Empathy, Social Intelligence and Critical Thinking: What Can Theatre Education Offer?

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Empathy, Social Intelligence and Critical Thinking:
What Can Theatre Education Offer?

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Final Project Masters of Arts of Liberal Studies Program
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May 6, 2014
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I’m grateful to the many individuals and organizations who have supported this final project in completion of a Master’s of Arts of Liberal Studies degree from Skidmore College. Many thanks to my final project advisor, Leah Lembo, who put in countless hours, listening to me and reading my drafts, offering essential information and insightful direction, and encouraging my process. Many thanks to Jeff Jamner, my second reader and a source of encouragement and support throughout this process. Thank you to the MALS program faculty and staff including; my first advisor Alison Barnes for supporting my initial coursework; to Sandra Welter, Ellen Eldridge and the staff of the Skidmore College MALS program, both current and past for accepting me into this program and nurturing my work along the way. Thank you to the committee who accepted my final project’s research and methodology for their guidance and suggestions.

Thank you to the Danville Independent School District, my fellow educators, teaching artists (both in and out of the district), and especially to my students. You played an essential role in this final project and you surprised me daily with your creativity and engagement with arts and education.

Thank you to my friends for continuing to ask about my work through this lengthy process, and for encouraging me to step away to gain perspective. Finally thank you to Dylan and Gus for supporting your mother’s life-long learning, and to my husband Matthew for supporting me tirelessly with both a shoulder to cry on and as a partner in celebrations!
Abstract

This study examines the relationship of theatre, education, and emotional and social intelligence. The applied research component explores what theatrical processes can offer the efforts to address the issues of bullying by developing skills (focusing on empathy) to help deal with that issue in a substantive way. In this study, I provide a selected review of literature with regards to: how theatre has historically addressed social issues, the current state of bullying with an emphasis on bullying in schools, and how theatre is currently addressing the issue of bullying in both school and theatrical settings. The role that emotional and social intelligence plays, as espoused by Daniel Goleman, in preventing bullying and how that compares with tools developed by theatre artists and nurtured in theatre audiences is also examined. In the applied research portion of the project, I create a case study that follows a high school production of *The Secret Life of Girls*, a play about teen-age girls and bullying, by Linda Daugherty. Included in the participant-observer case study are rehearsal observations, observations of 3 school-day performances, and interactions with the five schools attending the school-day performances. Conclusions show that theatrical processes contain promise in nurturing and developing social and emotional intelligence and that further study is warranted.
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Introduction

From the time of ancient Greek theatre, which is some of the earliest drama that we have written record of, theatre has been used to both explore what is meant to be human and the world that we occupy. Plays investigate the complexities of human relationships and the conflicts present in everyday life as well as larger conflicts among societies, ideas, countries and nations. In the 5th c. BCE, Aristotle wrote of the concept of “catharsis” in drama saying that tragedy could transport us from everyday concerns by making us aware that there can be nobility in suffering (Poetics). Shakespeare’s tragedies explored the tragic flaws of powerful men often ending with a slew of dead bodies across the stage as in “Macbeth” and “Hamlet”. Shakespeare’s histories explored actual historic events and rulers as in his Richard and Henry series, while his comedies still provide audiences the chance to laugh at the idiosyncrasies of young love and misplaced identity. It’s sometimes said that we “lose” ourselves in a good drama, giving ourselves the opportunity to slip into the world of a good story. In the opening to “A Guide to Studying the Relationship Between Engineering and Theatre”, Dr. Bruch wrote:

From the very beginning of civilization, the theatre has helped us discover and understand ourselves and our relationship with our world, with others, and with God (or the gods.) As such, it is and always has been an affirming force in the world. As Ludwig Lewisohn (1882-1955) stated, "In all ages the drama, through its portrayal of the acting and suffering spirit of man, has been more closely allied than any other art to his deeper thoughts concerning his nature and destiny."

Unlike any other art, the total, intense focus of theatre is on the human being, his
or her existence, and his or her relationship with life. It is a part of human nature to need to examine who we are in relationship with where we are. Consequently, basic elements of theatre and drama exist in every society. Stories, both actual and fictional, connect audiences and the “tellers” to the subject matter through engaging plotlines and twists, compelling characters and character relationships, and thought-provoking themes and action. Theatre and storytelling have done this for centuries, engaging audiences, helping artists and audiences question events and actions, while shaping their beliefs. This project studies how the process of theatrical rehearsal and theatrical performance grow critical awareness of, and empathy with, bullying among middle and high school students. Can theatre guide students to examine the issue of bullying through a deeply reflective lens? What do theatrical processes provide when used to both develop a production and to view a production that aren’t provided by other types of bullying prevention programs and curriculum? I examine several contemporary theatrical processes and the theory of social/emotional intelligence and create an applied participant/observer study in which fifteen high school students develop a production of a play entitled “The Secret Life of Girls”. The study includes observations of the play’s five performances and talkbacks (facilitated audience discussions about ideas and questions raised by the play) to audiences of middle school students and the general public.

If theatre narratives can help us explore our world, and ourselves in that world, then what is their role in developing empathy or emotional intelligence? What role can theatre play in guiding us towards positive explorations of human behavior? In the mid-
nineties the National Endowment for the Arts was under attack for funding works of art considered by some to be obscene. During a debate by the senate on an amendment brought by Senator Helm to limit funding of certain types of artwork, Senator Wellstone responded by saying, “Mr. President, as many have said, a child who picks up a paintbrush, a pen, or clarinet—and these will be words dear to my colleague from Connecticut who cares so much about children—will be less likely to pick up a gun or a needle.” It seems that Senator Wellstone might have been pursuing the idea that engagement with the arts, dance, drama, music, visual art, can develop emotional intelligence, and that students who engage in the arts might be exploring forms of communication and expression that will allow them to participate constructively in shaping culture and society. Our legislative representative was referring the importance of the arts, including theatre, in shaping the emotional foundation of our youth. As I noted earlier in the paper, theatre has been expressed as the art form most closely aligned with human behavior, thoughts and emotions.

**Theatre and Social/Emotional Intelligence**

Theatre is an exploration of human emotion, human behavior and human action. Beginning with the earliest stories from indigenous societies to contemporary productions and improvisation, audiences and theatre practitioners laugh, cry, question and investigate characters stories, actions and personalities. The emotional connections present in theatre are intrinsically connected to other studies of human behavior. Crossovers exist in how theatre is used in psycho- and socio-drama in which the process of drama is used not for production, but for exploration. Even when theatre results in a production, there’s often as much focus on what occurs during process of making that
theatre as in the resulting production. Community theatre is the opportunity to explore and create community around the process of bringing a script to life. Educational theatre teaches 21st Century Skills of collaboration, critical analysis, and creative thinking resulting in a full-out stage production (Dean, Colleen, et al.). The relationships and connections between the act of creating theatre and other forms of using stories to explore and understand human emotion are many and varied. As Brown states, in *The Meaning of Transfer in the Practices of Arts Education*, “the arts are absorbed in characterizing the world whereas most other subjects are bent in breaking it up into analytical pieces” (87).

Daniel Goleman, author and researcher, has highlighted the importance of emotional and social intelligence through his writings. He hypothesizes that these forms of intelligence are at least as valuable as intellectual intelligence and academic aptitude and are essential pieces in human success. Goleman describes five skill sets that comprise emotional intelligence: (1) **self-awareness**, the ability to recognize one’s own emotions and to recognize the effect those emotions have on others; (2) **self-regulation**, the ability to think before acting, to control one’s impulses; (3) **internal motivation**, the ability to do something for internal rather than external reasons; (4) **empathy**, the ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people; and (5) **social skills**, the ability to find and build connections among and between people. Goleman also states that unlike IQ and intellectual ability, which are thought by many to be set, emotional intelligence, can and does develop over time. This project will show connections between the skill sets of emotional intelligence and theatre and explores how creating theatre both develops and makes use of these skills sets. Developing emotional intelligence is also used to prevent and combat bullying. As my project examines the
role of theatre and bullying, we must first explore what bullying is and some current practices used to combat bullying.

What Is Bullying?

In March 2010, at the first-ever White House Conference on Bullying Prevention, President Obama spoke about the goals of the conference saying, “It’s to dispel the myth that bullying is a harmless rite of passage or an inevitable part of growing up.” But what is bullying? Stopbullying.gov defines bullying as “unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance”. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying behavior that falls into that definition seems to be clear. It is aggressive, unwanted and repeated. It involves an imbalance of power and “includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone verbally or physically and excluding someone from a group on purpose” (stopbullying.gov). It seems difficult to imagine that behavior like that could ever be considered a myth or just part of growing up. Threats and physical and verbal attacks hardly seem to fall into a gray area where we’re unsure if the behavior should be dealt with or if it’s just something to get over, that “harmless rite of passage”. However, bullying can be difficult to discern. Bullying Basics from Teaching Tolerance reminds us that there are many and varied forms of bullying and that bullying often happens outside the presence of adults. If bullying were simple, clear-cut and easy to define it might be easier to prevent. Instead it’s as complex and layered as any human relationship and deserving of a thorough analysis.

Statistics on bullying among school age school youth are numerous. According to the Teaching Tolerance web site, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, one in
five students is bullied annually (“Bullying Basics”). The bullying watchdog group, Bully Police USA states that three out of four students report being bullied. The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Adolescent Health has data from a 2011 survey where teens self-reported that bullying was a “problem for them more often than racism, HIV/AIDS, or the pressure to have sex” (“October 2011: Bullying and Adolescent Health”). Data on cyber-bullying shows Internet bullying increasing with the growth of technology. According to a 2010 study one in five teens reported they had been cyber-bullied at some point with about the same number reporting they had cyber-bullied others (“October 2011: Bullying and Adolescent Health”). In Kentucky, the 2012 – 2013 Kentucky School Report Card shows that out of 652,213 total students, there were 15,520 reported unique events of harassment (including bullying).

