

Literacy-Enriched Dramatic Play

in Kindergarten

A Paper

Presented to the Faculty of

Viterbo University

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

by

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May, 2009

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Approved – Instructor

Date

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Since the passing of No Child Left Behind (2001) and the movement to standards based curriculum there has been more pressure put upon schools, teachers, and students for accountability. Due to this increased pressure schools were looking for ways to increase student achievement. As a Kindergarten teacher I felt the pressure of increased guidelines of instructional time devoted to teaching reading and math. This resulted in the reduction of time allocated to other areas. The first target usually brought up in Kindergarten was dramatic play. However, I struggled with cutting back the time my students were allowed to play with their peers because I saw so many benefits socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Roskos and Christie (2007) found play as an effective means for promoting all aspects of child development. With all the benefits of dramatic play I believed it could also have a positive impact on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement. Saracho (2001) found emergent literacy evident using a play environment in which children experienced reading, writing, speaking, and listening. I believed all forms of play could have benefits, but for the purpose of this study, I focused on the impact of literacy-enriched dramatic play.

### Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify the impact literacy-enriched dramatic play had on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement.

### Research Question

What impact did literacy-enriched dramatic play have on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement?

### Sub-Questions

- Did students demonstrate increased literacy behaviors in literacy-enriched dramatic play settings?
- What themes in dramatic play led to the greatest amounts of literacy interactions?
- What types of literacy interactions did students engage in during literacy-enriched dramatic play?
- Did high achieving students engage in greater number of literacy interactions than low achieving students?

### First Research Hypothesis

Literacy-enriched dramatic play had an impact on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement.

### First Null Hypothesis

Literacy-enriched dramatic play had no impact on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement.

### Definitions of Terms

**Standards**-learning objectives outlining what students need to know, understand, and be able to do

**Dramatic Play**-children adopt roles and use make-believe transformation to act out stories (Christie, 1990)

**Immature dramatic play**-children repeat the same sequence of actions and stay in the same roles

**Mature dramatic play**-dramatic play with multiple roles and the use of symbolic props

**Literacy-enriched dramatic play**-dramatic play in which the setting the children were playing in was stocked with literacy materials

**Literacy achievement**-students showed measurable gains in literacy assessments

**Literacy interactions**-any attempt a student made to read or write

**Kindergarten Students**-students who are 5 and 6 years old and enrolled in school

**High achieving students**-students who perform above grade level expectations

**Low achieving students**-students who perform below grade level expectations

**Running records** – a method of assessing reading that can be done quickly and frequently. It is an individually conducted formative assessment, which is ongoing and curriculum based. It provides a graphic representation of a student's oral reading, identifying patterns of effective and ineffective strategy use.

***On the Mark Assessment Kits*** – a common, ongoing assessment kit published by Wright Group to assess student reading level. *On-the-Mark Assessment* guides provide a variety of authentic assessment tools for the teacher to help identify students' specific strengths and skill areas in which they need support.

### Limitations

For the purpose of the study the following limitations were noted:

- The sample selected for this study was students of the researcher and bias may have been a factor.
- The sample of this study was limited and not randomly selected: therefore, the finding might not have been generalized.
- The sample selected received direct literacy instruction daily.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the impact literacy-enriched dramatic play had on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement. There have been numerous studies done exploring young children's literacy achievement through dramatic play. The chapter was organized in a topical format. The first part of the review examined the movement to standards based curriculum. Secondly, the review focused on the impact of dramatic play on the development of young children. Thirdly, literacy-enriched dramatic play was examined. This chapter concluded with a summary of the finds.

The following was a summary of the related professional literature and a synthesis of its pertinence to this research.

### Standards Based Movement

Standards based education reform has transformed the United States educational system over the past two decades. The standards based reform movement calls for clear, measurable standards for all school students. Standards outline what students need to know, understand and be able to do. These standards are then the driving force in what teachers teach in the classrooms.

The movement began in 1983 with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) *A Nation at Risk* declared the American public school system was not adequately preparing students for the future. The finds of the study stated "declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted. The findings that follow, culled from a

much more extensive list, reflect four important aspects of the educational process: content, expectations, time, and teaching.” (A Nation at Risk, 1983 p. 17) A Nation at Risk prompted educators to look at standards as a way to raise student expectations and performance.

With the passing of No Child Left Behind in 2001 the standards based movement was reinforced. No Child Left Behind called for all states to have approved state standards and these standards are assessed yearly once students enter third grade through high quality state standardized assessment test. Furthermore, No Child Left Behind backed the emphasis on standards and assessment with federal funds allocation.

With the emphasis put on standards and assessment how did this impacted classrooms? Irons found “High stakes testing associated with standards may limit content taught to content tested, narrowing the depth and breadth of content area options because of stringent state standards associated with them.” (Irons, 2007, p. 15) Teachers felt the pressure that everything they teach needed to be directly linked to academic standards.

