

ECE 401: Overview of Drama in Early Childhood Education

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Definition of Drama

- **Drama:** The act of using the imagination to become someone or something other than yourself.
 - **Act:** Children are actively involved in the drama
 - **Imagination:** Act of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never perceived in reality
 - **Become:** To undergo change or development
 - **Something or someone other than yourself:** Wondering, 'What if...?' and acting as if the imagined was reality

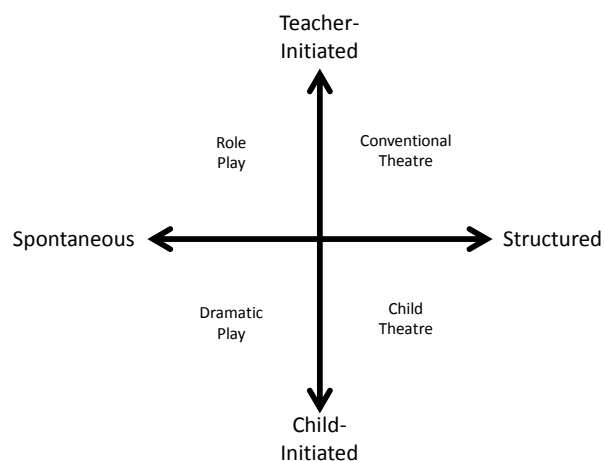
Drama in Education

- *Drama in education* is **NOT** an independent course to teach acting skills
- *Drama in education* means that drama is used a tool for helping children learn important cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual knowledge and skills

Drama in Education

- **Drama in Education:** Process of learning where children can be taught through carefully structured experiences which include plays, dramatic play, and dramatic activities
 - **Process of learning:** Emphasis is on general learning, not learning acting skills
 - **Carefully structured experiences:** High quality instruction requires careful planning by the teacher, (set objectives, gather relevant materials, and introduce the drama learning experience)
 - However, drama in education can also be spontaneous
 - **Plays:** Scripted Theatre
 - **Dramatic Play:** Children's playtime
 - **Dramatic Activities:** Any activity that requires the imagination

Continuum of Drama in Early Childhood Education



Drama and Learning

Principles of Learning

- Learners are active in their attempts to learn (Cognitive Theory)
- Students learn by observing others (Bandura's Observational Learning)
- Social interaction helps learning (Constructivism)
- Meaningful learning occurs within real-world tasks (Constructivism)

Drama

- Dramatizing helps children actively experience what they are learning
- Children observe others' behaviors and learning in drama
- Drama gives social interaction helpful for learning
- Drama is more like the real-world than lecture/ recitation

Theories of Drama

- **Idealism:** Strong emphasis on ethical ideals and values that should be actively pursued. An example of such is "Church dramatization of certain doctrines say, transubstantiation".
 - Goal of drama in education is to help children develop good social and emotional skills to benefit society
- **Realism:** Drama should be based on real-life. An example is Anton Chekhov Three Sisters
 - Dramatic experiences can help children better understand real-life situations
- **Expressionism:** Characters are allowed to express themselves: "Eugene Oneil's *The Hairy Ape*"
 - Role plays enable children to express themselves in a safe and low-stakes environment
- **Surrealism:** Blends the dream world with the real world: an example is Eddie Murphie's "A Thousand Words"
 - Symbolic play blends the imagination with the real world
- **Absurdism:** Drama that is irrational and that rebels against tradition: An Example is Jos Repertory Theatre's workshop developed play: "Combubaration"
 - Allow children to be "absurd" in play because that can bring humor and joy into the classroom and it can help children come to a better understanding of what is rational

Developmental Progression of Drama in Early Childhood (Smilansky, 1968)

- **Imitative play.** Acts out a make-believe role
- **Make-believe with objects.** One object is substituted for another
- **Verbal make-believe.** Orally describe an imaginary situation or person
- **Interaction.** Two or more children interact in a make-believe play