continuous contradictions and chaos. Within this uncertain context a number of western education systems continue to cling to traditional transmissive models of education and reflect a siloed and overcrowded formal curriculum measured by increasingly high stakes testing regimes as the most privileged form of assessment. This approach reinforces a one-size-fits-all formulaic pedagogy and inevitably leads to a reductive or narrowed curriculum that ignores the inter-connectivity of minds, bodies and souls that Gavin recognises above.

In this context many teachers report an overwhelming pressure to compromise their pedagogical intuition, expertise and understandings. In addition, they often discuss feeling pressured to devalue the teaching of and learning through and about the Arts in order to prioritise so-called 'core' literacy and numeracy skills. Despite the rhetoric in policy documents (including the Melbourne Declaration, 2008) reminding educators that 21st century learners must develop other core skills including their creative potential and risk-taking to cope with accelerating change, teachers frequently assert that they do not feel empowered to focus on the imaginative or creative when planning learning experiences. Yet Sardar insists that: 'The most important ingredients for coping with post-normal times … are imagination and creativity' (p. 48) and he suggests that the broad spectrum of human imaginations will be needed

to ensure multiple ways of imagining new possibilities and alternatives to what we have so often taken for granted.

In an alternative and seemingly parallel education universe, a highly significant body of research, scholarship and practice spanning more than three decades unequivocally supports the transformative potential of embedding arts-rich or quality arts processes and experiences across the curriculum (e.g. Workman, 2017; Ewing & Saunders, 2017; Fleming, Gibson and Anderson, 2016; Biesta, 2014; Martin et al., 2013; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013; Ewing 2010a; Catterall, 2009; Bamford, 2006; Deasy, 2002; Fiske, 1999).

Most recently in a very comprehensive longitudinal research project conducted in England from 2015-8, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), Tate and the University of Nottingham partnered to investigate the benefits of arts and cultural education. *Tracking Arts Learning and Engagement* (TALE) listened to the voices and opinions of young people aged between 14 and 18 and analysed their responses as well as those of 63 teachers to provide new understandings about and insights into why sustained engagement with arts and cultural education makes such a difference. The clear overall message from students was that arts and cultural learning fosters their imaginations and creative intuitions as well as their self-efficacy in ways that other learning does not. TALE also investigated the different models of continuing professional learning for teachers offered by Tate and the RSC that are discussed later in this paper.

The next section briefly considers this parallel discourse to provide a context for the focus of this monograph: the potential role of drama-rich pedagogies in becoming deeply literate in the 21st century.

The Arts: Disciplines and transformative pedagogy

There is strong and unequivocal evidence that education in, about and through the Arts, especially when authentically integrated across the curriculum is a strong predictor of long term student success, in fact a far more accurate predictor than results in particular test scores (Workman, 2017). In addition the ever developing field of neuroscience continues to 'unpack the complex ways that certain types of arts experiences affect cognitive development' (President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 2011, p. 52). Boyd suggests this is because the Arts:

> … serve as a stimulus and training for a flexible mind, as play does for the body and physical behavior. The high concentrations of pattern that art delivers repeatedly engage and activate individual brains and over time alter their wiring to modify key human perceptual, cognitive, and expressive systems, especially in terms of sight, hearing, movement, and social cognition … a social and individual system for engendering creativity, for producing options not confined by the here and now. (2009, pp. 85-7).

Moreover, each art form is a discrete discipline with distinctive knowledges, skills and understandings and therefore each embodies different kinds of literacies, different ways of making and representing meaning (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009; Ewing, 2010a; Livermore, 2003). At the same time, each art form involves processes that include play, design, experimentation, exploration, communication, provocation, use of metaphor, expression or representation, and the artistic or aesthetic shaping of the body or other media (Ewing, 2010a). Different art forms thus enable us to develop a better understanding of ourselves, others and the world because the Arts activate our thinking, challenge our traditional systems and ways of being and deepen our knowledge and understandings through communicating using different aesthetic representations (Freeland, 1997). The Arts disciplines therefore can and should play an important role in fostering our imaginations, creativities and gaining deep understanding of and competence in the multiple and ever-increasing literacies needed today.

The TALE research team defines arts education as:

> fundamentally about learning to produce and represent meanings, so good arts education involves doing (e.g. making or interpreting) and being (e.g. taking on the role of artist or performer) as well as knowing. (Arts Council, England, 2019, p. 8).

Learning by making, doing and being is not new. Nevertheless it is important to be reminded of how important such pedagogical approaches are for the learner, whatever their age and stage in life. Learning through the arts is often referred to as a discovery process:

> … the experience of discovery, of insight into connections and organizations – the elation that comes from the apparent opening up of intelligibility. I call this “active discovery” to draw attention to

> the excitement of meeting a cognitive challenge, of flexing one's experiences … (Beardsley, 1982, p. 292).

Despite such acknowledgements, the Arts are continually downplayed by education policymakers and bureaucrats, not only in Australia but internationally. In a 2014 study of European curriculum documents, for example, Wyse and Ferrari found a disjunction between rhetoric and enacted curriculum. While …

> … creativity was a recurring element of curricula … its incidence varied widely … creativity was represented in arts subjects more than other subjects and … was relatively neglected in reading and writing as part of the language group of subjects … It is concluded that there is a need for much greater coherence between general aims for education and the representation of creativity in curriculum texts. (2014, p. 30).

These findings reflect the ongoing siloing and privileging of some subjects in the formal curriculum documents mandated in many western countries.

This monograph synthesises ongoing research that specifically focuses on the potential that drama rich pedagogies in particular can play in becoming critically literate in the 21st century. This does not mean the discipline knowledge about drama is ignored, in reality there is a huge overlap when learning *in*, *through* and *about* any arts discipline. Given the ongoing focus on literacy levels in western countries and the current controversies about the concept itself as well as how we learn to be literate, it is imperative to revisit and build on the rich scholarship that documents the relationship between drama, language, literature and literacy (e.g. Baldwin & Fleming, 2003; Dunn & Stinson, 2012; Ewing, 2002; 2006; 2010b; Ewing, Simons, Hertzberg, & Campbell, 2016; Ewing & Saunders 2017, 2016; Fiske, 1999; Miller & Saxton, 2004, 2016; O'Mara, 2004; O'Toole & Dunn, 2015).

An ongoing theme throughout the last twenty years of research in the arts is the emphasis on *quality*. Steve Seidel et al (2009) from the Harvard Graduate School's Project Zero led a project that documented broad categories for quality arts education. In addition they suggest ways in which arts education can provide an excellent starting point to explore the meaning of quality in teaching and learning more broadly.

The following section examines what it means to become critically literate. The concept of drama rich critical quality pedagogy (Ewing, 2002, 2006) is then

explored. Subsequent sections then take some of the principal factors in literacy learning (play with oral language, story, sharing of quality literature, dramatic play, phonic knowledge, vocabulary development, questioning and substantive dialogue) and demonstrate how the central features of drama (embodiment, enactment, suspending disbelief in fictional contexts) can enhance deep understanding and critical literacy development. Relevant research and some contemporary exemplars provide evidence for the claims made. Finally, the implications for education and children's life chances are considered.

While the central focus of this monograph is the role of drama and literature in enhancing meaning making at a deep level, the discussion of ideas and the research that supports them has relevance for pedagogy more broadly across the curriculum.

Defining what it means to be literate in 21st century

What literacy actually means and how it should be taught has been the subject of heated debate at least since the early 20th century (Huey, 1908). It appears that this debate may never be resolved, perhaps because at the heart of the controversies around what it means to learn to be critically literate and what we mean when we talk about 'literacy' are different epistemologies and ontologies. These epistemologies and ontologies lead to very different definitions and conceptualisations of becoming literate. They also go to the centre of pedagogy more broadly. Our understandings of these concepts certainly become more complex as we move further into a 'post-normal' global community (Sardar, 2010) characterised by uncertainty and accelerating change. Given the current renewed arguments around the learning to read process it is timely to revisit our understanding of literacy – or literacies – for 21st century learning and living.

The different ways literacy is conceptualised are too often polarised along ideological lines and are regularly characterised as being at war with each other. For example, a meaning-centred approach to becoming literate argues it is an ongoing process that enables us to make sense of our world(s) incorporating a range of skills but with meaning-making as the core and key motivator. Therefore we must be able to interpret the world and different lived experiences and ways of being in the world in as many ways as we can (Greene, 1988, p. 120).

This contrasts starkly with what has been described as a 'simple' view of reading that sees learning to read as a linear progression beginning with a largely technical skill set based on a set of contrived activities that often come in pre-determined packages and is only followed later by learning about comprehension. In this view, learners must therefore begin with the most simple and repetitive of skills that require practice, even drill, discipline and testing. Learners are often more passive in this process – the knowledge is transmitted by the expert knower.