Bullying behavior has been shown to have impact beyond the victim and the bully. The bullying circle, first describe by researcher Dan Olweus, who conducted some of the earliest scientific studies on bullying behavior, shows how various groups of students participate in bullying. Incidents generally involve three groups of students: *bullies, victims, and bystanders* and these groups can be further sub-divided. Even a single student who bullies can have an effect on more than just the students they bully. That single “bully”, also effects the students who observe the bullying, which can have an impact on the overall school climate (Violence Prevention Works). Kids who bully and kids who are bullied are considered direct roles in the circle of bullying. When the indirect roles are considered it’s easy to see the wide-ranging effects of bullying behavior. Indirect roles include: *followers*, students who take an active part in the bullying, but aren’t usually the initiators; *supporters*, students who don’t join in, but
actively support the bullying perhaps through laughter or calling attention to the situation; passive supporters, students who seem to remain neutral though they like the bullying behavior; disengaged onlookers, students who do not actively engage either to support or defend and who think it's none of their business; possible defenders, students who think the bullying is wrong and who think they should become involved, but don't; and defenders, students who actively try to help the victim of bullying (Violence Prevention Works). This analysis of bullying behavior begun by Olweus in the seventies shows complex layers of behavior requiring that preventive programs address not just the bully or bullies, but offer a wider range of responses that take into consideration the indirect roles students play in bullying. Stopbullying.gov also references the importance of labeling the behavior of bullying rather than labeling the students who are involved with bullying saying that labeling the student as either a “victim” or a “bully” can have the unintended consequences of “sending the message that a child’s behavior can’t change, failure to recognize the multiple roles children play, and disregarding the role of peer influence or school climate”.

Bullying behavior can have damaging consequences, including a negative impact on mental health, substance abuse, and suicide on those involved both directly and indirectly in bullying behavior. Violence Prevention Works lists some of the costs both to individual students including depression, health problems, poor grades and powerlessness. Costs to the entire school climate when bullying isn’t successfully addressed include the development of a fearful environment where students have difficulty learning and students perceive that teachers and staff have little control and don’t care about them (Violence Prevention Works). Just as with identifying bullying
behavior, it seems as if many of these negative responses would be easy to spot. Some students who bully don’t exhibit behavior problems or are obvious rule-breakers. In 2009 Education.com reposted an article from the Kansas State Department of Education that said, “research has shown that bullies are actually quite adept at reading social cues and perspective-taking. Rather than use these skills prosocially, such as to empathize with others, they instead use them to identify and prey on peer vulnerabilities”. Bullying behavior leaves multiple players in need of intervention.

_Bullying Prevention Practices_

Bullying prevention in 2013 seems to be widespread. Many states including Kentucky have implemented anti-bullying or anti-harassment laws. According to the watchdog group Bully Police USA only one state Montana has yet to enact legislation. In addition, schools and other organizations often provide bullying resources for both individuals and groups. The initial Olweus research on identifying what bullying is and the prevalence of bullying and subsequent research has led to the widespread development of bullying resources. Olweus authored the introduction to a collection of studies on bullying, _Peer Harassment in School: The Plight of the Vulnerable and Victimized_. In this he stated that in the twenty plus years since the publication of his initial research, studies on bullying have led to a general consensus that bullying and harassment are an important social issue that affects students in schools negatively and states that schools are ever more willing to take ownership of these problems (20). Bullying interventions are necessary for schools to reach their main objective, “where a major – and very worthwhile goal must be to create safer and better learning environments” (Olweus 20).
That need to provide a safe and supportive learning environment is a must for all schools. Any behavior that brings about the negative effects both to school climate and individuals listed above becomes a barrier to learning. Many programs and curriculums exist to address bullying in schools. There is an Olweus Bullying Prevention program that Hazeldon in partnership with Clemson University offers and the programs goals epitomize the objectives that any bullying program would hope to accomplish (Violence Prevention Works).

- reducing existing bullying problems among students
- preventing the development of new bullying problems
- achieving better peer relations at school

The program includes school, classroom, individual and community level components, recognizing how all these elements interact to allow bullying to exist and spread.

Teaching Tolerance, part of the Southern Poverty Law Center, has several free resources on its website including professional development materials, classroom activities, blogs, articles and more in an effort to help teachers “make their classrooms safe, supportive learning environments” and to help administrators create “positive school environments”. Their focus is on prevention and one of the most powerful tools in their educator toolkit is the documentary Bullied, which tells the story of a student’s experiences with anti-gay bullies. The Spring 2011 issue of Teaching Tolerance magazine featured many seemingly disconnected topics including bullying. The article titled “Imagining the Lives of Others” identified the common thread as being the idea of empathy and the goal of getting past labels. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum was quoted in the preface to Perspectives, “As we tell stories about the lives of others, we learn to
imagine what another creature might feel in response to various events. At the same time, we identify with the other creature and learn something about ourselves”. The idea of telling stories and developing our imagination to build a better understanding of an individual and her life could well describe a theatrical piece telling the story of an oppressed group or individual. It is sharing through telling that has the ability to take us to the level of developing empathetic responses.

Applied Theatre and Social Issues – An Overview

Contemporary theatre includes several movements that directly align theatre practice with social issues. Theatre of the Oppressed is a continuum of theatre theory and practices developed by the late director, playwright, and political activist Augusto Boal. Boal began this exploration in the early 1960’s working in Brazil with the Arena Theatre of Sao Paolo. There, Boal and other members of the company were writing and performing plays that fought the inequalities of the time and place, railing against the extremes of socio-economic injustices that characterized Brazil during that period. This initial work was structured using the traditional theatre practices including a separation of audience/actor. As Boal writes in The Rainbow of Desire, the plays often ended with a chorus encouraging action, “Let us spill our blood for freedom! Let us spill our blood for land! Let us spill our blood, let us spill our blood!” (1). Following one performance in a small village in the North-East, they were approached by a peasant inviting them to take their guns and join with the villagers to attack a group of big wealthy landowners who had recently stolen land from one of their villagers, burned his house and threatened to kill his family (Boal 2 – 3). The actors had to explain that their guns were only props, which couldn’t be fired. At that point the peasant offered to supply the actors with guns
saying that they had enough to go around. Boal and the other actors then had to explain that they didn’t even know how to really shoot. The peasant answered, “the blood you talk about spilling – it’s our blood you mean, not yours?” (Boal 3). This led Boal to explore theatrical processes with both theatre artists and audiences that would blur the line between the two.

Theatre of the Oppressed grew from Boal’s desire to make theatre accessible to all rather than a spectacle that was enjoyed by or moving for audiences. It’s a participatory form of theatre designed for people to explore and “try-on” solutions to oppressions that they experienced in their everyday lives. Boal created the term “spect-actor” to refer to the spectator who literally takes the stage to change the action of the scene. Theatre of the Oppressed takes multiple forms depending on usage. It includes techniques such as image theatre, invisible theatre, and “shows” under the label of Forum Theatre. Boal delved into the realm of theatre as therapy through the theories and techniques articulated in The Rainbow of Desire, which grew out of his work while exiled in Europe and North America. Later, when working as part of the political structure, back in Brazil, he began experimenting with Legislative Theatre as a tool for communities to explore and suggest laws they would like to see created (Boal xix). Boal’s contention that theatre is the earliest art form and his openness to the exploration of his techniques and to the adapting of his techniques to and in a variety of settings makes his work applicable to exploring controversial social and emotional or political issues and situations. Bullying, often seen as a form of oppression, would fall into these categories.

Augusto Boal used Theatre of the Oppressed to engage people in exploring solutions to “oppressions” they were facing: political oppressions, social oppressions,
internal and external oppressions, and governmental oppressions. These practices were
developed with and influenced by Boal’s friend and mentor, Paulo Freire, who advocated
teaching methods that were democratic, where the teacher develops strategies to
empower his students. Freire went so far as to propose that “teachers and students start
from scratch and develop the course together” in much the same way that spect-actors
enter a scene or play in a Forum Theatre production to change the course of the action of
the scene (Burleson 5). Freire’s ideas emerge in today’s classroom in the ArtsLiteracy
Project, a program developed by a group of teachers and artists based in Brown
University’s Education Department who are working “to create learning environments
that bring academic content to life” (Landay, Wooten 3).

The ArtsLiteracy Project attempts to “create powerful learning experiences that
have the capacity to transform participants’ understanding and actions” (Landay, Wooten
8). Built on Maxine Green’s work which views the arts as tools for releasing the
imagination, opening new perspectives, and identifying alternatives, they have spent over
a decade engaging students, educators and artists in hands-on learning activities that
provide opportunities to rigorously explore academic content (Landay, Wooten 6). This
exploration developed into a pedagogical framework called the Performance Cycle,
which serves as a planning structure of instructional techniques based on theatre and
multi-disciplinary arts practices. Landay and Wooten, the cocreators of the ArtsLiteracy
Project illustrate the components of the Performance Cycle: Building Community,
Entering Text, Comprehending Text, Creating Text, Rehearsing/Revising Text and
Performing Text, in a circular pattern with Reflection in the center, demonstrating how
each piece evolves from and can drop back to the next depending on the needs of the
In A Reason to Read, Landay and Wooten describe how research undertaken by Shirley Brice Heath and Milbury W. McLaughlin on arts-based youth organizations has influenced the ArtsLiteracy Project. Heath noted the multiple roles youths play in those organizations and found that these youth “consider multiple ways of doing and being in their work and beyond” (27 - 28). While the Performance Cycle is designed to be flexible within a common approach and has multiple entry points, the concept of performance is an essential piece. In ArtsLiteracy, the performance is not a traditional school play, but combines student work “in a range of symbol systems with selections from the original text”, and addresses “one or more questions established at the onset of the process” (Landay, Wooten 29). A Reason to Read states, “a test is not a suitable substitute for a performance” (29). One project that embodies how students used the Performance Cycle to engage with creative solutions concerning community social issues was in a high school classroom in Inhumas, Brazil. Teacher Daniel Soares interrupted students talking about a murder that had occurred the previous night. This wasn’t an isolated incident as the small city had witnessed twenty-five murders over the past six months. Frustrated by a lack of action on the part of police and city officials the students and teacher decided to respond. They had been creating cordels “string literature” as a way to exhibit their class writings. They created a clothesline in the hallway were they displayed their daily writings, sometimes standing in the hallway reading their pieces in addition to the display. This particular cordel, created to explore the role of the murders would surround the town’s entire lake with theirs and others writings about their feelings and connections
to the violence in their community (Landay, Wooten 36–38). During the project the
students continued reading poetry in class, created their own essays and poems, visited
classrooms around the city to solicit student work and created the cordel exhibit to
display the work. There were also public readings and further community participation as
community members were invited to take paper and pencil to contribute their own
thoughts to the cordel. In an interview with Landay and Wooten, Soares noted “So the
cor
cor
conversation became huge in the city, and after that we had fewer deaths” (Landay,
Wooten 39). The multiple roles undertaken by the students were possible because of the
earlier work in the classroom using the performance-based techniques of the Performance
Cycle. Their teacher Soares believed there was a connection between the drama
influenced work based on the ArtsLiteracy Project and increased conversation in the city
about the murders and the decrease in deaths.