When teachers were being pressured to ensure all teaching was directly linked to academic standards more and more emphasis was being placed on teaching students using direct instruction forms of teaching. This ensured the teacher covered the standards and all students were exposed. Early Childhood programs were even turning to more direct forms of instructions to teach the basics of language, early literacy and numbers. (Christie and Roskos, 2007)

The standards movement did not only impacted what and how teachers teach, but the motivation of students. Wang, Beckett, and Brown (2006) found the high stakes accountability system in place with No Child Left Behind provided an overreliance on extrinsic motivation at the expense of intrinsic motivation. “The higher the stakes, the less intrinsically motivated the

teaching and learning becomes.” (Wang, Beckett, Brown, 2006, p. 319) Therefore, the students were no longer learning for the sake of knowledge, instead they were learning for the test score or another extrinsic reward. (Hatch, Grieshaber, 2002)

The standards based movement and the accountability behind it was leading teachers to look closely at what they were teaching and how they were teach it. No Child Left Behind called for practices to be researched based. In regards to play “Lack of strong evidence linking play with academic outcomes have worked together to marginalize play as a context for learning school readiness skills. In today’s pragmatic climate, if an activity is not directly linked with the skills needed for school success, that activity can be quickly forced out of the early childhood curriculum.” (Roskos and Christie, 2007 p. 201)

Furthermore, accountability concerns were being pushed down to younger and younger children. Thus, teachers and children were feeling the pressure of the standards. Hatch and Grieshaber found patterns between the advancement of accountability concerns and the retreat of traditional child observation. (Hatch, Grieshaber, 2002) When observation of children was not being use as often, it was no longer the basis foundation used for developing curriculum based on what children needs developmentally. (Hatch, Grieshaber, 2002) This was a concern to researchers.

### Why Dramatic Play?

In an era of academic standards and assessment dramatic play was often not the burning question in the minds of administrators, teachers, and parents. Instead, everyone was focused on the issues related to school readiness and reading achievement. However, for decades research has shown the importance of dramatic play as a means to the foundational skills for learning.

Christie defined dramatic play as “children adopt roles and use make-believe transformations to act out stories.” (Christie, 1990) Dramatic play was most often seen in children between the ages of 4 and 6. In their research, Bodrova and Leong (2003) found children during this age were capable of engaging in complex mature dramatic play with multiple roles and the use of symbolic props. However, play was not what it was 20 or 30 years ago because children spend less time at home playing with peers and more time playing alone. Therefore, Bodrova and Leong concluded children are not engaging in this mature form of dramatic play. Instead, preschool and kindergarteners were still seen engaged in immature dramatic play in which children repeat the same sequence of actions and stay in the same roles. Bodrova and Leong also found immature dramatic play doesn't provide the same benefits as mature dramatic play.

Researchers have found dramatic play did have numerous benefits to children. First, play developed the whole child. It promoted social, emotional, and intellectual development. (Honig, 2007) Play in the early childhood years was necessary because it supplied the brain with what it needs to grow: exploring, testing ideas and skills in a non threatening environment, combining materials and actions, repeating action to automaticity, inventing and pretending. (Sutton and Smith, 1999) Play also was highly motivational. While children were playing they are engaged and motivated. This motivation had been shown to increase the ability of the brain to remember. (Helm, 2008)

Vygotsky (1978) found play as a critical role in the mental development of children. Vygotsky's approach was to emphasize underlying competencies instead of specific facts and skills as standards do. Vygotsky also believed human development was a complex interplay between nature and nurture and during the preschool and kindergarten year's children needed to

develop intentional behavior. Further, intentional behavior was developed during dramatic play. (Bodrova and Leong, 2005) Thus, Vygotsky and his colleagues promoted enriched development, instead of trying to push down the curriculum which we were seeing in many schools.

However, for dramatic play to be most meaningful and effective there were several factors teachers needed to have in place. First, dramatic play settings provided the greatest benefit when set up as theme based play settings. (Christie, 1990) For example, a doctor's office, post office, or a bank were some of the theme based play settings teachers could rotate in classrooms. Secondly, Christie (1990) found children are more likely to engage in rich, sustained dramatic play when given 30 minutes of uninterrupted play time daily. Thirdly, the type of adult involvement played a factor in the outcome of dramatic play on the development of children. (Saracho, 2004) This adult involvement will be looked at further later.

Thus, research did in fact provide many reasons for promoting dramatic play in the classrooms of preschool and kindergartners.

### Literacy-enriched Dramatic Play

However, academic standards were what was driving the education system at the time and many administrators and teachers have a hard time seeing the connections to dramatic play and academics. Therefore, literacy-enriched dramatic play settings were a good balance between academic standards and the developmental benefits of dramatic play.