UNESCO's paper (2005) acknowledges that a simple view of literacy is long outdated:

> Increasingly, reference is made to the importance of rich literate environments – public or private milieux with abundant written documents (e.g. books, magazines and newspapers), visual materials (e.g. signs, posters and handbills), or communication and electronic media (e.g. radios, televisions, computers and mobile phones). Whether in households, communities, schools or workplaces, the quality of literate environments affects how literacy skills are practised and how literacy is understood. (UNESCO, 2005, p. 159).

Yet, in my view, too often the more traditional and 'simple' conceptualisations of literacy are privileged by governments, policymakers and cognitive psychologists in their efforts to find a recipe for literacy success for all children. This desire for a formula overshadows the need for a more complex approach and is detrimental for children, their parents and the community more broadly. I agree wholeheartedly with Kieran Egan's (2008) assertion that for, at least some children, literacy learning at school does not provide them with 'access to literacy's transcendent culture' (p. 6).

Typically community members including many parents believe that once children can read they have mastered a global skill that will remain with them throughout their lives. Yet Anne Spargo-Ryan (2018) reports that: 'In Australia 44% of people (around 7.5 million) aged 15-74 lack the literacy skills to manage everyday tasks' (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). The difficulties that many adult learners have in completing forms unassisted are a stark reminder that the burgeoning of literacies over the last few decades means that we must continue to develop and refine our literacies over our lifetime. In addition, skills learned in our early years will not necessarily be

retained if not used. The identified difficulties that many older Australians are experiencing in using online resources, mobile phones and social media platforms are testament to the ongoing ever-changing demands of being literate.

In contrast to traditional understandings of literacy, the Australian early childhood framework, Doing, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 38) defines literacy expansively to include all artforms given that they are different ways of making meaning:

Literacy is the capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms. Literacy incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, reading and writing.

Thus, as Eisner (2002, p. 5) wrote, ‘Each form of literacy provides another way to be in the world, another way to form experience, another way to recover and express meaning.’ And according to Freire (1985, 2004), it is authentic dialogue that provides the link between oral and literate forms of interpreting, understanding and transforming the world. It is not a matter of a linear progression from speaking to recoding sounds to symbols to learning syllables and words and so developing reading skills and then learning to write. Instead, speaking, reading, writing and viewing must be seen as interconnected parts of an active and ongoing learning process and, indeed, of social transformation. We must reflect on the words that people use as they give meaning to their lives and are fashioned, created and conditioned by the world which they inhabit (Freire, 2004). Georgina Barton (2013) writes, being literate in many communities in the 21st century requires the ability to not only comprehend, consume and compose a range of ‘texts’ but also to be cognisant of the aesthetic-artistic elements within these texts.

In his definition of critical literacy Colin Lankshear (1994) also emphasised how important it is to be able to both relate our understandings to our own context as well as to be confident in challenging the assumptions made in texts (with ‘texts’ used here in its broadest sense to apply to oral, aural, written, viewed). Further a person is literate ‘to the extent that he or she is able to use language for social and political reconstruction’ (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 159) – part of the notion of literary transcendence Egan refers to.

To enable such abilities it is pertinent to consider The Four C's (as distilled from an earlier list of 18 skills) by the National Education Association in 2013. These four key inter-related skills needed by all 21st century learners highlight aspects of being critically literate as defined above alongside mastery of discipline knowledges are summarised briefly in Table 1 below:

Table 1: A summary of 'The Four C's' (Adapted from the National Education Association, 2013).

21st century 'C' skill	**Brief definition**
Critical thinking and problem solving	• effective use of different types of reasoning appropriate to a situation, • analysis and evaluation of alternative points of view, • synthesising and making connections between information and arguments, • identifying and asking significant questions, • successful conventional and innovative problem solving, • critical reflection on both learning experiences and processes.
Communication	• expressing thoughts and ideas clearly using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a range of forms and in multilingual and multicultural contexts and for a variety of purposes (e.g. to inform; articulate opinion, instruct; motivate; persuade) • effective listening to ensure meanings, attitudes, values and intentions are understood • understanding and using multiple media and technologies and how to assess impact and effectiveness
Collaboration	• ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse groups and teams • flexibility and willingness to help and negotiate making necessary compromises where appropriate to achieve a shared goal • share responsibility for collaborative work and value individual contributions
Creativity and Innovation	• think using a wide variety of techniques to create ideas and elaborate, refine, analyse and refine to improve new and worthy ideas • work creatively with others being open and respond to new and different perspectives incorporating input and feedback • view failure as part of the creative process and an opportunity to learn • act on/implement creative ideas where appropriate

Alongside these well-established 'Four C's', it is proposed (Gibson & Ewing, 2019; Ewing, 2017) that a further 4 C's are vital to our social, emotional and intellectual wellbeing and ability to become critically and creatively literate:

Curiosity

Curiosity has been called the 'wick of the candle of learning (Kang et al, 2009, p. 983) given that it engages multiple areas of the brain. Asking why because you are tentative or uncertain appears to strengthen our desire to learn (Siegel, 2007). Our use of conditional language in these contexts reflects our desire to encourage openness and avoidance of snap or black and white judgements.

Compassion

Compassion takes empathy one step further: it is not enough to have empathy for another's feelings or situations. For empathy to count we must take action in some way to try to make a difference. As Goleman (2006) and Miller and Saxton (2016) suggest: Empathy + action = compassion.

Connection

Seeing the connections of our ideas, knowledges and understandings and being able to authentically link or integrate them across disciplines/curriculum areas is the way we learn to make sense of the world. Our knowledge does not operate in separate silos!

Courage

Courage to take risks, make mistakes, challenge the status quo is also essential. Without courage we cannot speak up and stand up for what we know is right to effect change.

It is of concern that too often these kinds of skills or attributes, dispositions or traits are termed 'soft' skills implying they have less significance than those described as 'hard' skills (although the hard skills are often nameless). Such a dichotomy is unhelpful and in fact, entirely misleading given all are core to our social and emotional wellbeing and to the development of the deep literacies defined above.

Critical factors in learning to be literate: a snapshot

While the actual moment when a child learns to read is often described as an 'epiphany' (Ewing, Callow & Rushton, 2016) and will happen differently for every child, there can be no attainment of literacy as a single global skill.

Rather, research has established that there are a range of factors that contribute significantly to becoming literate in its deepest sense and that becoming and remaining literate needs to continue to evolve over a lifetime. These important factors are briefly discussed in this section. (For further detail see, for example, Ewing, Callow & Rushton, 2016; Meek, 1982).

a. The centrality of talk and development of oral language

> Each aspect of oral language makes an essential contribution to the child's evolving understanding of words and their multiple uses in speech and written texts. (Wolf 2007, p. 85).

From the moment a child is born (and perhaps even before) it is clear that opportunities for young children to listen to and 'talk' with their parents, older siblings and other caregivers are essential. They develop their understandings from meaningful interactions and conversations; listening to stories being told and read; playing with sound through rhymes and songs; and, engaging in storying (Lowe, 2004) and dramatic play. Vocabulary is built and rules about how language works are learnt. As Margaret Meek (2006) says, children who build a repertoire of oral language through rhymes, songs, verses and stories explore the phonology of our sound system and learn to read by discovering that they can tell themselves how to see what they say. As Wolf states well-developed oral language is crucial for reading and writing progress, and listening to and speaking a language is foundational for its mastery (Hertzberg, 2016).

Unfortunately in many cases this is not always the young child's experience. Researchers (for example, Garcia & Weiss, 2017) suggest by the time children start school there are often highly significant vocabulary differences between those children who are advantaged by language rich home contexts and those in at risk or vulnerable situations. Children from low SES backgrounds – and in Australia more than one in six children are living in poverty (ACOSS, 2018) – must be provided with a much higher level of support in early childhood contexts and at school. Schools who have higher enrolments of disadvantaged or at risk children therefore need the best resources and larger investment in teacher professional learning to access research and strategies to understand and address the challenges some children face in becoming literate.

It is story that forms the bridge between learning to talk and learning to read (Meek, 2006) and is also central to drama.

b. Shared storying and stories

We are all largely governed by and at the same time enriched by story. Our lives are relegated by gossip, anecdote, family lore and oral history …

> But fiction – imaginative narration – still holds a crucial part in the self-development of most responsive human beings. (Saxby, 1997, pp. 3-4).

Sharing oral and written imaginative stories with young children helps lay the foundation for them to become good readers and, as Saxby argues, responsive human beings. Listening and responding to stories builds vocabulary and grammar knowledge and encourages children to read regularly: by far the best way of developing reading ability, writing competence, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling (Meek, 1988). Meek (2006) asserts that stories are a 'special kind of play with language'. Wolf (2007, p. 82) asserts that: 'Decade after decade of research shows that the amount of time a child spends listening to parents and other loved ones read is a good predictor of the level of reading attained later'. The number of books in the home enabling an individual to self-select material to read is also one of the most important predictors in successful literacy learning (Krashen, 2015).