The process of ArtLiteracy uses theatre techniques to engage students in rigorous
thought processes deepening content knowledge through physical and intellectual
connections with text and material. The Living Newspaper was originally a presentational
theatrical form designed to bring current events, happenings that one could read about in
a daily newspaper to the stage. One of the Living Newspapers first incarnations was as
propaganda in the early years of the USSR. It was to ensure that news and propaganda
were distributed to people who couldn’t read (Casson 108). About the same time, Jacob
Moreno established the Theatre of Spontaneity in Vienna and his troupe created the
“dramatized newspaper”, which were improvisations based on the day’s news. The news
was dramatized rather than recited (Casson 110). Hallie Flanagan, who became the
director of the Federal Theatre Project in 1935, established a Living Newspaper project to
put hundreds of unemployed theatre artists and journalists back to work "presenting an in-depth look at pressing issues of the day" (Quinn 62). As a theatre professor at Vassar, Flanagan had traveled to Russia where she learned of the workers theatre and became interested in its emphasis on the issues of working people. When she returned she and a student co-created a Living Newspaper production, *Can You Hear the Voices*, which became a prototype for the Federal Theatre Project's Living Newspaper productions.

Flanagan hired Elmer Rice as the head of the New York chapter and proclaimed the Federal Theatre Project as "an opportunity to supplant the theatre of the past, which radio and movies had rendered as "dead as Queen Victoria" with a new theatre "vested with a public interest" that can have importance as "a social institution and a cultural force" (Quinn 66). Their first Living Newspaper production, *Ethiopia*, which dealt with the "Italo-Ethiopian situation, both in Africa and in Europe", never actually opened due to censorship from the US government resulting in the resignation of Rice (Quinn 69). Though Flanagan also almost resigned she stayed on and a year later opened *Triple-A Plowed Under* a Living Newspaper on the "farm problem" that both borrowed from both established theatre techniques, including a chorus of rising voices echoing important messages and the "black out" that punctuated a staccato interchange designed to illustrate the chain reaction of swift scenes and established a new technique, "the disembodied 'Voice of the Living Newspaper' coming over a loudspeaker". The voice is heard prior to lights up on the tableau (frozen picture) of a farmer examining the soil (Quinn 74).

Flanagan's Living Newspaper productions continued the tradition of scripted plays begun in the USSR. Her brushes with government censorship and public sentiment showed that the subjects had immediate relevance and engendered impassioned and controversial
viewpoints. Moreno’s improvisational newspaper dramas went on to become precursors to socio and psychodrama where role-play, the method of trying on a role, has therapeutic value for both groups to explore a socially shared problem and for individuals to confront personal problems in both group and individual settings (Casson).

Theatre improvisation is creating a dramatic piece spontaneously with unscripted dialogue. Commedia del Arte was one of the earliest forms of improvisational theatre using stock characters with conventional settings and stock speeches creating theatre that occurred unexpectedly and contained elements that the audience knew from previous experience with the characters. Today improvisation often means entertaining comedy. Second City, a Chicago-based improv company and “Whose Line is it Anyway”, a made for TV improvisational game show, create entertaining and comedic performances that sometimes include audience suggestions and reactions.

Kathleen Gallagher in *Improvisation and Education: Learning Through* writes of the strong connection between improvisation and education saying, “Despite considerable theories about the most *effective* teaching methods, I would hazard a guess that some of the most effective teachers any of us has had have been skillful improvisers” (42). Gallagher also explores the surprising challenges of using improvisation in a high school drama curriculum stressing how easy it can be for improvisation in high school theatre classroom to reinforce “a kind of moral norm” as opposed to encouraging true exploration of human behavior and situations (Frye 147). Gallagher writes that improvisation that springs from Keith Johnstone’s work shows teachers how “improvised games may be thematically or structurally connected to the work they (teachers) do in classrooms” (43). With these structures in place improvisation can provide
opportunities for creative inquiry. A research project entitled *Urban School Performances* examines how theatre practices, including improvisation and role play can become core pedagogy in examining “how relationships among culture, identity, multiculturalisms, student engagement, and theatre impact the lives of youth in schools and communities traditionally labeled ‘disadvantaged’” in a number of international cities (Gallagher 43). This study conducted in 2010 illustrates how research into serious subjects can be impacted and changed by theatre practices that on the surface can seem merely frivolously entertaining. Preventing bullying is a serious subject being addressed in schools locally, nationally and globally. This review of how theatre practices have and are being used to examine serious content, and social and political issues provides context for how theatre might be addressing bullying both in and out of schools.

*What is Theatre Doing to Address Bullying?*

Research quickly showed that bullying is a topic that theatre artists are exploring. In an article for Huffington Post celebrating World Theatre for Children and Youth Day, Lauren Gunderson wrote that theatre for youth “is truly powerful, hilarious, bold, engaging, surprising theatre that might just save the world” and cites bullying as a topic that theatre for youth is exploring. She goes on to explain that theatre is more than fun and entertaining; it’s crucial because theatre can counteract a world that is suffering from a “collective draining of empathy”. If, developing empathy has an important role to play in changing bullying behavior, as experts (including Olweus), dealing with bullying state, then theatre, which has the capacity to “to build up the muscles of compassion” is a strong vehicle in deepening students understanding of their own roles in bullying (Gunderson).
A review of what’s developed over the past several years in using drama/theatre strategies to raise awareness of bullying and help grow empathy, critical awareness and ownership of the issue among young people shows a multi-faceted approach. Theatre in education programs that exist as part of professional, community and university programs both nationally and internationally, are producing theatrical productions that tell the many faceted stories of bullying. Theatre in education specialists are also developing programs that use Forum Theatre and other improvisational and role play strategies with students on an continuing basis providing students the opportunity to explore bullying situations themselves and “try on” solutions by experiencing various bullying situations through using theatrical practices.

In *Theatre and Bullying: A Useful Tool for Increasing Awareness About Bullying and Victimization* George Belliveau writes that “as drama activities unfold, the line between what is being symbolically represented and the so-called real life experiences begins to blur”. Belliveau created a research model that includes pre-show activities to “hook” the students, a dramatic play that acts as a stimulus for thinking about bullying and post show activities that allow students to explore their learning and emotional connection to bullying. His research recommended that teachers concerned with the issue of bullying in their schools should look for theatre troupes who are willing to come to schools and ask them to develop pre and post activities for each class to deepen student’s engagement (Belliveau).

In 2012 the Long Wharf Theatre Company in New Haven, CT began working with the Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology offering classes to teens where they would create a theatre piece based on Dr. Seuss’ story, “The Sneetches”. The hope was
that this classic tale of one group looking down upon another because of their appearance would spur teens involved in the program to take ownership of their classrooms and community (Yarger). The teaching artist facilitating the project, Mallory Pellegrino stated “bullying is such a relevant topic these days” and hoped that the project would allow students to connect to the topic of bullying on a deeper and more personal level than they currently experience (Yarger). Rather than completely devising their own work, creating from an existing work allows the students to work at a “deeper, more connective level because they have the safe medium of using someone else’s words” (Cody). Pellegrino stated that students quickly found connections between their experiences of racism and bullying and what occurs in “The Sneetches” (Cody).

In a 2012 production of a play entitled “I Have a Secret” students from Cuyahoga Falls High School in Ohio, explored characters that had been bullied in school. A report by WKYC on the production showed the teenage theatre artists explaining how personal experiences of bullying in their lives played a role in their ability to relate to their characters. One of the actors related how a good friend of hers had begun to bully her and how she relied on those personal experiences when on stage. The actor playing Steve dealt with students bullying him for being gay. The reporter ended the report by saying “it’s so important for kids to know they aren’t alone” (Students Spread Anti-Bullying Message Through Play). Theatre can create a community of artists who are exploring a given topic, like that of bullying, with their peers. This speaks to the emotional intelligence skill set of developing social connections as it provides the opportunity for teens to connect with peers on a common issue.

Lexington Children’s Theatre, (LCT), has developed a weeklong program that
utilizes drama in prevention of and education about bullying. The program contains four drama components with the goal that “program participants will develop greater empathy and understanding of the issues facing them” (“Theatre in Education”). The mere fact that the program includes multiple steps begins to unravel the complexity of situations involving bullying. Curriculum for week-long program includes: a parent meeting, students watching a performance of *The Bully Show* and participating in a feedback session immediately following the show, teachers utilizing the activity packet provided by LCT to create discussion and thoughtful responses about the bullying that exists in their students’ lives, and a return visit by LCT Teaching Artists where they lead a follow-up workshop on strategies to help student alter their behavior or avoid or detect bullying. This program utilizes and develops emotional intelligence skills while building capacity among the whole school community: educators, students and parents, in recognizing, preventing and developing skills to address bullying.