Literacy-enriched dramatic play could be defined as dramatic play in which the setting the children were playing in was stocked with literacy materials. For example, the dramatic play setting was turned into a doctor's office. In the play setting a child found all the instruments a doctor would use, however the child would also see many literacy materials such as a pad of

paper to write prescriptions, telephone message pad, a calendar to schedule patients, patient files, and more. Almost any theme based play setting could be turned into literacy-enriched dramatic play by adding literacy materials to the play area.

There have been numerous initiatives researched in which enriched dramatic play promotes literacy. In 2001 Roskos and Christie critically looked at play research over the decades, they found play to serve literacy in three specific ways. First, it provided a setting that promoted literacy activity, skills, and strategies. Secondly, play served as a language experience which was a foundation for reading and writing. Lastly, play provided a setting to teach and learn literacy. Since the 2001 publishing, Roskos and Christie (2007) also found literacy-enriched dramatic play encourages more play with print, supports book-reading, develops language skills, and motivates children to read and write. Saracho (2000) found numerous opportunities for children to practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening from dramatic play activities. She also found children communicating in an endless variety of forms and media during dramatic play.

Numerous studies have also documented the number of literacy activities in dramatic play setting and then in literacy-enriched dramatic play settings. Each study found children had more literacy experiences in the literacy-enriched dramatic play setting. (Neuman and Roskos, 1997) Further Justice and Pullen (2003) found increases in literacy-related behaviors in literacy-enriched dramatic play have been associated with substantial performance changes in written language awareness, particularly in alphabet knowledge and environmental print recognition.

When dramatic play settings were enriched with literacy materials they were found to be motivating and empowering. "Literacy is clearly interwoven through layers of social and

cultural experiences, and by extending children's repertoire across these domains through play and exploration during the pre-school years, we will fulfill the universal right of all children to access knowledge and information, thereby empowering people to enhance their own lives."

(Raban, Coates, 2004)

However, for literacy-enriched dramatic play to have the biggest positive impact on the development of young children and kindergarten student's one main factor becomes apparent, adult involvement. "Young children have their own assumption about and knowledge of the written language, which they actively use in their play and imaginary worlds, we also learned that interventions by a sensitive teacher can relate children's experiences and knowledge in emergent literacy to the real work and build a bridge to it" (Korat, Bahar, Snapir, 2003)

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is widely known and can be used when looking at the role adults take during literacy-enriched dramatic play. The zone of proximal development has been described as what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help. Researchers have looked at the role adults, specifically teacher's role in literacy-enriched dramatic play and have found when involved in the children's play teachers could use children's play in cultivating the children's literacy skills and understandings to support their emergent literacy. (Saracho, 2004) However, teachers and other adults need to have caution when engaging in dramatic play with children. The teacher should not try to take over the play; instead the teacher was there when students need him or her. By the teacher listening and responding to the children, she could affect the kind of solutions the students produce to their problems. The key was the teacher gave them guidance without taking away their control. (Korat, Bahar, Snapir, 2003) Saracho (2004) cautions teachers need to understand their

instructional roles in developing the children's literacy in the context of dramatic play in order for children to learn the prerequisites for reading and writing.

### Summary

The above studies demonstrate the move to standards based curriculum and instruction and the impact it has had on Kindergarten classroom instruction. Further, the research showed the importance of dramatic play, and the impact literacy-enriched dramatic play has had on student literacy. This review of literature provided a theoretical basis for the study which identified the impact literacy-enriched dramatic play has had on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement.

## CHAPTER 3: PROCEDURES

### Research Design

The purpose of this study was to identify the impact literacy-enriched dramatic play had on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement. The design of the study was quasi-experimental, action research that produced qualitative and quantitative data. The variable which was implemented was literacy-enriched dramatic play, which has been previously defined and discussed.

Prior to the implementation of the treatment, the students literacy achievement was pre-tested using running records, letter and sound recognition, and an expressive vocabulary test. The students were also videotaped in a dramatic play setting for three weeks and the number of literacy interactions was recorded using a researcher designed checklist. The students then were treated in a literacy-enriched dramatic play setting for three weeks. During this time the students were videotaped and the number of literacy interactions was recorded using a researcher designed checklist. After the treatment the students were post-tested using running records, letter and sound recognition, and an expressive vocabulary test.

### Sample

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of five Kindergarten students attending Westwood Elementary in De Pere, Wisconsin. The sample consisted of three girls and two boys. All five students were Caucasian with no special needs.

Westwood Elementary is an early childhood through fifth grade elementary school with a population of 608 students in the West De Pere School District. The district serves 2,476 students with 18.4% of the students' families considered to be low income. The population of the West De Pere School District was 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% African American, 2% Hispanic, 10% American Indian, and 84% Caucasian located in the city of De Pere, Wisconsin. The city of De Pere is a fringe city of Green Bay, Wisconsin which is a mid size city.