What children attend to in reading depends on what they and those around understand reading is and how it can be used. Children will have a very different view of reading if it is mainly used as a quiet or settling time before bedtime than if a child is actively engaged in making meaning, asking questions and sharing related experiences (Williams, 2000; Meek, 1988; Chambers, 1985; Brice Heath, 1983). Children use story to make sense of who they are, and to find their place in the world (Nicolopoulou in Gleeson, 2010). Children construct their own games: "I'll be the doctor and you can be the patient" is a common example. Mary Beattie encapsulates the centrality of story for us:

> Stories speak to our conscious minds and senses in direct ways, and to our subconscious and unconscious minds in complex, circuitous, and indirect ways that continue to resonate long after the words and images have faded into the background. When they provide us with access to

> the subjectivity of another individual's life and humanity, they can lead to changed stories for our own lives, our relationships, communities, and society, and for the world in which we all live. (2018, p. 259).

c. The role of imaginative literature in children's development

> It's when we fool about with the stuff the world is made of that we make the most valuable discoveries, we create the most lasting beauty, we discover the most profound truths. (Pullman, 2005, p. 8).

While literature is one of three strands in the *Australian Curriculum: English* (ACARA, 2019), the literary arts are not mentioned in the Arts Key Learning Area and are often missing from discussions about the Arts, even though the Australia Council for the Arts (2010) research demonstrated the literary art form is the discipline most Australians have engaged with in some way. And, as Bettelheim (1975, p. 12) writes in introducing *The uses of enchantment*, the fairy tale has such impact on children because it is a work of art. Further he says: 'the story itself permits an appreciation of its poetic qualities, and with it an understanding of how it enriches a responsive mind' (1975,p. 19). While earlier I argued that each artform has distinctive skill sets and knowledge, at the same time, many arts processes are shared (Ewing 2010a; 2010b). Separation of different arts disciplines fragments the formal intended curriculum and foregrounds the need to work on authentically integrated learning approaches (Macdonald, Hunter, Ewing & Polley, 2019).

Imaginative literary texts as Pullman implies, need to be a cornerstone in the early childhood, primary and secondary classroom because of the centrality of story in our meaning-making processes. Their inclusion motivates children to continue exploring, questioning and creating possibilities through language so they can build on the innate imaginations and creativities that they bring to school. An imaginative story is intellectually challenging and evocative, the vocabulary and language structures are appropriate and make sense and the language use is therefore rich rather than contrived.

Yet currently in early reading contexts there is a renewed and concerning focus on the use of contrived or 'decodable' texts based on the synthesised sequences of sounds addressed in synthetic phonics programs. Freire's early work (1985) articulated the impact on learning of such limited and inappropriate use of contrived reading materials. He argued that texts written with controlled

vocabulary and syntax remain controlled by writers and teachers, rather than by learners. Learners are then unable to engage actively and creatively in the learning process, remaining only marginally engaged in learning to be literate (Freire, 1986). An over privileging of these technical and reductive reading programs may damage children's understanding and development of deep literacies.

A recent doctoral dissertation examined the evidence for cognitive gain in reading literary fiction. Jon Phelan (2017) cites a range of relevant research to argue that the *process* of careful reading of quality literary works is very important. This is because many cognitive benefits emerge when the reader is encouraged to exercise certain cognitive capacities that constitute distinctive forms of 'understanding' from close analysis and interpretation of a work of literary fiction. For example, in New York, Evan Kidd's and Emanuele Castano's (2013) research, 'Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind' undertook a number of studies that included between 86 and 356 participants. After the participants had read genre-fiction, literary fiction, non-fiction excerpts or nothing at all the researchers posed five questions about Theory of Mind, the human capacity to comprehend that other people hold beliefs and desires and experience emotions that may be different from one's own beliefs, desires, feelings and perspectives. Their findings suggested that reading literary fiction can improve the reader's capacity to infer and understand what others are thinking and feeling. Surprisingly there was a significant difference between the literary- and genre-fiction readers. They argued that literary fiction focuses more on the psychology of characters and their relationships and often disrupted reader expectations and stereotypes. In addition, they suggested that if little detail was provided it encouraged readers to fill in the gaps to understand the characters' intentions, motivations and inner conversations. Building such awareness can then be transferred to real experiences in their worlds enabling the kind of understandings resonant with the 'C's' introduced in the last section.

In an extension of this work, Maria Nikolajeva (2014) synthesised neuroscientific and psychological theories with specific and popular literary examples such as *Where the wild things are* (Sendak, 1963); *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Lewis, 1950-6) *His Dark Materials* (Pulman, (1996-2000) to demonstrate how reading fiction affects children's cognitive and emotional development. She explained that literary texts (including picture books, fantasy, fairy tales and realistic and

historical fiction) can help children develop their knowledge of self, others and the world more broadly. Most of all she emphasised how such reading fosters empathy and the understanding of different perspectives because she contended that '(o)ur engagement with fiction is not transcendental; it is firmly anchored in the body' (p. 10). This emphasis on learning through the physical body aligns with Saxby's (1997) insistence that drama and dance must be part of the literary experience.

While the reader brings their own life experiences to narrative, at the same time the imaginary world of the story sheds light on the real world because the brain responds to fictional characters' emotions and dilemmas as if they were actually happening. Nikolajava claims that: 'successful children's fiction challenges its audiences cognitively and affectively, stimulating attention, imagination, memory, inference-making, empathy and all other elements of mental processes' (p. 227). In a similar vein, Emy Koopman's (2015) findings from her online survey with 282 participants suggested that exposure to literary work elicited more empathetic understanding about depression and grief than other genres read. Thus, a singular focus on teaching and explaining literature to young language and literacy learners rather than allowing them to (critically) interact and transact with a narrative can be entirely counterproductive to their cognitive development.

In concluding this section, it is clear there is strong evidence over a sustained period that engaging students in imaginative stories that promote talk, cognitive development, empathy and deep understanding is central to their becoming critically literate and able to respond to the changing nature of texts in the world.

Many teachers, parents and carers, however, express a lack of confidence about choosing quality texts.

d. Choosing quality literary fiction

As with all art, a quality literary work is coherent in both its purpose and design. It is intellectually challenging and evocative, layered so that underlying the surface subject there are themes that trigger interest, challenge, even provoke and may lead to imaginative responses, reflections and or multiple interpretations. In addition, these themes are carefully sustained or developed by the author's use of literary features and narrative devices

such as symbolism, irony, metaphor and allusion (Lamarque 2013, p. 524; Gibson, 2011, p. 75). Such texts can be used as the basis for powerful learning experiences integrating drama, music, dance, visual arts and media. These can, in turn, provide the inspiration for creative writing. As the new publishing company Dirt Lane Press (2019) so eloquently states, *Art thus creates art*. Sometimes, however, reading the text alone is not enough. Many children need to interact more directly. As mentioned earlier, large and ever-increasing research documents the impact of learning through and in the body. Drama and theatre activities can deepen learning in the areas of language and expressive skill development (e.g. Winner et al 2013; Ewing 2010b; O'Toole et al 2009; Ewing and Simons 2016; Deasy 2002; Bolton 1984).

The following section describes how embedding drama rich pedagogy in close study of language and quality literature has the potential to enable children to engage more deeply in creative thinking and problem-solving, to make emotional connections, to extend their understanding of narrative and thus to foster each of the C's cited earlier and develop deep literacies that equip them for 21st century life. While acknowledging these changes can occur in any discipline the research exemplars that are examined below particularly focus on English and literacy.

What is 'drama rich pedagogy'?

Drama-rich English and literacy pedagogy

> Through the embodied metaphoric acts of the imagination in drama and theatre we create internal models that result in increased social and empathic awareness. (Miller & Saxton, 2016, p. 14).

Drama-rich pedagogies enable children to explore a range of meanings, concepts, cultural assumptions and social dilemmas relating to and surpassing their own issues and their personal behaviour and learning. Time and time again over nearly three decades studies have documented evidence that drama has the potential to support every aspect of literacy instruction (e.g. Cremin, 2014; Ewing, 2009; McMaster, 1998). Nevertheless learning through drama has been 'alternately acknowledged, repudiated, celebrated, misunderstood, included and neglected' (O'Neill, 2013, p. 19).

Defining drama-rich pedagogy

In arriving at the term 'drama-rich pedagogy' for this paper a range of definitions have been considered from 'process drama' to 'relational pedagogy' to 'drama-based pedagogy' to 'drama as dramatic inquiry'. Although there are nuances and specificities in the use of each of these terms, all can be positioned under the broader umbrella of Creative Body-Based Learning (CBL) or whole-person learning (Smith, 1994). Such learning advocates the use of artistic and creative processes to deepen and enhance learning experiences in the classroom. When children use their whole body to learn in a creative and active way, their interest in learning, school attendance and attitude often improves resulting in better academic achievement and increased student resilience. Often artists and teachers work together to create these whole-person learning experiences. (A recent example of CBL is the Carclew project in South Australia, see for example Garrett, Dawson, Meiners & Wrench, 2019).