The May/June 2012 American Theatre Magazine produced by the Theatre Communications Group published a retrospective look at how theatres across the country have been examining bullying and helping students find the tools to cope with the effects of bullying (Green). The article begins by reiterating the problem that exists across the country reminding readers that according to *Teaching Tolerance* part of the *Southern Poverty Law Center*, three million American students miss school every month because they don’t feel safe there. In a time of growing achievement gaps and concerns of American falling behind other countries, that many students missing school constitutes a real issue. Of course it isn’t limited to the US, as international projects on bullying are also occurring. Green writes that 2012 was a
particularly prolific year for bullying plays. Theatres staged productions of both newly commissioned and remounted works, toured shows and created interactive theatre workshops. Plays such as *The Wrestling Season* challenged audience’s understanding of who can be a bully by allowing audiences to empathize with the most physically aggressive character. The play also deals with the ever-present teen feeling of being misunderstood and judged. In 2012 *The Secret Life of Girls* by the Dallas Children’s Theatre, marked the remounting of a play originally commissioned in 2006. According to it’s Education Director, Nancy Schaeffer “The issue hasn’t gone away, but rather has gotten worse” (Green). Steppenwolf for Young Audiences produced *FML: How Carson McCullers Saved My Life* about how a student in their junior year of high school who is the target of gay bashing uses McCullers classic story *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* to move beyond the hurt and despair she experiences. In conjunction with that show, teaching artists collaborated with fourteen Chicago area schools to create lesson plans. In 2010, the Hartbeat Ensemble from Connecticut created *StartinDrama* to teach what they term as the essential elements for a positive school environment, empathy, empowerment and engagement by creating and performing scenes that come from the participants’ experiences (“Education”). These efforts represent just a few of the many examples of how theatre is being used as a strategy, a tool to raise awareness among students of what bullying is, their roles in bullying and helping them take ownership and “try-on” ways to make changes in bullying situations.

In April 2011 the American Alliance for Theatre & Education, AATE, partnered with Theatre for Young Audiences USA, TYA, on a multi-year program, Dramatic
Change: an Anti-Bullying Initiative. AATE’s 2012 annual conference focused their pre-conference on this initiative featuring performances designed to tell the stories of bullying and programs using dramatic techniques to enable students to explore bullying with the goal of increasing awareness and developing strategies to employ when confronted with the problem. In 2013 the initiative created a playwriting contest for young playwrights on bullying. These two professional organizations putting together a multi-year commitment speaks to the reality of the problem, and that theatre education has tools to help students connect with the problem, “theatre and its techniques allow participants the opportunity to explore, challenge and examine social issues and topics through a fictional fourth wall, but with a real look at the life changing consequences” (TYA/USA). It sets the stage for a national dialogue among theatre artists that will help us better understand bullying. This review of how theatre is addressing bullying issues among youth illustrates the similarities between “tools” developed through theatrical processes and the skill sets of emotional intelligence. If developing strong skill sets in emotional intelligence is essential in preventing bullying can theatre help by providing an environment where those skills grow?

Introduction to Theatre Project

In the fall of 2012, ninth grade students at Danville High School attended a play about cyber-bullying performed by Looking for Lilith Theatre Company from Louisville, Kentucky. As the Director of Arts Education for the school district, I worked with our Youth Services program to bring this production to our students. In “Choices”, a 15-year-old character named Hannah receives multiple online threats from various peers that leave her to feel increasingly powerless over her life. This interactive theatre
piece has Hannah contemplating taking her own life as the only solution to ending the pain and suffering the online bullying has caused.

The idea of bringing this production to our students was brought to us by an alumnus of Danville High School who was currently working with the theatre company. Working on this production had led her to believe that all schools encounter bullying and that theatre could help students think about their own roles in bullying situations (Schulz). In consultation with Beacon Youth Services director, Kristi Short, we decided that this would be an opportunity to engage our ninth grade students in the topic of bullying from a character’s perspective. I had reservations. I was concerned that this would focus unneeded attention on an issue over which the school has very little control. I was afraid that this might become more of an issue than it actually was by shining a bright light on the stories. I also had concerns about the interactive nature of the piece, that students might be inappropriate with suggestions when asked to “step into” the drama or that some students might make fun of other students who were engaging in the process structured by the theatre company.

I had the opportunity to observe the entire experience as the theatre coordinator and I was surprised at how well the event went. Our students had little preparation for what they were about to see, but were respectful and engaged during the short play. When the action stopped and they were asked to engage with suggestions for change, there were many. Both the actors and the facilitator handled this part of the production well, inviting suggestions and encouraging response while attempting to include many members of the audience community. Several of the changes suggested by the audience were acted upon onstage with the action again stopped for continued discussion and
additional acting suggestions. The actors and facilitator invited students to act out their suggestions themselves and one student taking another’s suggestion did get up onstage. While Looking for Lilith didn’t promote this as a Forum Theatre production, it took on many of the aspects articulated in Boal’s work. The result was that many of the students engaged with the topic actively through suggestions brought about by seeing the bullying happen on stage as well as by passively engaging as audience members. This engagement caused me to question how we “normally” address bullying issues, and wondering if it might be possible to create this type of engagement about bullying with other age groups in our district. I began questioning if theatre could provide students an “instrument of effective self-direction” as Dewey wrote about with regards to schools and arts in the schools, in *The School and Society* as students engaged in learning about bullying behavior (44). Could theatre, both interactive and presentational, make bullying more relevant to student’s lives by providing our students with authentic engagement needed to develop a more empathetic and analytical response when inevitably confronted with bullying in their own lives?

Intersession 2013 at Danville High School provided the next opportunity to engage with these questions. Two years earlier Danville High School had introduced the concept of intersession, a week set aside in early spring where students trade traditional class time in math, English, history, science, business and the arts to pursue learning in these subjects through internships, job shadowing and hands-on classes including Barbecue, ACT Prep, Theatre Improvisation and Yoga. A group of eighteen high school students and I spent the week creating a production using an anthology from Dramatic Publishing entitled *The Bully Plays*. We were addressing the question of how can theatre
engage elementary school aged students in exploring the topic of bullying? The structure included four components: learning how bullying manifests itself among elementary school children, both what it is and how it affects students, choosing plays from the anthology, rehearsing the plays, and presenting the plays. While not officially research, this project accomplished its initial goal, providing students hands-on engagement with the subject of bullying. Through the four-step process I learned that it not only encouraged the audience of elementary school students to think more critically and empathetically about bullying, but that it had that effect on the high school aged actors as well.

From the beginning of the week, the high school students delved into the what bullying looks like in elementary school through discussions involving their own memories of bullying incidents in elementary school, through discussions with the Families First director on what is going on currently in our elementary schools and through the rehearsal process. During this process they explored how their characters felt during the bullying episodes that were dramatized. They stepped into the shoes of bullies, victims and by-standers attempting to understand and honestly portray the actions and feelings of these characters. Rehearsals included the use of improvisational techniques and Forum Theatre techniques to explore the plays and the actor’s connections to the characters and storylines. Our audience members became part of this discourse as the student actors created symbols (of bullies, victims and bystanders) through the plays and these symbols had meaning for them. When the presentation of the play ended the audience was encouraged to participate in a talkback with the actors about the characters and stories of the play. While some of the questions were typical theatre questions, some
questions began to get to the root of the plays themselves and often the audience
members related something that had occurred in their own personal experience that
related to the bullying stories they had just seen performed. Both the theatre artists
involved in creating the project and the student audiences fully engaged in the process.

All but one student in the class actively participated in all sessions. I observed that
they discussed bullying that they had seen or experienced seriously recognizing
similarities with some of the incidents in the plays. They read several short plays and
took an active role in deciding which plays to include raising questions of audience
suitability and understanding as well as feasibility of production within the one week
time frame. The students thoroughly engaged in the rehearsal process. They would
rehearse independently while I was working with another short play which helped get the
plays “on their feet” in the short time period. The one non-participatory student had been
placed in the class, but didn’t wish to be there. While the student refused to participate,
this didn’t have an observable impact on the other students in the class and the non-
participatory student was still respectful of students and myself. Presenting the plays
allowed the high school students a sense of public accomplishment. In addition, several
commented on the positive engagement of the elementary students in the audience.

I realized that these productions were accomplishing one of the goals of the
AATE/TYA anti-bullying initiative; they were creating dialogue (Green). This
experience in spring of 2013 caused me to take this study further. Could several of the
erlier mentioned theatrical forms and techniques, Forum Theatre, Living Newspaper,
Improvisation, ArtsLiteracy, and Psychodrama be intertwined in a theatre production that
engaged students as theatre artists and audience members to both critically examine the
issue of bullying while nurturing empathetic response to bullying? I approached the Youth Services Director with this idea. Charged as that organization is with removing barriers to educations for all students; she agreed that continuing this work, which had showed benefits for our students could be useful (Short). With the approval of the Beacon Youth Services Director, district, high school and middle school administration and the high school drama department I set out to create a production culling elements from the various forms and techniques mentioned above, that would engage high school theatre artists and middle school audience, “spect-actors” in exploring bullying through theatrical production. I hoped that this would be more than a simple short-term solution, like a school-wide assembly, as studies reported by the Kentucky Center for School Safety have shown that type of “fix” ineffective (McCuiston).

Theatre Project Methodology

The next step in the process was to choose a play script. My early research showed some success with devised productions, but I quickly realized that time constraints prohibited devising work with students. The production was slated for mid-late October and casting would occur mid-August. Given that our student body is small and students are often engaged in multiple after school activities I knew we’d be limited in rehearsal time until the final two weeks, so I set about reading plays using following selection criteria:

- Length – one act that ran approximately 50 – 60 minutes.
- Characters – a story that included several age-appropriate middle and/or high school aged students. Characters who were compelling, authentic and well developed.
Audience Appeal – a storyline that middle school students could find believable and potentially engaging.