### Instruments

One main instrument used to obtain data for this study was a checklist of the literacy interactions seen in the dramatic play setting. The checklist was designed by the researcher. (See Appendix A) The researcher used several instruments to identify the literacy achievement of the Kindergartners. The first instrument used was On the Mark running records assessment published by Wright Group. The second instrument used was a letter and sound recognition test designed by the researcher. (See Appendix B) The last instrument used was the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test.

### Data Analysis

The letter sound recognition test was analyzed for the growth in known letters and sounds. The running record assessment was analyzed by looking for improvement in the students' reading ability. The expressive vocabulary test was analyzed by looking for improvement of vocabulary development. A t-test assuming equal variances at the .05 level of significance was calculated to compare pre-test results to post-tests results.

The checklist was examined for a number of factors. First, the checklist was examined for the number of literacy interactions before the treatment of enriching dramatic play with

literacy materials and after the treatment. The checklist was further examined for the kinds of literacy interactions the students engaged in while in the dramatic play setting. Further, the checklist was analyzed for the differences in literacy interactions between the high and low achieving students. The data was analyzed using a bar graph.

To determine the extent to which dramatic play affected the treatment group, a t-test was conducted on pre and post treatment results of running records, letter/sound recognition and expressive vocabulary.

### Calendar

The following was the timeline for this study.

December 15-19 2008	Pre-tested the five students
January 5-23, 2009	Observed and recorded literacy interactions in dramatic play setting
January 26-February 23, 2009	Observed and recorded literacy interactions in literacy-enriched dramatic play setting
February 23-28, 2009	Post-tested the five students
February 28-March13, 2009	Analyzed data and reported findings
March 20, 2009	Submitted first draft to advisor
April 24, 2009	Submitted second draft to advisor
May 15, 2009	Submitted final draft to advisor for approval

### Budget

The cost of conducting this study was minimal.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the impact literacy-enriched dramatic play had on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement. The design of the study was quasi-experimental, action research that produced qualitative and quantitative data. Data was collected from five Kindergarten students using pre and post assessments. Further data was collected from the students being videotaped while in dramatic play and the number of literacy interactions was recorded. This chapter provided a discussion of the results that were reported from the pre and post assessments and videotaped recordings in both quantitative and qualitative form. The results were summarized at the conclusion of this chapter.

### Increased Literacy Interactions

The first sub-question addressed by the researcher examined the effect of literacy-enriched dramatic play and the number of literacy interactions seen in students while in dramatic play area. This was measured by watching the videotape of students in dramatic play and using the researcher designed checklist to document the literacy interactions. The researcher found in each of the three theme-based areas students engaged in more literacy interactions when the theme was literacy-enriched.

Figure 4.1 showed in the housekeeping theme the students engaged in 19 reading and 0 writing interactions. However, when the housekeeping theme was enriched with literacy

materials the student engaged in 11 reading and 41 writing interactions. Thus, the student engaged in 19 literacy interactions total in housekeeping and when literacy-enriched housekeeping the student engaged in 52 literacy interactions total.

**Figure 4.1 - Number of Literacy Interactions in Housekeeping Theme**

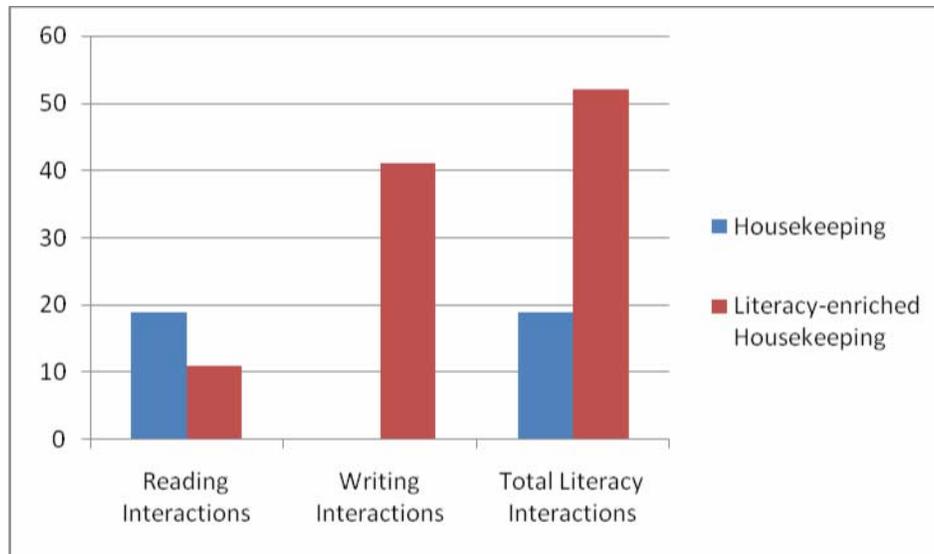


Figure 4.2 showed in the doctor's office theme the students engaged in 0 reading and 0 writing interactions. However, when the doctor's office theme was enriched with literacy materials the student engaged in 7 reading and 27 writing interactions. Thus, the students engaged in 0 literacy interactions total in the doctor's office and in the literacy-enriched doctor's office the students engaged in 34 literacy interactions total.