Process drama (O'Neill, 1995; Haseman, 1991) emerged from the work of such giants in the drama field as Brian Way, Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, Brad Haseman, Cecily O'Neill and John O'Toole. The term is used to describe the use of a range of strategies adapted from those used in theatre including sculpture, role walking, role play, depiction, still image or tableau, improvisation, mime, thought tracking, hot-seating or questioning in role, play-building, mantle or enactment of the expert, conscience alley (Ewing & Simons, 2016) to explore a problem, situation, theme or series of related ideas or themes. More recently, given that 'process drama' sometimes implies a particular implementation process Saunders (2019) has used the more general term process-based drama.

Drama-based pedagogy is similarly described by Lee, Patall, Cawthon and Steingut (2015, p. 4) in their meta-analysis as 'a collection of drama-based teaching and learning strategies to engage students in learning' in any content area. Once again the emphasis is on embodiment and process rather than performance and a similar broad range of applied theatre strategies are adapted.

Similar definitions are found for *Creative drama*. In framing her meta-analysis Mages (2008) includes an emphasis on process based experiences usually with a facilitator guiding imaginative, enacted and reflective processes.

Relational pedagogy (Fraser, Aitken & Whyte, 2013; Prentki and Stinson, 2016) centres on the relationship between teacher and students, encouraging student curiosity and inquiry and concentrating on developing student agency in the learning process. An emphasis on creative teaching and learning processes including the use of drama strategies is once again a strong focus.

Taking this further *Dramatic inquiry through mantle of the expert* (Aitken, 2012) foregrounds a particular drama framework developed by Dorothy Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) that aims to create learning conditions that enable the child to grow in their knowledge, leadership and confidence facilitated by the teacher. Many other drama strategies are embedded in the inquiry process. For further detail see: https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com

Dramatic inquiry (Aitken, 2012) the Mantle of the Expert approach places the child at the centre of the learning. The teacher's role is to create the conditions whereby a mantle of leadership, knowledge, competency and understanding grows around the child. This approach assumes a progressive view of learning, responsive to the needs of the child (Heston, 1993). The child centrism begins in the planning stages, with the teacher starting from the children's interests and needs, alongside the curriculum objectives, and continues in the classroom interactions, where the teacher consciously positions the children as competent co-constructors of the learning. Although placing the child at the centre, and including strong elements of inquiry, the approach is far from child-led.

All these terms are resonant with the concept of drama-rich pedagogies. All are characterised by the factors needed for becoming deeply literate as described above: play, inquiry, imagination, creativity, embodiment and enactment, empathy, collaboration and substantive dialogic interaction. 'Improvisation, perspective taking; working in role (walking in the shoes of another); working symbolically; revisiting and reframing our ideas; asking questions and reflecting – all done as individuals or in groups – are strategies fundamental to drama practice' (Miller & Saxton, 2006, p. 5). All these practices highlight the agentive role the child must take in the learning process but also acknowledge the central role of the teacher as both co-learner and facilitator of the learning processes.

The features of drama-rich pedagogies and the role they can play in becoming deeply literate are considered below.

Play

> The most valuable attitude we can help children adopt – the one that, among other things, helps them to write and read with most fluency and effectiveness and enjoyment – is one I can best characterise by the word playful … (Pullman, 2005, p. 8).

Children play with words, experiment with rhyme, rhythm and language rules. In play they learn that what is said and what is meant may sometimes be different. 'Why are you *dying* for a cup of coffee?'; 'What do you mean it's raining cats and dogs?' And, at the same time, through play children examine rules and people's actions. As Pullman implies, children's play is 'serious work' (Fox, 1993) – it is not merely a time for fun (even though it does result in much pleasure). Rather than seeing child's play as replication, Vygotsky suggests it should be seen as 'a creative reworking of the impressions' collected by the child that will be used to construct a new reality. Further, he asserts play, drama and creativity are all inextricably linked and the children's desire to draw and make up stories are other examples of exactly this type of imagination and play (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 5; p. 65).

Drama processes, for example, hot-seating, allow children to play with character, time, space and context to create a place for exploratory interactions, dialogues and diverse representations of events. Playing with different perspectives by framing events differently can blur boundaries and identities. As a result, the learner gains access to many points of view, for example from a character at different stages of their journey, from the perspective of many characters about a particular event or from the author's perspective. New thoughts, ideas and alternative ways of looking/seeing/understanding/being emerge. Dramatic play can release us from our here and now to imagine new possibilities. *'I wonder'* and *'What if'* opportunities are important here:

> I wonder why the Frog Princess is so grumpy all the time?
> What if Christopher searches for Ollie but can't find him?

Through playing in fictional contexts we are given permission to take risks and to explore others' perspectives and the taken for granted in our own lives.

Imagination

> The arts can move the young to see what they have never seen, to view unexpected possibilities. They are always there on the margins to refuse the indecent, the unjust, to awaken the critical and committed to visions of things being otherwise. (Greene, 2010, p. 5).

As Greene reminds us, children's imaginations have the potential to take them in many different directions. It is crucial for parents, teachers and carers to ensure that the imaginative potential they are born with is nurtured if they are to continue to develop their imaginative processes (Ewing, 2019; Latham & Ewing, 2018a, 2018b). Drama processes can enhance children's already rich imaginations by giving them permission to wonder what could be different/what might have been/what could be. Nussbaum (2006) uses the term 'narrative imagination' to describe the kind of pedagogy that should be used to promote 'the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story …' (p. 6). As Dewey (1934, p. 275) writes:

> Deliberation is actually an imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct. We give way in our mind, to some impulse; we try, in our mind, some plan.

Vygotsky (2004, p. 35) wrote that: 'The entire future of humanity will be attained through the creative imagination' because through conceptualising something about another's experience the children will not be limited by their own narrow boundaries. It follows then that the richer a person's experience, the richer are the resources his/her imagination can access. Timothy, aged 7, articulated this when he said:

> Imagination is … in your mind … it's when you think of stuff that is not actually real … I think of things I know and then I make up other things like them. I like writing stories because it's fun and you get to make up things.

Timothy suggests his imagination enables him to take actual elements from his reality and building on them to imagine something different.

And creativity is often conceptualised as the outcome of activating a vibrant imagination.

Creativity: activating our imaginations

> Drama, which is based on actions, and, furthermore, actions to be performed by the child himself, is the form of creativity that most closely, actively, and directly corresponds to actual experiences. (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 64).

Creativity is a term that defies clear definition because it is used in so many different ways. Often conceived of as an inherent gift for the special few it is now more frequently understood as innate in all, a product of the imaginative process but also including a number of skills and dispositions that can be learnt. These dimensions of creativity (Lucas, Claxton, & Spencer, 2013) include:

- Inquisitiveness (curiosity)
- Persistence
- Imagination
- Collaboration
- Discipline.

In thinking about fostering these dispositions, the *pedagogic* creativity of the teacher is important. Creative teachers improvise, think metaphorically, are flexible, comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty and are always putting ideas together in seemingly incongruous ways (Abramo & Reynolds, 2014).

The next two processes, embodiment and enactment, described as the very essence of drama, can further the listening to or reading of a story. As already argued there is strong evidence that embodiment and enhancement have the potential to enhance imaginations and develop learners' creativities.

Embodiment and enactment

> … the drive for action, for embodiment, for realization that is present in the very process of imagination here finds complete fulfillment. (Vygotsky, 2004).

The centrality of embodiment and enactment to becoming critically literate through our understanding of ourselves and of the other is increasingly supported by neuroscientific research. Enactment or walking in someone else's shoes (Ewing & Simons, 2016) is regarded as the essence of educational drama. For example in embodying someone who is powerful and contrasting this with embodying someone who is powerless we are able to think, move

and feel as both. We can consider how our body interprets each one. Enacting the critical moment when John Jagamurra's mother runs beside the van as he is being driven from Dryborough Station (as in *The Burnt Stick*, Hill, 1994) deepens our understanding of this moment from the perspectives of John, his mother Liyan, the stationmaster's wife and the welfare official. The experiential and embodied nature of drama parallels Vygotksy's socioconstructivist notion of *perezhivanie*, or 'lived emotional experience' considered fundamental to meaningful learning (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002).

In 2000 Shirley Brice Heath quoted research that documented how moving from physical enactment or embodiment of an idea or event, to visual and then written representation, extended and developed children's neural circuitry. In her address at the 2011 Drama Australia Conference in Perth and then in her book, *With Drama in Mind* (2012), Patrice Baldwin explored the connections between the neuroscientific research and drama. She described how almost twenty years ago Rizzolatti and colleagues accidentally discovered mirror neurons in chimpanzees concluding that these enable not only the observation and imitation of another's actions but can lead to understanding them. She linked the research on mirror neurons and imitation with dramatic play and drama processes to argue that a child's cognitive, kinaesthetic and emotional capacities are ignited through the enactment. For children without a rich vocabulary or multilingual children learning English for the first time, words on their own do not always mean the same and often do not transfer across cultures, backgrounds and ethnicities. Embodiment can make a huge difference to deeply understanding a particular feeling or event.