Audience Appropriate – the storyline needed to find the balance between honest portrayals of potential bullying situations while still considering language, gender issues, issues of sexuality, issues of substance abuse and other destructive behavior, suicide and other consequences of bullying behavior for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders.

Theme – the play needed to be an honest exploration of bullying.

Storyline – I wanted the play to follow one story rather than a group of several vignettes.

All design, technical and production elements were feasible for the personnel and the venue.

I was hopeful that within these criteria, I could find a play that would allow student theatre artists and audience members to empathize with the characters, become engaged with the story and begin to see the problem of bullying being explored within the theatrical context from a variety of perspectives. As Barb Hill expressed in a recent study “it’s about seeing things in their all sidedness” (Prendergast 19). I wanted the script I choose to both broaden perspectives and encourage a sense of ownership of the problem. As another research subject in Prendergast’s study states, “theatre becomes a way to help people see the need for change” (20) and I wanted a story that could be told well enough for people to step by and really see bullying as a problem.

While some of the criteria seemed clear-cut, the length of time, one continuous storyline, and the feasibility of design, technical and productions elements for example,
other criteria required much deeper examination. I began my search by consulting on-line and hard copy publishers of dramatic literature. Publishing catalogues and search engines allow you to enter information and read quick synopsis, which helped narrow my search. I narrowed my selection to approximately eight one-act plays that I read in full. All presented challenges, most of which are inherent in producing what Joan Lazarus terms as “socially responsible practice”. I found myself wrestling with the questions other secondary theatre teachers confront, “What is age appropriate in a secondary school theatre program and what is the right combination of exposure to contemporary societal issues for children who are eleven to nineteen years old” (Lazarus 154)? My goal with the project could have come straight from Signs of Change: New Directions in Theatre Education. As a theatre educator I wanted to grow awareness of the issue of bullying, using a theatrical production to help students think critically about the issue, develop their empathetic responses to bullying situations and define themselves and the roles they have played. I knew this was dependent on the choice of a story and the reactions of adults to the story in addition to the reactions of the students. Could my actors and audiences handle cursing, issues of homosexuality, and self-inflicted violence including suicide? These storylines and language were part of most of the scripts that I considered. My goal was for the students involved both in the production and as audience members to imagine multiple solutions to the dramas they live out at school every day as (Lazarus 166). I realized that the story and the characters were essential to that goal. If adults and students became so challenged by what they were hearing on stage that they couldn’t imagine themselves in those situations, then the goal of the production, to raise awareness of bullying and engage students in conversation and empathetic response with the characters
could not be achieved.

I kept coming back to *The Secret Life of Girls*. My reservation with the script revolved around whether a script that was about bullying among young teen girls without any male characters could speak adequately to a mixed gender audience of young adolescents. I consulted the Dallas Children’s Theatre and through email conversations learned that their productions, both the original and remounted versions had played to mixed audiences of males and females, especially their school shows (Schaeffer). In addition, I consulted Marty Childers, the Artistic Director of the Jenny Wiley Theatre who had produced a touring production of *The Secret Life of Girls*. That production also played successfully to mixed middle and high school audiences (Childers). Finally, I asked the Beacon Youth Services director, Kristi Short and two teen-aged boys to read the script and provide input. The older teen, already a college freshman, but a graduate of the school system, read the play and engaged in several discussions about the content asking questions about the process and what I hoped to accomplish (Crow, D.). The younger teen, who was heading into eighth grade and a male was the type of audience member that I was most concerned with expressed that “it really doesn’t matter, ‘cause they’ll (the students) will like anything that gets them out of class” (Crow, G). The Youth Services Director responded in a way that was indicative of some of the challenges I would face saying that she hadn’t had time to read the play, but she trusted my judgment (Short).

The final step in the decision-making process came at the start of the school year. I had informal group discussions with students in the Tech Theatre Club and in the Advanced Acting class (Dewey Performance Notes). The consensus from both groups
was that bullying was happening and that a play about bullying would be “something we hadn’t done before”. Some students commented on how different it would be to do a play about a serious issue that affected students (Dewey Performance Notes). This would be different than the musicals we had produced the previous two years. Several students expressed disappointment that there were no roles for male students. I began assembling the production staff and was able to get a senior male to agree to assistant direct. I felt having a male student be part of the leadership of the production would begin to address how males could relate to the production. It would also prove to be a different perspective as the project took shape through rehearsals. The Tech Theatre Club expressed considerable interest in figuring out how to do the projections, which would be the major scenic element and we were off!

*Beginning the Process – Rehearsals and Connection*

Auditions were held August 20th and 21st and a total of sixteen students auditioned for the ten roles (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). Scripts had been available for sign out the previous week and several students had taken scripts reading them prior to auditions. During auditions, I talked about the story that was told in the play and described the characters. I also asked the students to begin thinking about bullying they had experienced in their lives. Auditions consisted of ensemble warm-up and improvisational exercises and cold readings from the script. I was looking for student’s ability to connect with each other as much as their ability to connect to the characters. Acting skills including movement and diction and projection were part of the casting decisions and ultimately, as with most educational theatre productions, scheduling played a large role. I was fortunate to find a committed cast and stage manager through the
audition process.

Until the final two weeks of rehearsals we rehearsed three times a week. The play is a series of short vignettes following the plotline, and actors could be called to rehearse specific scenes. However, because of the subject matter I knew that I needed the cast to become close to one another. The idea proposed in Jeremy Kisling’s article, “On Bullying and Activating Social Change,” that theatre can promote a safe space for discourse was never far from my mind. The cast needed to feel safe with one another and with me and the other student artistic personnel (assistant director and stage manager). During the first five rehearsals the group read and discussed the story of the play. The first rehearsal was spent in ensemble building games and in discussing bullying in our school. We never even got to the play. The discussion was informal. I tossed the subject out letting the actors begin to talk about what they have seen and experienced. While this initial discussion was fairly superficial, it got the actors talking to me and to each other about their connections to the topic of bullying. I also talked about their role in my final project. The ensemble building theatre games were active and engaged, with the students working together and relying on one another. We played *Kitty Wants a Corner*, did a *group juggling exercise* and did non-verbal, *1 – 10 shape scenes*. The actors left talking and laughing amongst themselves while the assistant director, stage manager and myself began our tradition of debriefing following rehearsals. Examining the question: what had we accomplished and where did we need to go next? Through this informal, but regular rehearsal follow-up the assistant director and stage manager took additional ownership of the play. They started operating at a different level than the actors, which allowed them to think critically about the subject and be actively involved in decisions about the direction
of the production. Because they were also involved and sometimes leaders of warm-ups
and ensemble exercises at the rehearsals, they became part of the cohesive group of
theatre artists creating the play.

The actors came to the second rehearsal in high spirits from our work in the first
rehearsal eager to approach the text through our first read through of the script. Seated in
a circle, we began reading the script. The laughing and joking soon turned serious.
Following a particularly difficult scene in which many of the characters bullied another
character the actor playing the bullied character abruptly left the room. It was here that
the process became one in which the students began to “vicariously experience what
happens to people in different life situations” (Lazarus 166). In this section of the play the
girls, who are part of the school volleyball team, have a sleepover and don’t invite two of
the girls from the team. One of the girls’ calls during the sleepover and the other girls pull
up unattractive pictures taken of the girl on cell phones. They are laughing and making
fun of her for being overweight during the conversation. Stage directions in the script
called for the photos to be projected during the scene so you have juxtaposition of the
sleepover, the phone call from the girl who wasn’t invited and the projected pictures. The
scene captures a realistic look at bullying that occurs through a variety of social media.
We took a break during which some of the actors stayed and talked with me, while a
couple went to check on the actor who had left the room. We never went back to
rehearsal that day. I had a lengthy conversation with the girl playing the character who is
bullied in the script, and spoke with her parents both that day and the day after. I left the
door open for her to pull out of the show, while expressing how confident I was in her
ability to take on this role. This rehearsal changed the tone of the project from one of
“this is an important topic and maybe we can shed some light on it” to one of personal connection. While I had realized the potential of the script to address the issue and to move students toward a critical examination of the issue, this incident made me question the choice of doing this. Could I keep the actors both honestly connected to the work while creating a safe environment in which they could work? Questions that I had been asking myself about the appropriateness of the script came flooding back and I began rethinking many of the questions referred to in the chapter on *Socially Responsible Practice* in the section on “Looking at What Is and What Could Be”. What community did I want to have in my theatre program (Lazarus 215)? While I had begun the project thinking that the high school students would put on the show for the middle school students and it was the effect of the play on the middle school students that I wanted to examine, this early rehearsal effected my direction. Because of these initial reactions among the high school students involved with the play I began examining how they were developing critical thinking skills and empathetic responses with regards to bullying.

Very early on it the process, I started expanding my analysis to include the importance of relationship in developing empathetic response and in guiding critical thinking. The relationships that the student actors were building with each other were already allowing them to become vulnerable in front of one another. While this began with an actor abruptly leaving rehearsal, it progressed to in-depth conversations about discovering the complexities of the characters. We used *1 – 10 scenes* often during rehearsals to explore themes in the play, friendship, keeping secrets, confronting another person. The *1 – 10 scenes* are repeated allowing students to explore layers of these themes, experimenting with non-verbal communication (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). As Uta Hagen writes in “A
“Challenge for the Actor”, they were developing their capacity as actors to find themselves in their characters leading to a more authentic and honest portrayal of the story. The theatrical processes that were guiding them to form close relationships were also allowing them to identify with and understand the behavior of the characters.