**Figure 4.2 - Number of Literacy Interactions in Doctor's Office**

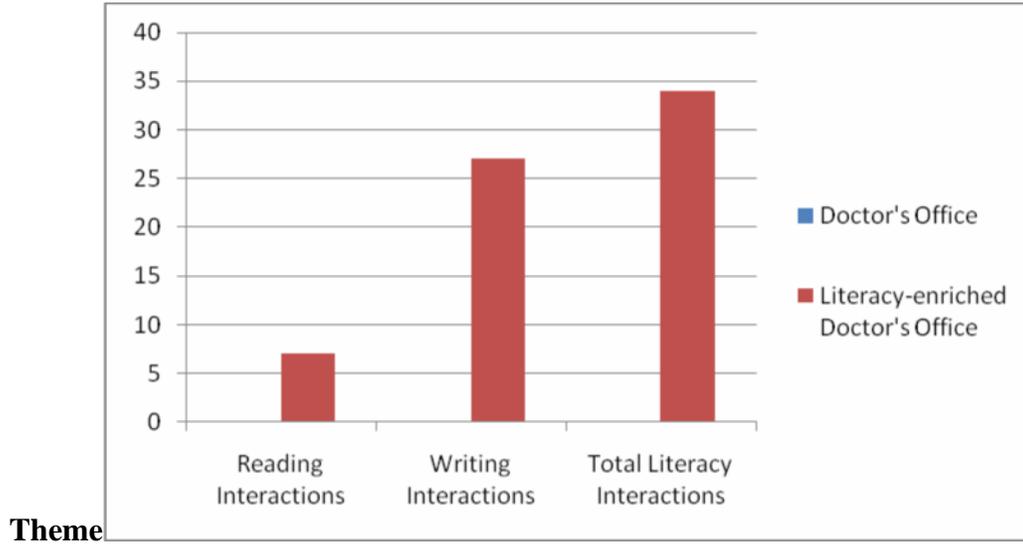
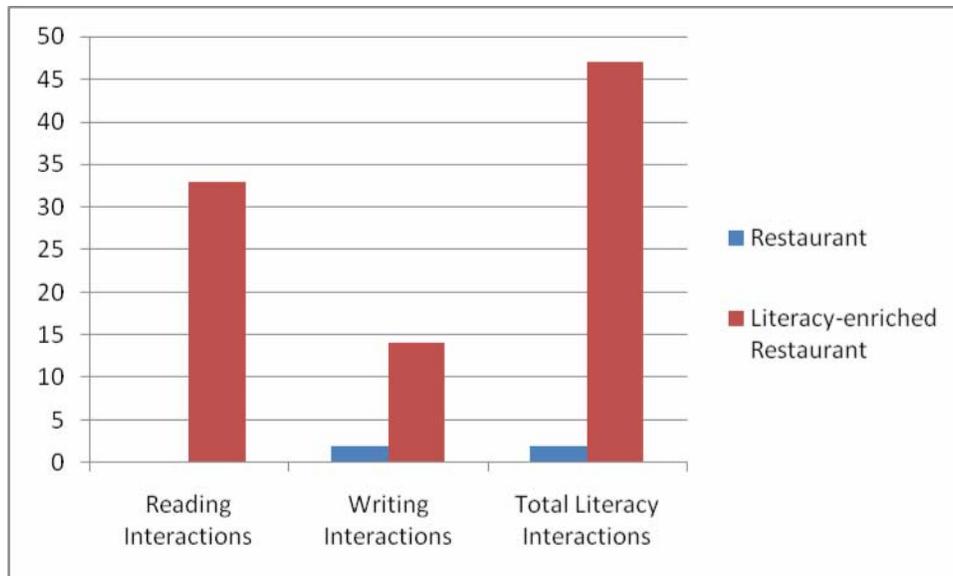


Figure 4.3 showed in the restaurant theme the students engaged in 0 reading and 2 writing interactions. However, when the restaurant theme was enriched with literacy materials the student engaged in 33 reading and 14 writing interactions. Thus, the students engaged in 2 literacy interactions total in restaurant and when literacy-enriched restaurant the students engaged 47 attempts of literacy interactions total.