Similarly, Lindenberger (2010) has theorised that when an individual internalises information it can lead to understanding it better (p. 4). If we accept the notion of an embodied mind, on one hand physical imitation stimulates the individual's imagination and thus enables an experience of the character's emotions. Alternatively, the enactment itself may lead to deep understanding of the emotions and result in the ability to express them meaningfully. If we see the human being as a whole then our bodies, minds and feelings are located in a particular context and cannot be separated out/fragmented. Our use of language then can be seen as evolving from our embodiment/enactment. Blair (2015) citing Fadiga et al, notes that the area for language production, comprehension and perception of intention of actions are all very close together in the brain and neurally linked.

As Vygotsky (2004) asserted, the child will thus make a stronger connection as they move beyond imagining an action to enacting it in an imagined (or real) context. Through drama, students are able to work inside the imagined world of the narrative with the teacher, internalising and kinaesthetically engaging with the story, its setting, the characters, roles, relationships, tensions, situations and contexts.

As mentioned, drama-rich pedagogy enables students and teacher to work together, both in and out of role, suspending disbelief and creating imagined worlds often involving the use of quality literature. Students can meaningfully explore themselves, their own worlds, or different alternatives of these. They can do this safely, by being protected into and out of role and through the fictional context of a story to explore people, relationships and situations that they otherwise may never experience.

It is this feature at the core of drama process, walking in another's shoes, that provides a strong basis for the development of empathy for others' circumstances, lives, actions, dilemmas.

Empathy and Compassion

> We must recognise the absolute centrality of drama in giving a sense of what it is to be other than ourselves in a world where otherness and difference is often something to be feared and punished. (O'Connor, 2008, p. 29).

Written more than a decade ago, Peter O'Connor's words are even more pertinent today! Much is made of the importance of developing/fostering empathy and it is often thought about as being able to understand how someone else is feeling as in the Biblical Romans 12:15 'rejoice with those that do rejoice and weep with those who weep'. As Vygotsky (2004, p. 14) described:

> The passions and fates of imaginary characters, their joys and sorrows move, disturb, and excite us, despite the fact that we know these are not real … rather the products of fantasy … the emotions that take hold of us from the artistic images on the pages of books or from the stage are completely real and we experience them truly, seriously, and deeply …

Dramatic processes enable us to understand through embodiment what another person might be feeling or experiencing. Carole Miller and Juliana Saxton (2016) go further, however, citing Martin Buber's (1965) characterisation of such emotional engagement as *'glid[ing] with one's own feeling into the dynamic structure of [another] … to trace it from within … with the perceptions of one's own muscles'* (p. 97). This embodiment pushes our imaginations further evoking the whole person learning described and encouraged by Smith (1994) and a sense of attunement (Arnold, 2005). In addition, Miller and Saxton, along with Daniel Goleman (2006) see compassion as the ultimate step in the empathic process:

> Thinking and feeling as another is not enough; empathy requires that we respond with some kind of action; "I notice you, I feel with you, and so I act to help you" (p. 56). To stand with another – even in fictional circumstances – is to *practice* compassion. (Miller & Saxton, 2016, pp. 15-16).

Embodiment and enactment have the potential to change our understanding of meaning-making (Ewing & Simons 2016). Over time we develop an understanding that there are multiple ways of knowing, doing, interpreting the world and being, and at the same time our awareness of our own identity (ies) is/are heightened and our capacity for empathy and compassion increased. Working with Anthony Browne's (1990) *Piggybook* year three students embodied Mrs Piggott who at the beginning of the story is doing all the work at home as well as working outside. A parent reported to the class teacher that her daughter had been so much more helpful around the home.

In addition, improvement in oral and written skills occurs when learners are stirred by an engagement of cognitive and affective domains through shared reading. Dunn and Stinson's (2012) study highlights the impact of emotion in learning, in that rather than marginalising affective responses, the case study teacher allows students to experience feelings such as concern, frustration, empathy, delight and triumph thus engaging and empowering them. The example above of the affective response to the *Piggybook* unit also demonstrates how it can lead us to take action in our own particular context.

Dialogue and substantive conversations are central components of embodiment and enactment.

Oracy, active listening, dialogue and substantive conversations

> Meaningful use of spoken and written language in a range of play-based and child-centred activities in different contexts lays a firm foundation for learning to read and write. (Campbell, 2013, p. 13).

Drama processes can be used to build learners' meaningful use of language identified above by Campbell. They can be employed to fashion a strong oral base around storybook language (Fox, 1993) and develop a rich vocabulary. The unexplained gaps and spaces in stories can be explored and extended through improvised conversations with characters. Children can relate them to their own personal experiences, wonder about what might happen and ask questions. All these activities are examples of what Scott Paris (2005) has described as the development of unconstrained reading skills.

Active listening, the least taught of the language modes and the most used (Gross, 2013) can be fine-tuned. O'Toole and Stinson (2013, p. 157) argue that in today's world there are much fewer opportunities to practice 'listening, turn-taking ... registers of spoken language, expanding verbal and expressive vocabularies ... argument, negotiation and questioning' and as a result, the ability to acquire oracy depletes. Their case study demonstrates how taking on different roles enables teachers to model and students to experiment with different language forms for a range of different purposes. Children can listen to the subtext of a conversation and explore how the meaning of words can be changed by how they are conveyed either through voice tone or facial expression and gesture or all three. And, as Alvarez (2016) reminds us, writing well is premised on listening well and appreciating what she terms the presence behind the words that have been chosen. Improvised brief conversations and readers theatre can be useful for developing students' active listening skills.

Much more could be written here about drama and oral language development including additional language learning but a monograph devoted to this important area will be forthcoming (Stinson, in press).

Learning to read

A very important longitudinal multi-case study of the use of dramatic pedagogies in an early childhood classroom was undertaken by Annette Harden (2015a, 2015b). Harden's investigation included a focus on how drama

strategies can be used in the explicit teaching of phonics and phonemic awareness. Guided dramatic play, puppetry and mantle of the expert were some of the powerful drama processes embedded in the literacy program. For example in using mantle of the expert:

> The focus of the drama event was to develop the oral and literate activity of children in role as palaeontologists discovering, observing, recording and speculating about fossil bones at a 'dig'. Some children took turns to be the fossils, while others, armed with clipboards, pencils and brushes took on the role of the scientists. (2015a, p. 144).

Harden (2015a, p. 143) writes:

> As an emerging drama teacher with an early childhood background, I was discovering the power of this strategy in working with young children, who did not need to be invited to share the action of a drama, but slip fluidly into pretend spaces in drama events just as they do in their dramatic play.

Such research is invaluable in the current literacy context in Australia.

Montgomerie and Ferguson (1999) used drama with selected classes for half-day sessions to raise the awareness of drama as a medium for the teaching of reading. The classes were in the lower primary track with children ranging from 4 to 8 years old. Observations undertaken during the drama sessions by both the researchers and the class teachers documented the role process drama can play in learning to read and the development of critical literacy skills. The researchers offered two 'thick descriptions' of literacy events, involving children with English as an emerging additional language.

Readers Theatre can be a very valuable strategy for both oral reading and comprehension as Hertzberg (2000) observed in her case study in Year 5 classrooms. Students were able to master aspects of oral reading, such as graphophonic, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic cues while improving their fluency and inferential comprehension.

Two New Zealand teachers employed process drama as a 'productive pedagogy' in developing multiliteracies in a rural New Zealand primary school (Wells & Sandretto, 2017). Their analysis of the initial and exit teacher interviews, lesson transcripts and transcripts of the teacher-researcher

meetings demonstrated the power of using process drama in enabling students to develop their text user, meaning maker and text analyst practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990) through greater engagement, more detailed writing and an enhanced depth of thinking. Importantly, students who often struggled to make contributions in the class made progress. In order to realise the potential of process drama pedagogy for multiliteracies, the researchers found that the teachers needed a great deal of support to build their confidence to use process drama due to their limited professional experiences of the arts.

Storytelling and imaginative writing

Storying – which incorporates both oral and written storytelling of our own and others' stories – is important for all of us in terms of finding our voice and sense of identity (Campbell, 2013). It is nurtured through embedding drama processes during storytelling experiences (Mortimer, 2015; Campbell, 2012; Crumpler & Schneider, 2002; Booth & Neelands, 1998). Imaginative storying encourages the exploration of existing ideas, the extension of the boundaries of our own worlds and the development of new possibilities.

Drama work can enhance students' use of vocabulary and lead them to be more expressive than when merely involved in a discussion before writing (McNaughton, 1997). Synthesising findings from five separate studies Crumpler and Schnieder (2002) demonstrated how drama strategies provided students with more confidence to write in role. Mortimer's (2015) work showed how students built on their oral base to frame creative writing as an artform in itself. She articulated this relationship to learners' broader development of creativity.