It’s interesting to note that early in this process, my focus landed on the development of the actors, their critical awareness, and their empathetic responses. I still maintained a focus on the middle school audience although primarily through structural and logistical methods. I reached out to potential audience members through educational list serve postings, professional organizations and personal networking. I developed a study guide, “The Danville Schools Spotlights: The Secret Life of Girls”, with information about bullying and pre and post suggestions for engaging audience members in both the play and the topic (see appendix). The study guide was essential for two reasons, both as a tool for educators to document the instructional value of students seeing to a performance (a must in our accountability-driven educational climate) and because my research had shown that while a performance can shed light on a subject, genuine change, critical analysis or empathetic response may necessitate a greater connection with the material. As I mentioned earlier simple one-shot solutions have not proven to be effective in addressing the problems of bullying. Theatre of the Oppressed developed into theatre that wasn’t presented to an audience, but a performance that involved the audience. Living Newspaper theatre, while more presentational, created plays about topics that were innate pieces of the audiences’ world “dramatizing the news with living actors, light, music and movement (Quinn 62). The theatre companies currently producing socially responsible theatre for youth that are included in Chapter 4
of Landay’s “Socially Responsible Theatre” in *Signs of Change: New Directions in Theatre Education* created pieces that involved the audience either directly through residencies or through devised and interactive pieces or indirectly primarily through the inclusion of study guide materials. This project needed to include a study guide and a post-show talkback to strengthen any productive impact the performance would have for the school audiences.

My growing understanding of the need to develop a safe space where student actors could open themselves up to an empathetic and emotional response to the story led to my creating a “Warm and Fuzzy Board”. What had happened in our August 30th rehearsal caused me to fully understand that I was asking these young actors to make personal connections that might continue to be emotionally disturbing. I needed a tool to help maintain safety and nurturing, which led me to try the “Warm and Fuzzy Board”. This consisted of a piece of white board, multiple sets of post-its and writing utensils. It lived off-stage and all those involved with the play were encouraged to leave each other messages of support, encouragement and celebration. The message was written on the non-sticky side of the post-it, and then folded in half with the individuals name appearing on the outside. The messages could be signed or anonymously written and read by only the person to whom they were addressed unless that person wished to share. I had first learned of the “Warm and Fuzzy Board” during a weekend long retreat with college students and faculty who were exploring issues of belonging, specifically with regards to social class, through activities that became deeply personal. During these retreat activities many participants shared their own stories with regards to the topic, being homeless as a child, not having enough food to eat, living in shelters and being thrown out of their
home as a teen and having to live on their own. When there was downtime during the retreat participants would gather around with stacks of post-its writing messages of encouragement and support to people they knew and people they had just met. The messages were called “Warm and Fuzzies”.

I thought this might translate well as the cast and crew of The Secret Life of Girls were also sharing deeply personal stories. I was asking them to open themselves to experiencing a wide range of authentic emotions. They were working with a script that asked them to be friends one moment and cruel to each other the next. “Warm and Fuzzies” became an essential piece of developing the play with the actors and crew members leaving multiple messages for each other and often resulted in students staying late to read or write messages. Following our first read through I have discussed the importance of leaving both the characters and the story in the rehearsal room, however it was clear that many of my actors had lived through bullying episodes themselves and were going to be effected by the rehearsal process (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). Messages were anonymous so it was difficult to track their what they wrote to each other. Instead I began noticing that students did in fact go to the board to write messages when their character wasn’t onstage. On several occasions some cast and crew members stayed after rehearsal to finish writing, or they would call after each other, “you have Warm and Fuzzies”. Also, the number of “Group” Warm and Fuzzies increased and included messages that simply said “love working with everyone” to “thanks for putting up with me”. I had begun the “Warm and Fuzzy Board” making sure that I wrote messages to any cast and crewmembers not receiving messages. Very quickly I no longer needed to make sure that everyone was receiving
a message, as there were always messages for all. One particularly interesting message I received was from a cast member who I let come late one day to rehearsal so that she could go buy a new dress for the upcoming homecoming dance. Normally that isn’t something that I’d allow, but this particular student had been struggling with personal issues and had confided in me that the only reason she was coming to school was for rehearsals. When her mother contacted me about her missing rehearsal, she reiterated how challenging things had been for *Andrea this semester. I realized that if I was making this a safe space I needed to reach past the boundaries of rehearsal. Not long after that *Andrea sent me a “Warm and Fuzzy” just saying “You’re fantastic Ms. Dewey”, with a heart (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). More than being called fantastic, it was that this particular teen felt good enough about herself, confident in the experience, to leave that message. Participating in the “Warm and Fuzzy Board” was an action the students could take to combat their feelings of connection to the story. It provided an action of support to each other that was used at nearly every subsequent rehearsal. It was during the first few days of rehearsals following the read-through that we began discussing the roles identified by Olweus: bullies, victims and bystanders and the myriad of roles that fall into those groups. Once these concepts had been introduced many rehearsals included discussions of the actors personal involvement with bullying. Role-plays using these broad categories also occurred (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). The actors began to realize that their own personal stories would help them portray the characters and tell the story in an authentic manner. Often the actors would mention how they thought this might affect the audience. However, they didn’t seem to notice how this was affecting their bonds. They grew from a group of
students who knew each other to students planning in pairs and large groups to “hang out” together on weekends and days off. Towards the end of the rehearsal process I had several parents relate what a good “social experience” this had been for their teen, noting that their teen had invited another cast member to the house or been invited to another’s. The cast also planned two large whole group outings, one to a local restaurant managed by one of the parents and a sleepover during fall break. While these occurrences aren’t often documented in studies of bullying prevention among teens I found them to be very important. While they were still relying on me as the adult to arrange their play, they were taking charge of changing their interactions with others. My observations of this were on a very small level, within the cast of the play, but it would be interesting to see if this social ownership of how people feel could become a new normal, were they reaching out to include and interact with all those around them or is it because there’s a common cause – the show – the draw them closer together? The cast and crew were exhibiting signs of being able to independently use Goleman’s skill set of social skill; the ability to find and build connections among and between people (Goleman).

Role-play and improvisation continued throughout the rehearsal process. On September 13th, and Oct. 22nd, I led the cast, Stage Manager, and Assistant Director in Cross the Line exercises. Both times I used the same nineteen statements designed to help them reflect silently on their understanding and experiences of bullying (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). For this exercise the students lined up across the stage and responded to statements about bullying by silently stepping forward if they had experienced the situation or were in agreement with the statement. The silence and
public acknowledgement through movement gave the students a chance to reflect on their responses before talking about them and integrating them into their acting work. Following the first *Cross the Line* exercise we discussed their take-aways from the exercise. Discussions like these seemed to bring the group closer together. We had moved from an individual student being bothered enough to leave the room to students offering insight into their and experiences of and reflections about bullying. Their reflections also gave me information for improvisational role-plays that help the actors deepen their understanding of the play and subject matter. In the discussion of role-plays during rehearsal on September 19th, one of the students commented that, “I tease the people I love, but sometimes the teasing goes too far” (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). While the student was referring to sibling and other family relationships, we used this in rehearsal to look more closely at the characters, all of whom were friends and teammates, to better understand how situations where they were teasing each other went too far. That rehearsal used the *Cross the Line* exercise and walk around *Contact Exercise* (an exercise were the actors initiate non-verbal contact with one another) as foundation for this work by asking the students to reflect on teasing went too far in the student’s own lives and how it might have developed into bullying and connect that to what was happening in the play (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). These improvisational role-plays allowed the actors to experience how they felt about this in the world surrounding the play. Were they hurt, disappointed, did they try to laugh it off to remain part of the group? Explorations of this sort gave them greater connection with their characters. It allowed the actors to find bits of themselves in their characters, something essential to strong acting, when previously they’d thought they
didn’t share much with the characters when they were being mean.

Fall Break fell in the middle of the rehearsal process and our first rehearsal back, I began with a *Cross the Line exercise*. My goal was to reconnect the actors to the play, after being away for ten days. Following the first exercise one of the actors commented, “I have blinders on so I don’t really see the bullying” (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). The actors did the exercise in silence and I observed that they weren’t quick to respond by stepping up to the line, but seemed to really think about their responses. In that exercise as in the earlier version, only one statement initiated a positive *Cross the Line* response from all. They crossed the line on the statement “I understand what bullying behavior is” (Dewey Rehearsal Notes).

In addition to using role-play, improvisation and Forum Theatre techniques within the rehearsal project I administered the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire to nine of the company members (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). The Empathy Questionnaire is a 16 question self-reported measure of empathy (Spreng, et al.). The designers of the questionnaire were looking for a “brief, reliable and valid instrument for the assessment of empathy”. I believe that empathy plays an important role in plays – both among theatre artists and audiences. Kase-Polisini writes, “A good theatre experience always involves empathy, in which the audience vicariously identifies with the action it witnesses” (28). That “empathy” was included as a “Process Component” in the September 30, 2013 draft of the new National Arts Standards seems to bear out its importance to the art form (Theatre Writing Team). I was interested in learning what the empathy quotient, a numerical symbol of empathy that could be derived by taking the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire, would show about the students involved in the play. I administered the
questionnaire on Friday September 6th early on in the rehearsal process (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). Out of a possible sixty-four points, the nine students who took the questionnaire thirty-one to a high of fifty-six. In the simple scoring method associated with this questionnaire the higher the score indicates an individual more apt to respond empathetically to situations and others (Spreng, et al.). Scores ranged from zero to four on each of the measures and only four of the students scored less than a two on any statement. Only two students scored ones on any single statement. The majority of the students scored an empathy quotient in the forties and fifties (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). This correlates with research by Thalia Goldstein that showed teens who were studying acting at a high school for the performing arts showed an initial high level of empathy defined as “emotional response to another’s emotional state that is both similar to the other’s emotional state and appropriate” (98). We often hear empathy described as the ability to walk in another’s shoes and clinical social worker Diane Murrell in a blog post during National Bullying prevention month said that empathy “is about connecting while bullying, conversely is about disconnection”. I was observing that the students in The Secret Life of Girls were connecting. They had rallied around each other’s personal reactions to how the characters were bullied, and were connecting with each other socially outside of rehearsal and in rehearsal (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). Would that connection lead to a focused show that allowed other students to invest in thinking about bullying and their roles in bullying?