**Figure 4.3 - Number of Literacy Interactions in Restaurant Theme**

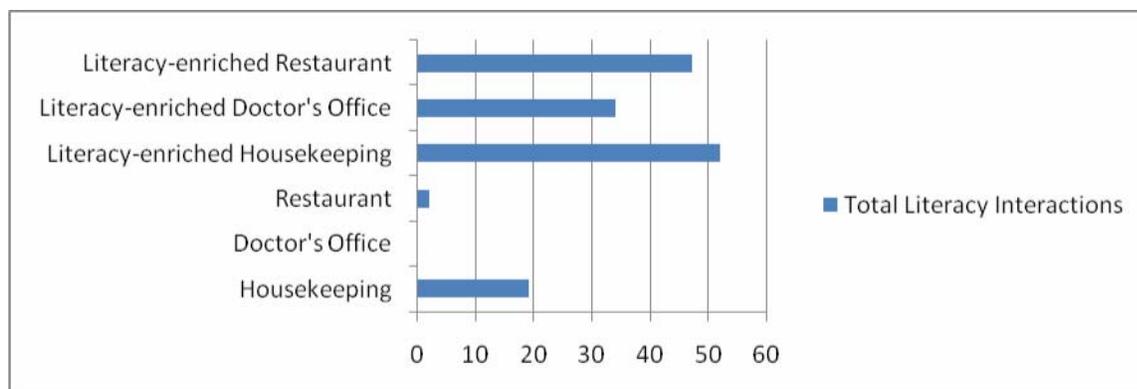


Therefore, in each of the three themes in dramatic play the students engaged in more literacy interactions when the theme was enriched with literacy materials.

#### Theme with Greatest Literacy Interactions

The second sub-question addressed examined which theme in dramatic play led to the greatest amounts of literacy interactions. This was measured by watching the videotape of students in dramatic play and using the researcher designed checklist to document the literacy interactions. The researcher found literacy-enriched housekeeping led to the greatest number of literacy interaction.

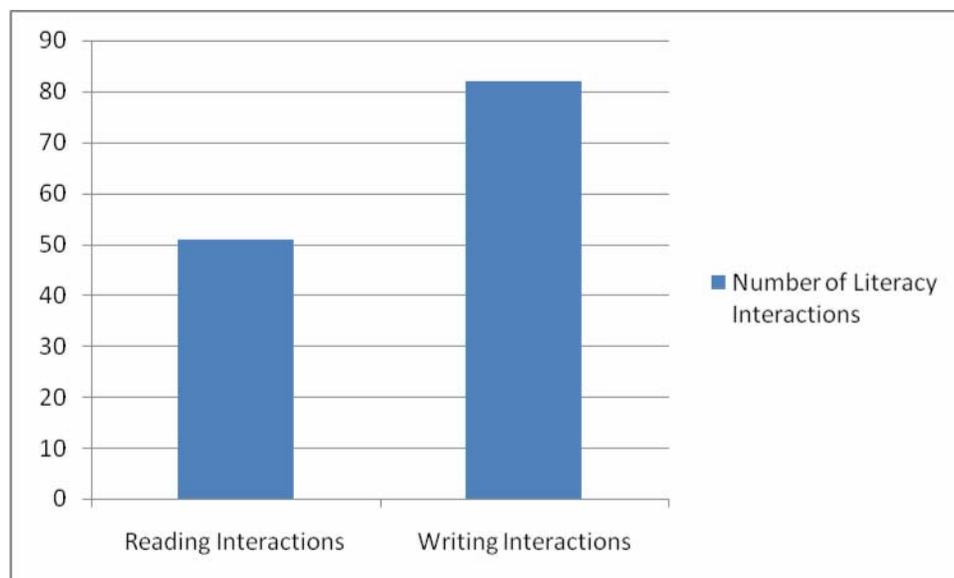
**Figure 4.4 Total Literacy Interactions in Each Theme**



### Type of Literacy Interactions

The third sub-question addressed by the researcher examined which type of literacy interaction students engaged in during literacy-enriched dramatic play. This was measured by watching the videotape of students in dramatic play and using the researcher designed checklist to document the literacy interaction as a reading attempt or writing attempt. The researcher found the students engaged in more writing than reading attempts when the themes were literacy-enriched.

**Figure 4.5 – Types of Literacy Interactions**



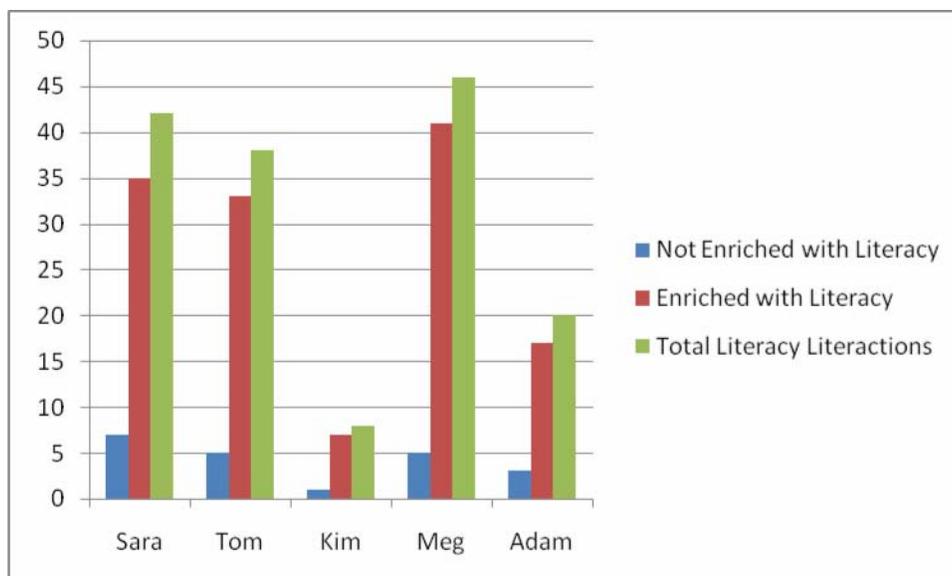
#### Number of Literacy Interactions of Each Student