O'Mara's (2004) process drama case study in a Year 5 classroom also demonstrated that writing in role in a dramatic context was a successful strategy to improve students' persuasive texts. Kinaesthetic movement through all learning experiences was used to engage students in true inquiry when reading literary texts (Macro, 2015). Drama enabled the students to build understanding and step outside themselves. The researcher reported that overall the participant students became more thoughtful and inquisitive and engaged in writing scenes to solve dilemmas in the literature they were reading. The *School Drama* program described in more detail below uses student pre- and post-drama intervention writing samples to demonstrate positive academic improvements in imaginative writing (Saunders, 2019; 2015).

Drama and classroom discourse

Dialogue is acknowledged as playing an important role in processing learning – so many of us are social learners and need to talk our way into understanding. However, despite the inclusion of 'substantive conversations' in our quality teaching frameworks (e.g. NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003), the long identified traditional teacher patterns of classroom talk often prevail – i.e. teacher initiates talk and ask questions, students respond, teacher provides feedback/evaluation (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1976). The current emphasis on 'teaching to the test' reinforces this kind of interaction pattern.

Yet many case studies document the power of drama to alter the traditional patterning of transmissive classroom discourse. Instead of merely responding to the teacher's questions and playing 'guess what's in the teacher's head' (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1976), many drama processes challenge learners to think for themselves and ask and reflect on their own critical questions (Saxton, Miller, Laidlaw & O'Mara, 2018). Viv Aitken (2012) highlights the importance of Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert inquiry framework in her work to encourage learners to use 'what if' and take risks in sustained programs. Learners try out ideas in fictional contexts rather than simply conforming to the more traditional frameworks for classroom talk. Programs can last a term with the learners having agency as experts working on a brief for a fictional client.

Drama-rich pedagogies thus encapsulate those elements required for the development of critical literacies. They equip children with knowledge about the discipline of the art form itself (for example, the elements of drama) while using the drama conventions and strategies as inquiry based learning.

The following section provides some further snapshots of relevant national and international research over the last two decades that document professional learning and partnership initiatives that empower teachers to use drama-rich or integrated arts pedagogies to enhance students classroom English and literacy learning. A selection of large and small projects are introduced in rough chronological order.

Snapshots of drama-rich professional learning initiatives: Becoming literate in and through drama

Learning through the Arts, Canada

In Canada the Royal Conservatory of Music's *Learning Through the Arts* (LTTA) (The Royal Conservatory, 2019) programs have developed from the conviction that the arts are humanity's greatest means to achieve personal growth and social cohesion. The Conservatory has led the development of arts-based programs designed to address a range of social issues, such as the academic achievement of youth at risk, the development of children in their early years, and the wellness of seniors (Smithirim & Upitis, 2005; Upitis, 2011). Artists plan their work directly with teachers to develop units of study that meet the Canadian provincial curriculum guidelines and their work with students. For example, a dancer might work with a teacher to develop a unit on geometry as interpreted through the discipline of modern dance.

A National Study (1999-2002) of the LTTA program found that teachers, principals, and students reported students' were highly engaged in their learning in LTTA programs. Analyses of the Royal Conservatory's *Learning through the Arts* (LTTA) project across Canada (undertaken by Rena Upitis and Katharine Smithrim) showed how these programs infused the teaching of core school subjects – language, mathematics, and science – with the arts. Their large scale research involved close to 7,000 students in Grades 1-6. Some students were from LTTA schools while other students (the control group) were from schools who had introduced other school-wide initiatives (such as a focus on technology) or schools with no special programs in place.

Smithirim & Upitis (2005, p. 121) conclude:

> In a few cases, effects of the LTTA program could be described as transcendent, that is, going beyond the perceived limits of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional experience and moving towards deep transformation of personal beliefs and practices. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Further, Upitis (2011) writes:

> ... because there was no interaction effect between socio-economic factors – such as mother's education level or household income and

> school type – it can also be concluded that the benefits of the LTTA program occurred for children of all socioeconomic classes.

A follow up 2010 LTTA study found similar reports of student engagement in learning, improved student capacities to work collaboratively, increased openness to different perspectives and, overall happiness with school life and learning more broadly.

Highwater Theatre, Victoria, Australia

Beginning in Australia in 2001 the *Somebody's Daughter Theatre* (SDT) company partnered with the Upper Hume Community Health Service and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. They provided an intensive creative arts-based education program called Highwater Theatre (drama, music and art) led by artists and including warm ups, voice work, articulation and breathing activities, visual arts, writing for and with a small group of rural school-aged youth aged between 12 and 16. Skills including developing collaboration and problem solving were also emphasised. Individual education plans were developed with the focus on literacy, numeracy, social skills and problem solving. Described as an arts-based program with essential education and welfare components, *Highwater Theatre* focused on production, performance and presentation. A specialist full-time teacher and an advocate for the young people worked alongside the artists with the participants focussing on literacy and numeracy, and health and life issues, on a one-to-one basis. Most of the young people involved had been out of the formal education system for some time. Many had been in foster care or experienced homelessness, and a significant proportion had suffered abuse or neglect. The program aimed to assist the young people to find pathways back to education and training (Osmotherly, 2007, p. 9).

By 2006 the personal, community and general outcomes from *High Water Theatre* were, by any program evaluation standards, remarkable once again because it disrupted the cycle for many of the young people involved. Outcomes included markedly improved literacy and numeracy skills of all participants. *SDT* Artistic Director, Maud Clark attributed a great deal of the success to the creative process itself: 'I've come to understand that in a world where so much is unequal – creativity is the great equaliser' (Clark, 2009, p. 26).

Direk Primary School, South Australia

Another notable Australian study conducted by Bryce et al. (2004) compared two year 4 classes assessed as similar at Direk Primary School in South Australia. One class had a drama-based artist-in-residence mentoring style program running (similar to STC's *School Drama*™ model described below) and the other class was conducted in a traditional, non-arts based pedagogical approach. The evaluation data found substantial differences between the arts-rich class and the non-arts-rich class. The arts-rich class achieved higher results in all areas tested, including literacy, numeracy, writing and key competencies including problem solving, planning and organising, communication and working with others (Bryce et al. 2004, p. 14).

The Development of Early Literacies through the Arts, United States of America

The *Development of Early Literacies through the Arts (DELTA)* (Scripp et al, 2007) was a three year collaboration between twenty-six Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education. *DELTA* explicitly sought to improve students' academic achievement by introducing integrated Arts programs in classroom literacy programs. Intensive teacher professional development through collaborations between teachers and artists was a strong priority. Three high-poverty school case studies detailed the arts processes and experiences undertaken in the action research by the project's researchers, teaching artists and teachers. A digital portfolio was developed and included qualitative and statistical data analysis from the interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, surveys and performances.

Improved classroom behaviour and attitude towards learning were the first changes observed by the teachers. With particular reference to literacy outcomes Year 3 children demonstrated impressive improvements in story writing, using drama and visual arts. Analysis of interview and survey data demonstrated impressive degrees of perceived effects in students' language literacy skills as well as reflective awareness and understanding of arts processes. The researchers reported that:

> … when literacy teaching practices include creative processes and self expression through multiple arts media, students will increasingly find new ways to expand their vocabulary, communication skills and self

> esteem as language literacy learners. (Scripp with Burnaford, Bisset, Pereira, Frost, & Yu, 2007, p. 181).

At the same time the teachers and artist also reported that they had further developed their own knowledge and skills along with increased flexibility, creativity and risk-taking. They cited the processes of co-design, co-teaching and challenging professional learning as critical in this development.

The *DELTA* study should challenge teachers, schools and education systems to think differently about the way classroom learning is organised. Integrating the Arts into English and literacy learning has the potential to deepen students' understanding and mastery of language and literacy.

Teaching Imaginatively, Sydney, Australia

Teaching Imaginatively, 2008-2010, was a project funded by the Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA). Seven participating primary teachers in one suburban Sydney school engaged in an action learning professional development process aimed at integrating quality children's literature (Revans, 1983; Aubusson, Ewing & Hoban, 2009) throughout their literacy programs. They investigated what teaching literacy creatively looked like at different stages of the K–6 primary curriculum (Warhurst, Crawford, Ireland, Neale, Pickering, Rathmell, & Watson, 2009, pp. 2-3). Each teacher explored how art and drama could bring quality literary texts to life and enhance students' critical literacy. Initially they identified criteria to determine quality literary texts. Next they made decisions about which texts were most appropriate for their students and they met regularly to discuss what activities using imaginative arts strategies they could incorporate into their units to encourage their students to respond creatively to texts. Examples of the students' talking, listening, reading and writing were benchmarked before the project began. Teachers compared these with students' work at various points along the way. They recorded evidence from oral presentations, brainstorming, group discussions, drama and dance, using digital cameras and electronic whiteboards. This evidence demonstrated increased student motivation and engagement, expanded vocabularies, increased use of imagery and improved ability to listen and dialogue with each other. Students' writing demonstrated improved structural features and narrative devices as well as more sophisticated use of description and characterisation.