Continuing the Process – Audiences and Outreach

While the company was connecting to the topic of bullying on a variety of levels through both empathetic response and critical thought, the outreach to audiences was
proving challenging. Middle school students from our district and three surrounding school districts had reserved seats, but there were no additional responses. I had not been able to recruit a facilitator with bullying training and instead I became the facilitator of all but one talkback following the shows. The study guides had been distributed, but despite my best efforts I was unable to learn if they had been used. There were a total of three school performances attended by approximately nine hundred sixth – ninth grade students and their teachers (Dewey *The Secret Life of Girls*, TSLOG, Beacon Findings).

The talkbacks, which were post-performance discussions, and role-plays with audience suggestions occurred following all performances. I observed the student theatre artists becoming increasing self-sufficient and spoke articulately about the process of the show and the personal explorations that they had undergone during rehearsals. In two of the three talkback discussions the audience participated appropriately becoming involved in both the bullying discussion and in offering suggestions during the post-show scenes about how certain characters could make changes that might alleviate the bullying situations (Dewey Performance Notes). The Youth Services Director facilitated the post-show discussion for the third school. The audience for that show was the largest and exhibited several behaviors that seemed to indicate they might have been uncomfortable with the subject matter or unprepared for the performance including laughter at characters being bullied and shouting out comments during the performance that caused laughter. The talkback discussion was somewhat chaotic with the facilitator having to speak to the students several times about their inability to deal with the seriousness of the subject (Dewey Performance Notes). Although many students did try to engage with the talkback discussion, side
conversations and laughter were distracting and several students were using cell phones. There was enough disengagement to prevent the audience from developing the ownership of the process that had been present during the two previous talkback discussions. Following the performance I learned that at least nine teachers (out of approximately seventeen total teachers) were absent on a collegial visit to another school. A substitute teacher later reported to me that the experience of getting the students there and returning them had been unstructured with little understanding of what they were going to see or behavioral expectations (Dewey Performance Notes). While this school was initially very interested in attending, the lack of educator involvement observed both in the number of teachers absent to observe in other schools and the lack of reported preparation, seemed to show that that other school priorities that took precedence. The Study Guide, “Danville Schools Spotlights: The Secret Life of Girls”, (see appendix) was designed with pre- and post-activities and bullying facts extending the performance by helping to develop the desired continuing conversations about the topic. Included in the study guide was a short synopsis of the play, the role of the audience including information on what would happen during the talkback that followed the performance, statistics on bullying to share with students and a section on using theatre techniques in the classroom to further develop student’s awareness of bullying (Dewey The Danville Schools Spotlights). One school reported extensive use of the study guide including guided student discussion and written responses (Dewey Performance Notes). That school didn’t use any of the role-plays, but reported that they students who attended the play referred to the character’s behavior and actions during discussions about bullying that followed both on the bus and in the classroom.
The students wrote poetry in response to the play and the school counselor had individual sessions about bullying with the students who attended the play. This is a small school that had self-reported a bullying problem when they made reservations for the play (Dewey Performance Notes). Three of the other schools reported using the study guides to prepare students for the play on their arrival to the performance. The fifth school said they had students respond to the performance, but gave no details. The fifth school didn’t clearly report what type of preparation students were involved with prior to the performance. The final page of the study guide included a brief teacher survey about bullying in the schools. A total of five surveys were completed from two schools. All five stated that bullying was an issue in their schools and that the teacher believed that theatre could be an effective way to provide an entry point to have students connect to the issue (Dewey Performance Notes).

In educational theatre the end of play is traditionally punctuated by striking the set, costumes and props and a cast party. Both of those happened with *The Secret Life of Girls* following the final performance on Sunday October 27th. Since this wasn’t a typical production, I met with the cast and crew the week after the production to determine their interest in presenting a workshop about the production at a statewide high school theatre conference, continuing the outreach aspect of this production. They were enthusiastic about attending the conference and leading a workshop on the play. Following their final school performance they had performed two well-received public performances and seemed eager to continue the discussion of how their work in the play had been received. There was some apprehension about leading some of the exercises they had participated in during rehearsals and we drew up a plan to structure their workshop.
In November 2013 seven of the actors, the stage manager, the assistance director and I attended the high school festival at the Kentucky Theatre Association (KTA) Conference. The students led the first ever student workshop in the history of the high school festival. They presented on the process of the doing a show with characters their own age about a topic, bullying, which many experience in a variety of aspects, from bully to bullied. The students facilitated Forum Theatre type scenes taking audience members suggestions on how to change the situations and the character behaviors. They spoke openly and honestly of their connections to the characters and their personal revelations about bullying. They led the participating students in a Cross the Line exercise from the study guide, which was similar to the cross the line exercise they had participated in twice during the rehearsal process (Dewey Performance Notes). Approximately twenty-five high school students from around the state attended the workshop. The students also led ensemble-building exercises. While it’s impossible to evaluate the impact the workshop had on the participants, I observed closer interactions between my students and students from other schools who had attended the workshop during the remainder of the festival.

Discussion – Analysis by the Participant/Observer

In attempting to organize and derive meaning from the research of studying the how theatrical processes and performances develop empathy and critical awareness through The Secret Life of Girls project, I kept returning to my initial thoughts on story as a core piece of the study. Reviewing theatrical processes including Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, Living Newspaper Theatre, improvisational theatre and processes that use theatrical techniques to enhance learning both of the arts, other subjects and self -
including ArtsLiteracy and Psychodrama - I was reminded of the value of narrative. The concept of making sense of something, a political or social situation, an ethical dilemma, a history lesson or a fictional or informational text or even one's own behavior was primary in each of these endeavors. I believed that story could be a powerful entry point to understanding an issue. Use of story could not only help students understand what bullying is, but could provoke an actual process of deeper understanding, one where both empathetic connection and greater critical awareness was created. I had rehearsal observations and tests of empathetic response and self-awareness to analyze. I had audience materials and some data on the impact of the performance on various audiences. What I was searching for was that overarching structure by which to make sense of this data.

I came across Jerzy Trzebinski's research on narratives and helping behaviors among adolescents. He found that information related in the form of a story has a better chance of affecting people than information related in a categorical, instructional manner, "The narrative frame facilitates integration of such data into a meaningful and easy to visual impression of the person" (22). His research also showed that "these impressions are organized around motives and emotions and are less stereotyped and more individualized in comparison to other modes of person understanding" (22). Interpreting my findings through the lens of these results brought me to a clearer understanding of the journey my cast members, Stage Manager, and Assistant Director took through the theatrical processes of creating the production.

The actors spent a total of eight and a half weeks working on the production, learning the stories of these characters, how their lives, friendships, successes and
hardships intertwined. They explored these character’s outward and inward lives, the faces they shared with each other and the secrets they kept from each other. In turn they explored themselves; what they saw themselves that was also part of the character they were playing. Together they strove to understand the kindness and cruelty these characters exhibit towards each other and sometimes personally toward themselves. This intense scrutiny of the story may have led to similar behavior that Trzebinski describes and quantified in his research. In one of his studies Trzebinski examined whether adolescents were more likely to offer to help an ill individual spending time soliciting money through a phone campaign. He found that narrative priming, hearing the request in the form of a story, resulted in a greater willingness to help in this way (19). While the cast of The Secret Lives of Girls was not asked to help in that way, their time, intense analysis and personal connections with the stories of these characters coupled with the growth of community among them guided them in creating a successful and engaging production which truly explored the issue of bullying through the eyes of these characters. Writing in response to Trzebinski’s work, John Sommers related the research directly to the essential nature of theatre both among the artists and the audience “so we can become fascinated as much by how the story is told as well as what it tells—and the two are, of course, almost inextricably entwined” (348). This study connects with at least three of the skill sets Goleman describes as comprising emotional intelligence: internal motivation, the ability to do something for internal rather than external reasons; empathy, the ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people; and social skills, the ability to find and build connections among and between people. These associations illustrate alignment between an intense exploration of narrative, such as the rehearsal
process experience for *The Secret Life of Girls* and growth in emotional intelligence.

In addition I wanted to examine how the arts could shed a unique light onto the issue of bullying illuminating it in a way that might bring about an awareness only touched on through current attempts to understand the issue. The complexities of bullying have been analyzed and articulated. From Olweus, whose work continues today to the Teaching Tolerance organization, to Kentucky Safe Schools there are multitudes of organizations providing curriculum and programming aimed at increasing student and educator awareness of the bullying and changing behaviors with regards to the issue both in schools and in communities. While only fairly recently addressing bullying prevention with an organized effort through the AATE and TYA initiative, my research shows that theatre has long dealt with social issues, through examining both societal conflicts and the individual human condition. Even a quick look at a variety of contemporary dramatic literature includes *Assassins* by Stephen Soundheim, a musical about people who’ve assassinated United States presidents, *Doubt*, by John Patrick Shanley, a serious look at sexual misconduct in the priesthood, and *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?*, by Edward Albee, a comedy that examines a family in crisis when the middle-aged husband falls in love with a goat. Theatre literally stages human interaction at some point in conflict so that even the classic boy meets girl plotlines could be interpreted as examining social issues or as Augusto Boal wrote in “Theatre of the Oppressed”, “all theatre is necessarily political because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them” (ix).

Elliot Eisner, a leading scholar of arts education long championed the case that a curriculum in the arts was necessary in developing critical thinking skills. In 2002 Eisner
included the “The 10 Lessons the Arts Teach” in his book “The Arts and the Creation of Mind” (ch. 4). He had been exploring this territory for decades arguing the teaching of arts for arts sake. Moving through the process of developing The Secret Life of Girls I found myself coming back to these “lessons” as prime reasons for the need to explore bullying through a play.