The fourth sub-question addressed by the researcher examined the number of literacy interaction of high achieving and low achieving students.

Sara (pseudo name) and Tom (pseudo name) were identified by the researcher as high achieving students as defined. Kim, Meg, and Adam (pseudo names) were identified by the researcher as low achieving students as defined.

Figure 4.6 shows the number of literacy interactions each student had in the non-enriched themes, the literacy-enriched themes and the total literacy interactions in both not enriched and enriched.

**Figure 4.6 – Number of Literacy Interactions by Student**



As the figure 4.6 shows Meg has the most total literacy interactions with 46 interactions. Sara and Ryan followed with 42 and 38 respectively. Then, Adam with 20 and Kim with 8 interactions. When looking at the results individually a low achieving student, Meg, had the most literacy interactions followed by the two high achieving students and then the other two low achieving students. However, when the high achieving students interactions were averaged together and the low achieving students' interactions were averaged together, the high achieving students averaged 40 interactions while the low achieving students averaged 24.7 interactions over the observation time.

### Impact on Students' Literacy Achievement

The overall all hypothesis in the research was the effect literacy-enriched dramatic play had an impact on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement. The students' literacy achievement was pre and post testing using running records, letter and sound recognition, and an expressive vocabulary test.

Figure 4.7 shows each student's pre and post treatment results.

**Figure 4.7 – Pre and Post-Treatment Results**

	<b>Running Records</b> Instructional Level		<b>Letter/Sound Recognition</b> % correct		<b>Expressive Vocabulary</b> % correct	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Sara	F	H	98.7%	98.7%	77%	83%
Tom	C	C	94.9%	100%	71%	73%
Kim	B	D	92.3%	96.1%	47%	56%
Meg	A	B	82.1%	98.7%	64%	61%
Adam	Pre-A	A	70.5%	91.0%	58%	63%

As figure 4.7 shows each student except Tom had gains in running records assessment. In the letter/sound recognition assessment each student except Sara had gain in know letters and sounds. For the expressive Vocabulary each student had gains except Meg who fell 3% in her post assessment.

To determine the extent to which dramatic play affected the treatment group, a t-test was conducted on the assessment data for the five students ( $df=4$ ), with a critical value of 2.776 ( $p=.05$ ). The calculated t-value for the students' running records assessments was 3.12, a higher level than the needed 2.776.

A t-test was conducted utilizing the students' letter/sound recognition assessments resulting in a t-value of 2.33. Again referring to the established critical value of 2.776 ( $p=.05$ ) the calculated t-value is lower than the stated critical value of 2.776.

A t-test was conducted utilizing the students' expressive vocabulary assessments resulting in a t-value of 1.87. Again referring to the established critical value of 2.776 ( $p=.05$ ) the calculated t-value is lower than the stated critical value of 2.776.

Furthermore, the results of the t-test showed the treatment was significantly significant for running records data, but not for the other two areas of letter sound recognition and expressive vocabulary. Therefore, even though gains were seen, the t-test does not allow for rejection of the null hypothesis.

### Summary

The findings showed the students had more literacy interactions when in the literacy-enriched dramatic play setting. Further, in the literacy-enriched housekeeping theme students were recorded having the most overall literacy interactions. When looking at the types of interactions the students engaged in more writing attempts than reading attempts. The averaged findings of the high achieving students and low achieving students showed high achieving students on average had more literacy interaction than low achieving students. However, when looked at individually a low achieving student, Meg had the most literacy interactions. Finally, the t-test of pre and post assessments of running records, letter/sound recognition, and expressive vocabulary were unable to reject the null hypothesis.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of literacy-enriched dramatic play on Kindergarten students' literacy achievement. The design of the study was quasi-experimental, action research that produced qualitative and quantitative data. The research sub-questions under the study were the following: 1) Did students demonstrate increased literacy behaviors in literacy-enriched dramatic play settings? 2) What themes in dramatic play led to the greatest amounts of literacy interactions? 3) What types of literacy interactions did students engage in during literacy-enriched dramatic play? 4) Did high achieving students engage in greater number of literacy interactions than low achieving students? In this chapter the researcher will interpret and summarize the findings and suggest implications for future research.