An extension of the project in 2009 across year four classes in three Sydney primary schools used the drama strategy of readers' theatre to improve students' reading fluency and comprehension. The teachers modelled the use of voice qualities such as tone and pitch, as well as pause and body percussion. Students developed their own scripts and all three schools collaborated in a readers' theatre festival. Participant teachers observed the renewed enthusiasm in reading and documented improved inferential comprehension. After one term some children's reading ages, as measured by the Neale analysis of Reading Ability, had improved by well over a year (Warhurst, Ahrens & Kilpatrick, 2010).

Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education, Europe

Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education (DICE) was a large scale research project undertaken in twelve European countries. The research consortium set out to explore the impact of educational drama and theatre. Led by Adam Cziboly, Kava Theatre in Education in Hungary, the project linked universities from Poland, Czech Republic, Norway and Portugal with Theatre Companies in the Netherlands, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, Palestine and Serbia, a Romanian Culture and Arts Centre and a Swedish Centre for Children and Youth.

DICE Volume 1 of the research report provides the project rationale/raison d'etre, summarises the findings, lists recommendations and details the resources and references used. The second DICE volume documents 12 case studies and elaborates on the processes employed. Considered 'an empirical turning point' given that educational theatre and drama artists worked with academics to measure the impact, the project was highly ambitious and large scale. Data was collected from 4,475 students aged between 13-16 across 111 different drama or theatre projects as well as from the teachers, independent observers and the theatre/drama program leaders and external assessors. The 111 projects were assessed by leading drama experts against the Lisbon key competencies on a scale of 1-10. Teachers and students filled in questionnaires before and after the project as did the control group.

In summary, the researchers reported findings demonstrating that students who regularly participated in educational theatre and drama activities (as

opposed to their peers who had not been participating in any educational theatre and drama programmes):

- … are assessed more highly by their teachers in all aspects,
- feel more confident in reading and understanding tasks,
- feel more confident to communicate, (…)
- are better at problem solving,
- are better at coping with stress,
- are more tolerant towards both minorities and foreigners,
- are more active citizens,
- show more interest in voting at any level [of government],
- show more interest in participating in public issues,
- are more empathetic: they have concerns for others,
- are more able to change perspectives,
- are more innovative and entrepreneurial,
- show more dedication towards their future and have more plans,
- are much more willing to participate in any genre of arts and culture (…),
- are more likely to be a central character in class,
- have a better sense of humour,
- feel better at home. (DICE 2010/1, pp. 6-7).

'This is too good to be true,' was the comment of one of the European officials in the opening keynote in Brussels in October 2010 where the DICE-Consortium presented their findings!

Identity Texts, Western Sydney

When working with English as an Additional Language / Dialect (EALD) students in highly disadvantaged areas in western Sydney Janet Dutton, Jacqueline D'Warte, Joanne Rossbridge and Kathy Rushton (2018) foregrounded the importance of identity texts (Cummins & Early, 2011; Cummins, Hu, Markus & Montro, 2015, p. 556). Any oral or written text that reveals some aspect of a student's own life and is developed in response to the relationships between identity affirmation, society's power relations and literary engagement can be thought of as an identity text. Dutton et al (2018) demonstrated the power of drama strategies that enabled students' to draw on their own stories as shaped by their cultural backgrounds:

> … drama pedagogy offers an ideal vehicle to help students move to understandings about self, others and the world. It creates rich opportunities in all our classrooms, especially those with second language learners because: embodiment and enactment are often precursors to other ways of knowing … (p. 11).

Further, the emphasis on affect in drama processes can help reduce anxiety for second language learners and, over time, foster their confidence in oral communication (Piazzoli, 2014).

KITE, South East Queensland, Australia

From 2009 until 2012 the KITE Arts Education Program, Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Education Queensland delivered the *Yonder* project to twenty low socio-economic schools in South East Queensland (SEQ), targeting children in primary schools (Jones, 2014). The project was a large-scale participative arts project that worked as an intervention with students as well as professional development for teachers. It provided a series of arts experiences and creative processes that resulted in students presenting a performance at a key cultural institution. In particular, drama pedagogy was used by teacher artists and professional artists to draw on the children's experiences to reflect their hopes, dreams and wishes for the future.

The research question that framed this study was: 'Can arts-based participative projects in low socio-economic primary schools have long-term impacts, develop attitudinal change and build capacity for ongoing arts engagement?' It sought to understand if the project had more than a tokenistic, feel-good effect, and investigated evidence of impact on students, teachers and principals , and parents of children in primary schools twelve months after the event. Four criteria were presented in the contextual review to summarise the impacts of arts education interventions for schools with low socio-economic communities. The criteria were: improved engagement of parents and families in school life; improved social and emotional development and team-building skills for students; increased awareness of the value of arts education for teachers, principals and schools overall; and improved student engagement and attendance. These criteria served as a framework to analyse the data collected during the research. Overall, there was evidence that the project was still having impact twelve months after its completion. Parents, teachers, principals and, in some instances, children described the intensity of the

experience as a circuit breaker, an opportunity for learning in a different way and thus to perceive themselves in a new and reinvented light.

The Open Storybox project, Queensland and New South Wales, Australia

The aim of *The Open Story Box* project (Davis, 2017) led by Susan Davis and Central Queensland University in partnership with Sydney Theatre Company was for early childhood teachers to be introduced to using drama strategies in their early childhood classrooms and enable them to see the benefits of learning *through* The Arts, not just *about* The Arts. The professional learning was grounded in creative and engaging pedagogy including Reggio Emelia principles. The resources in the Open Story Box were workshopped with participant teachers to open up a range of rich experiences that they then adapted for the needs of their learners in their own contexts to tell their stories about place. The professional learning model proposed reflected the value of a multi-modal approach and the use of a blend of different media including digital platforms and technologies.

Y-Connect, Yeronga State High School, Brisbane, Australia

Y-Connect was a unique three year (2016-8) government funded multi-arts project partnership between Griffith University and Yeronga State High School in Queensland. It aims to support students' learning and sense of belonging by using arts-based pedagogies. Artists and artist-teachers partnered with teachers to deliver both classroom-based learning and extra-curricular activities at Yeronga State High School. Yeronga is a multicultural Queensland school with students from over 60 countries including a significant proportion from refugee backgrounds. Six case studies are currently being finalised. One focuses on the impact on the project on both mainstream and EALD students. Another examines small groups of newly arrived year 10 students who are using drama based approaches to learning English. As Julie Dunn (2018) reported:

> With maths lessons involving dance artists, English lessons co-taught by actors and playwrights, students singing and composing with Opera Queensland or doing acrobatic tricks with Circa Circus team members, there is no such thing as a normal school day for students at Yeronga State High School … In the 21st century, finding ways to engage young people in learning is always a challenge, so we are very pleased to report the energising impact the project has had on student learning and the flow-on effect this has had on their academic achievement.

The researchers were keen to see if arts-based approaches could enhance connectedness and belonging across the school. The research report documented highly positive findings around connectedness and belonging and also a significant improvement in NAPLAN literacy results.

Many of the professional learning and partnership features that are characteristic of the above programmes are also reflected in the *School Drama* program discussed in the following section.

The *School Drama* program (Australia)

Over the last decade, the Sydney Theatre Company (STC) in partnership with The University of Sydney, has developed and implemented a teacher professional learning program, *School Drama*. This program fosters teacher confidence and expertise in the use of drama processes with quality literature to enhance student identity, empathy and compassion as well as deepening their English and literacy skills. It is based on and extends Ewing's (2002, 2006, 2009) academic mentoring work with teachers over 17 years at Curl Curl North Primary School.

In the Classic form of *School Drama*, actors or teaching artists work alongside participant primary teachers in their classrooms over seven weeks, modelling the use of educational drama as a powerful medium for improving students' English and literacy learning (Ewing & Saunders, 2016, 2017).

At the heart of the program is ongoing teacher professional learning and a co-mentoring relationship between primary teachers and experienced actors that re-awakens the teachers' own artistry. Using drama strategies to improve student engagement in a selected area of English and literacy, in turn improves the overall learning outcomes of students (Ewing et al, 2015; Saunders, 2015, 2019).

The pilot program was undertaken over four years in five inner city Sydney state primary schools from 2009-2012. Its success in those schools has led to the program's ongoing refinement and its extension across Australia. It will soon reach all education sectors in every Australian state. Two of the pilot study schools remain involved in the program a decade later. All participant teachers and actors are initially involved in three hour professional learning workshop so they experience the drama strategies and conventions first hand and reflect

on how they apply to language and literacy learning. In addition principals and executive are encouraged to participate in these initial workshops.

At the beginning of the classroom program the teaching artist and teacher meet to discuss the focus for the seven-week time frame. The teacher identifies the relevant literacy focus using outcomes derived from current syllabus documents and an analysis of the children's needs. For example, the teacher might identify that the children need to improve their expressive oral language skills or their inferential comprehension, their confidence in imaginative writing or their capacity to use descriptive language in their writing.

The teaching artist and class teacher then plan and team teach a seven week program incorporating relevant drama strategies and authentic literary texts. Each weekly session spans 60-90 minutes and after each session the teacher and teaching artist engage in a short debriefing session. Benchmarking of the students' capacities in the identified literacy area occurs before and after the program to assess student starting points and progress over the program. Pre- and post-program surveys are conducted with teachers and debriefing focus sessions are undertaken with teaching artists after each program. A meta-analysis (Gibson & Smith, 2013) and ten case studies have been undertaken (Beaumont, in press; Saunders, 2019; Mcatamney, 2018; Hankus 2016; Saunders, 2015; Smith, 2014; Sze, 2013; Robertson, 2010) to explore various aspects of the program. At the time of writing nearly 30,000 teachers and their students had been involved in the program.

It has been critical to monitor the sustainability of such professional learning over an extended time frame. A variety of methods have been used to collect data from principals and executive staff, teachers, students and teaching artists to ensure that all participant voices and perspectives are heard. It does appear that this program is an innovative way of developing transformative teacher professional practice as well as deep literacy learning understanding for students. To date, based on information collected and analysed, it is clear that the co-mentoring model is a highly effective professional learning approach. Both teachers and teaching artists express surprise at how valuable it is for them as well as the participating students. Teachers certainly value the distinction between building expertise and confidence through co-teaching and learning rather than, as in some artist in residence programs, a program that emphasises *learning from* an expert. Teachers consolidate

their learning between and beyond the teaching artists' visits. This has been shown to be at the heart of the creative transformation of teachers' practice. And the teaching artists are also surprised by the depth of the new learnings and understandings of using their craft and expertise in this way.

Teachers consistently report improved engagement, empathy and confidence as well as literacy outcomes for their students. They note as well as a growth in their own confidence, understanding and expertise in using drama strategies in their programming across the curriculum. They frequently acknowledge a growth in or a return to their own creative pedagogical processes. The research findings also underline that the participant teachers' excitement with and enthusiasm for being associated with a working theatre and professional actors alongside their new-found expertise in their use of drama. As classroom teacher Teri Mortimer (2019, p. 21) concludes after her work with *The Burnt Stick* during her *School Drama* experience with year 5:

> If we want students to be building 21st century skills (skills that include critical understanding, emotional intelligence, empathy and resilience) we need to make space where students can grow these in practical, engaging and real life contexts. … Providing opportunities that allow them to build empathy and resilience through investigating other people's lives and stories through great quality books is critical.

Student benchmarking before and after the drama intervention shows improvement in the selected literacy focus for most participating students but this improvement is most marked for lower achieving students. During focus groups and interviews students are also able to articulate their literacy gains. Interestingly, many also make observations about how they feel the drama supports this improvement. For example during a focus group (Saunders, 2015) year six students commented:

> Holly: You get to really … um … be someone else, like step into someone else's shoes instead of being yourself for the whole lesson … (p. 54).
>
> Joshua (in focus group): … usually you would just read the book from start to finish but this we are reading two or three chapters or just one and diving into the book so we are becoming characters and making frozen moments of what would happen in the book. Like bringing it to life. (p. 83).

Genuine collaboration between the teacher and teaching artist is both critical for and central to enabling and empowering teacher knowledge, understanding and confidence. Working together, learning from each other and sharing new ideas grows experience and expertise, and professional dialogue nurtures the development of authentic learning communities. With such opportunities, teachers can build courage and capacity to meaningfully embed drama in both their literacy program and across other subjects in the curriculum, and to articulate these philosophies and processes in their school communities.

It is also clear that teachers who have been involved in the *School Drama* program continue to use the drama strategies modelled for them in their subsequent English and literacy programs indicating the sustainability of the processes. Both text (Ewing & Saunders, 2016) and online resources (Ewing & Saunders, *The School Drama Companion*, 2016 b) have been developed and the *School Drama Hub* professional learning program has been created to address the demand from teachers who have been involved in the Classic program to continue their professional development and involvement in the learning community. Attending twilight workshops to learn more, trying their learning out in their specific contexts and reporting back in the next workshop enables both a consolidation of skills and understandings as well as renewal. New units of work are jointly written and shared.

Further indications of the success of *School Drama* include its adaptation for use in intensive English classes in secondary schools for EALD students (Beaumont, in press; Mcatamney, 2018); in juvenile justice centres for disengaged students; in adult English classes for refugees (Campbell & Hogan, 2019; Jacobs, Campbell & Hogan, 2018) and in early childhood contexts (Karaolis, in press).

Core to *School Drama's* success is the teacher professional learning co-mentoring model that underpins the program. Bentley's (2015) key features of an effective professional learning framework have been reinterpreted by Abbey MacDonald (2018) for arts professional learning and are relevant here. The framework's features include time for consultation, planning and debriefing around shared purpose and vision; the forging of a genuine partnership and the development of collegiality and trust to learn from each other. Perhaps most important, however, is the recognition of the intertwining of teacher, artist and student wellbeing, a growth in confidence and, consequently, a growth in identified literacy skills.

School Drama is one example of a successful teacher professional learning program that focuses on building teacher confidence to embed drama-rich pedagogies that foster the growth of 21st century skills in English and literacy classrooms. It reflects the elements of many successful arts education programs both in Australia and overseas.

Having detailed the importance and benefits of drama-rich creative pedagogy in becoming literate, including some examples and relevant programs, this final section considers the implications.

Implications: drama rich pedagogy and becoming deeply literate

Critical literacy, a term which has triggered much controversy in literacy and English circles as well as in the media, has been defined here as the ability to understand and make meanings that penetrate literal or surface interpretations of texts (in their broadest sense) including the ability to think about the implications for different people and contexts. If we are to understand the information we receive from computers, mobile phones, blogs, photographs, paintings, billboards and podcasts (to name just a few) we must be able to intelligently sift this myriad of information that bombards us daily to turn information into knowledge and knowing. Drama processes can enable us to read, analyse and reflect, with a view to effectively interpreting this information and testing its authenticity, while at the same time remaining conscious of our own social and cultural biases. Further, as Andrew Upton reminded us, we are all attracted into imaginary worlds as a retreat from the everyday. Drama helps us move out of the everyday to imagine new possibilities and potentialities (Upton, 2014).

Becoming deeply and critically literate does not develop through remembering, synthesising and repeating syllables, words and phrases. While these skills are part of the process, a deep understanding of what it means to be literate in today's world and how we can take action involves the whole person – body and mind, feelings and spirit. Drama rich pedagogies provide a rich and powerful base for transformative language and literacy learning, enabling us to be someone else, somewhere else, using our bodies, creating shared meaning through dialogic talk in an imagined world … They are built on interactive collaborative experiences as well as reflection on

the processes of talking, listening, reading, writing and viewing and provide opportunities to transform our stereotypical ideas and practices, potentially changing our relationships with others and the world. Drama-rich pedagogies can also deeply impact teachers' own artistry and creative literacy learning.

Using drama will enable educators and learners alike to build on the creativity and flexibility that the large majority of children bring to school.

While this monograph has focused on the synergistic relationship between drama, literature and English and literacy, the evidence from programs such as *School Drama* strongly suggests that drama processes can deepen teacher learning and help transform traditional classroom pedagogy across the curriculum. In addition, drama can effect change in social behaviours, because it provides opportunities for learners to explore multiple perspectives and work through real issues and dilemmas.

It is clear that the relationships between drama, language and literacy development and literary understandings are long and well established, and as compelling today as they were decades ago. However, teachers, both those in pre-service teacher education programs and those who are already teaching, need courage, confidence and ongoing rich professional learning opportunities to turn this potential into reality in their classrooms. They need to be pro-active in enabling relevant education authorities, policymakers and parents to understand these potentialities too. Learning through drama-rich, and arts-rich pedagogies more broadly, foster ways of making connections to the whole range of 21st century skills alongside a deep sense of personal wellbeing and agency that will enable learners' ongoing commitment to understanding self and the other. The education profession must, however, become more proactive in changing the game for the transformative potential of drama and other artforms to be realised.

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In the areas of English, literacy and the arts, Robyn's research has particularly focused on the use of drama-rich pedagogy with authentic literature to develop students' imaginations and critical literacies. She has worked in partnership with Sydney Theatre Company on the teacher professional learning program *School Drama* since 2009.

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Robyn is an Honorary Associate with Sydney Theatre, Principal Fellow of the Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA), Board member of West Words and Visiting Scholar at Barking Gecko Children's Theatre. She has served as a Council member and Chair of the Academic Board of the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), as president of ALEA and the Primary English Teachers Association (PETAA) and as Vice President of Sydney Story Factory.

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