### Discussion of the Findings

This study was done with a convenience sample of students, while other students were able to play in the dramatic play area, only the five students pre and post tested were videotaped and literacy interaction data was gathered on. This small sampling makes it hard to make generalizations about literacy-enriched dramatic play and literacy achievement.

The convenience sample did have increased literacy interactions while in the literacy enriched dramatic play settings. This pointed to literacy-enriched dramatic play to having benefited students' literacy development. However, the research also finds the students didn't have higher achievement in all areas tested. The short time period between testing may have played a factor along with the timing in the school year the research took place. The researcher

questions how the results may have varied if the research began in the beginning of the school year and lasted for a longer period of time.

The research found the literacy-enriched dramatic play areas overall had a greatly number of literacy interactions versus non literacy-enriched dramatic play. Many of the literacy interactions were short incidents were the students only scribbled a few lines on paper or pretended to read a book for less than a minute. While scribbles are seen as developmentally appropriate for the age group and any literacy interaction is better than none, the researcher hoped for more complex, prolonged interactions with literacy materials. The researcher wondered if adults modeled literacy interaction while in dramatic play if students would have more complex, prolonged interaction with literacy materials as seen in other research studies cited previously.

The housekeeping theme produced the most literacy interactions. The researcher believed this is due to the students' familiarity of how literacy is used in the home. The students' had the greatest prior knowledge of a housekeeping theme as they spend a greater deal of their lives in their homes versus a doctor's office or restaurant. Further, the students have seen adults modeling literacy interactions in the home where they have not seen as many literacy interactions modeled in a doctor's office or a restaurant. Therefore, housekeeping is a theme which should be put into dramatic play areas often and when other themes are introduced the teacher should include modeling of different literacy interactions the students could attempt. Further consideration needs to be put into different themes which would produce a great number of literacy interactions such as a grocery store because the student's have prior knowledge of a grocery store and have seen literacy interactions modeled at the grocery store.

The research suggests low achieving students can have a high number of literacy interactions while in the dramatic play area. However, overall high achieving students averaged to have more literacy interactions than low achieving students. The researcher points out one low achieving student had the most literacy interactions and questioned student motivation and interactions with high achieving students in dramatic play as two possible explanations.

If the researcher were to do this study over again, some suggested changes would be:

1. The researcher would have a greater sampling of students.
2. The researcher would have a control group.
3. The researcher would have the students work with different students in dramatic play versus the same students each time in the dramatic play area.
4. The researcher would let the student play in each theme several times and videotape each time to have more data.

The researcher also had three recommendations for future studies:

1. The role peers or adults play in fostering literacy interactions in dramatic play.
2. The types of literacy interactions students engage in during dramatic play and ways to enhance the literacy interactions to have more complex, prolonged reading and writing attempts.
3. Different themes which would produce high amount of literacy interactions.
4. The role high or low achievement plays in the number, complexity, and prolonging of literacy interactions.

The researcher has seen through previous research and her own how literacy enriched dramatic play can have a positive effect in student literacy achievement and will continue to use literacy enriched dramatic play in her classroom. Also, the researcher has begun to work with other Kindergarten teachers to develop literacy enriched theme “boxes” which have materials in them for a specific theme and ways to enhance the literacy interactions in dramatic play. These boxes are to be rotated to teachers to ensure students are exposed to several literacy-enriched dramatic play themes throughout the school year.

### Summary and Future Implications

In summary, the researcher found literacy enriched dramatic play to have a positive impact on the overall literacy achievement of students. Although, the measures of literacy achievement didn't increase in each area for every student, the number of literacy interactions did increase from dramatic play with no literacy-enrichment. Furthermore, the results of the t-test showed statistically significant differences between the pre and post treatment at the alpha value of 0.050 level for running records. Thus, the t-test does not allow for rejection of the null hypothesis. The researcher will continue to find ways to incorporate literacy-enriched dramatic play into the Kindergarten curriculum.

The researcher's own teaching has been affected by this study. Before the study the researcher often conceded to the demands standards-based curriculum with the push of higher achievement and therefore more time spent directly teaching reading and math. However, after conducting this study the researcher clearly sees the need to defend the use of dramatic play in Kindergarten classroom as another means to producing high achievement in literacy.

Questions about the value of dramatic play in general and dramatic play's role in literacy achievement will undoubtedly continue to arise as the movement to standard based curriculum continues in the future, however, from past research, this research, and further research teachers can continue to defend the importance of dramatic play in the classrooms and its role in literacy achievement for our earliest learners. "Literacy is clearly interwoven through layers of social and cultural experiences, and by extending children's repertoire across these domains through play and exploration during the pre-school years, we will fulfill the universal right of all children to access knowledge and information, thereby empowering people to enhance their own lives."

(Raban, Coates, 2004)

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Appendix B