Several of these lessons deal with seeing problems from multiple perspectives and understanding that problems often have multiple solutions. Eisner wrote, “The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer”. This was a lesson for the students and myself over and over again throughout the process from scheduling to creating the projections to costuming choices and more. It clearly illuminated our process of developing the characters and the storyline. This concept permeated our work. From the outset I realized and research clarified that bullying was a complex issue. Not only was there no one (or even half-dozen) proven solutions, the complexity of the problem was growing for our youth. The rise of personal technology and the common use of social media has led to cyberbullying which has elevated bullying to a 24/7 phenomenon. Cyberbullying plays a role in the world of the teen-age girls of The Secret Lives of Girls and as I suspected it also plays a role in the lives of the student actors involved in the play. Every rehearsal brought a new or continued discussion about why the characters were behaving the way they were behaving, what were there motivations? How did characters that were the victims of bullying feel and why did they bury their feelings so often? And the need for the actors to take off the “blinders” referred to in the discussion following the first Cross the Line exercise to bullying in their own lives in order to make connections to the characters
needed to clearly and honestly tell the stories of these characters (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). As the characters turned from victims of bullying into bullies or vice versa, the emotions of the characters became more complex and challenging to portray. As one student pointed out during rehearsals, “Sometimes you have to be really sensitive to the other person who you’re teasing… they might laugh just to cover up how they really feel” (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). The students who were part of the play moved from a surface understanding of bullying to viewing this problem as a bully, a victim and a bystander by examining those roles existing side-by-side in the characters they played.

**Audience Impact**

The impact of *The Secret of Life of Girls* on audience members is challenging to analyze and assess. At the inception of the idea there had been considerable interest from one middle school in attending a performance. It was that interest and the support of the Youth Services Program in our district that made the production possible. However, it quickly became the least engaged part of the process although I spent considerable time and effort in attempting to include it. I met periodically with the Youth Services director and while always supportive during these meetings her actual support extended to financial support of the buses to transport the middle school students to the production to see the performance, providing anecdotal evidence of bullying in our schools and providing being a sounding board for challenges that I encountered. In addition, an employee of the Youth Services program facilitated the talkback discussion for one of the three school productions. This was the production attended by our district’s middle school. While these roles were important it may not have been broadly focused enough on helping the audience prepare for or debrief from the production.
The core of understanding the audience reaction may lie in understanding the engagement of those working directly with the student audience participants. All teachers were provided study guides (see appendix) for the performance that included information about the plot, characters and theme of *The Secret Life of Girls*, suggested theatre connections and several suggested discussions and theatre-based exercises to both prepare students for the play and allow students to process their thoughts about the play post performance (Dewey The Danville Schools Spotlights: The Secret Life of Girls). Of the five schools attending the productions, one school provided a complete picture of how the guide was used with students. This school communicated about preparing students. Post-performance the school emailed about how the students processed their thoughts through both formal and informal post-show discussions, follow up individual conversations with the school counselor based on themes within the discussions and writing assignments designed to allow students to express their own personal experiences with bullying (Arnold). A second school provided a limited look at how the guides were used by sending a survey completed by one class, twenty-two responses, that used statements from the *Cross the Line exercise* that was included in the study guide as a written exercise with the students. All respondents were able to define bullying and provide at least one example of bullying they had experienced and a majority had been “teased” and experienced physical bullying (Dewey Beacon TSLOG Data report). The last page of the Study Guide was a short six-question teacher survey. Five responses were received from two of the five schools and all showed that bullying is perceived to be an issue by both teachers and students. All respondents also either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I believe that theatre can be an effective way to explore bullying and...
raise awareness among students” (Dewey The Danville Schools Spotlights: The Secret Life of Girls). I had hoped to obtain clearer findings of audience response to the production and the effectiveness of the production in raising awareness of bullying among middle school students. The productions were attended by approximately nine hundred middle and high school students, which did indicate an interest in the topic among local middle and high schools (Dewey Beacon TSLOG Data report).

The talkbacks following each performance were another way to evaluate audience response. During one of the final rehearsals I’d taken time to discuss with the cast and crew possible audience reactions and to structure the talkback which would include each of them introducing themselves, responding to audience questions about the production and story and staging a “scene” containing the characters of the play, that wasn’t included in the play (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). The cast was familiar with this structure, which was taken from Forum Theatre techniques as we had used this during the rehearsal process to develop the play and gain a deeper understanding of character relationships.

The first two talkbacks went as planned with the audience asking questions on a variety of topics, from more theatre/production-based questions, “How did you memorize that many lines? How did you come up with the idea to project the electronic communication? How long did you rehearse the play?” to questions like “How did you feel when the character you were playing was mean to her friends? Did you ever actually feel hurt when you were bullied in the play?” The audiences also moved on to relating their own personal experiences with bullying to the situations they saw in the portrayed on stage (Dewey Performance Notes). Though the talkbacks lasted between twenty – thirty minutes, there was significant give and take between the
audience and the actors. We did have time to stage one brief scene with characters from the play discussing the make-up of the volleyball team in the cafeteria and stopping the action when the characters started to verbally bully a team member who wasn’t there. When the action in the scene was stopped, the facilitator asked the audience for suggestions to take the scene in a different direction and audience members offered productive suggestions to steer the scene away from bullying behavior into more productive areas. We did have time for a couple of those suggestions to be carried through and the audience was able to see the result their suggestions could have on the behavior of the characters (Dewey Performance Notes). Being able to suggest changes to the actors during the Forum scene portion of the talkback genuinely engaged audience members. Many students eagerly raised their hands with ideas and it would have been nice to have additional time to pursue the scene work (Dewey Performance Notes). I did offer suggested scenes in the Study Guide for further exploration and based on the reaction during the talkback to working with scenes, it seemed like the audience would have engaged with further exploration perhaps deepening their exploration of their understanding of bullying. Both audiences appeared to take both the questions and answers and the scene suggestions seriously and were eager to engage in the topics they had seen onstage.

The third audience presented a different reaction to the play then either of the first two. It was a larger audience then either of the first two. It was also the middle school from our district so the cast and crew were more familiar with the audience members as the audience included siblings and younger friends and neighbors. The audience was more verbal than previous audiences. They laughed in during some of the most serious
moments of the play and laughed and made derogatory comments during some of the serious bullying incidents. Also, there was considerable commenting and laughing when one character’s dialogue included the word “bitch” (Dewey Performance Notes). While these audience responses didn’t affect the overall quality of the performance, in fact it was the most focused and best-paced performance of the three in my evaluation, it did have an effect both the cast and crew who were concerned about the audience’s reaction. This reaction extended into the talkback. The facilitator had to remind the audience several times of how to behave appropriately saying once, “this is your chance to think about bullying in our school” and reminding them this wasn’t a topic to joke about (Dewey Performance notes). The cast and crew processed this following the performance coming to a couple of conclusions, “that the students were afraid of the topic”, “that the students needed to gain a better understanding of bullying”, “that (this particular school) has an issue with bullying that wasn’t being addressed” and that they “felt bullied themselves” by the audience’s behavior both during the performance and the talkback (Dewey Performance Notes). Most of the cast and crew called parents and checked out of school following this performance. The students who stayed kept close tabs on each other and checked in with me periodically throughout the day (Dewey Performance Notes). The reaction of the cast was known to the middle school and I met with the principal that day in an effort to keep the school informed of the consequences. The principal wasn’t overly concerned and stated that she had approved nine staff absences for conferences and visiting other schools that day. Substitute teachers try to hold students to the same level of behavioral and academic expectation as regular classroom teachers, but lack a consistent relationship with students. Often they are unclear on school expectations and
even when clear the lack of relationship can make expectations difficult to sustain. She also stated that since many of the middle school students knew the high school cast and crew they probably felt more comfortable expressing themselves. She did say they would have time to respond to the production the following day. One of the cast members had suggested that the cast might be helpful in that process and that she would be willing to go to the school and help with that. The principal never responded to this suggestion (Dewey Performance notes).

The different student audience responses may have been related to the amount of preparation for the production and to the value placed on the topic within the school culture. In an article on improvisation and education, Kathleen Gallagher quoted a drama teacher who cautioned that without specific guidance in improvisation “students often fall back into the ‘small world’ that they know” (44). I wondered if the context for the production had been enough to nurture critical thought and empathetic response. Without a broader context or preparation, it certainly would be possible for the students in the audience to be uncomfortable or inappropriate in responding to the play.

A member of the Youth Services Advisory Council, Cari Calico, a Crisis Counselor for the Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center, was in the audience for that production. I interviewed her a couple of months later and she offered a unique perspective on the experience. Our conversation covered aspects of the play and audience reaction. Her reaction to the production was that it was a “well paced series of vignettes with an easy to follow storyline which allowed easy access to and connection with the topic of bullying”. As a crisis counselor dealing with sexual violence, the concept of raising awareness and engaging people in critical and empathetic response to the issues, is something she deals
with daily. Mrs. Calico found the story and the cast’s portrayal to be authentic and
thoughtful and we discussed the kind of rehearsal process that would lead to that kind of
production. She stressed the importance of raising an empathetic response and that the
kind of a response could allow for participants to “step into the shoes” of a character and
bring about change in their understanding (Calico). She interpreted the audience’s
response as students who saw the play “as a chance to get out of school” and questioned
whether they had been given an “adult perspective” on viewing the topic prior to
watching the play (Calico). While I had other adult reactions to the production from
parents, community audience members and teachers from the school audiences, this was
my only authentic opportunity to process the performances with a peer. This interview
offered the experience of an individual involved in a related field with close ties to
students, while providing me the opportunity to look at the experience with the distance
of both time from the project and personal connection to the project. Mrs. Calico’s
perspective was instrumental in looking at the data gathered from the project with an eye
towards what I had learned from the project and recommendations for further study.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There’s a dream in the future
There’s a struggle that we have yet to win
And there’s pride in my heart
’Cause I know where I’m going, yes, I do
And I know where I’ve been, yeah

“I Know Where I’ve Been” Hairspray (Lyrics by Mark Shaiman and Scott
Wittman)
I was present recently at the annual high school Talent Show in our school district. One of the performers was *Debbie, a cast member from *The Secret Life of Girls. The other characters in the play bullied *Debbie’s character consistently. She was also one of cast members who shared stories of being bullied herself about issues that shared similarities with her character in *The Secret Life of Girls. Yet, there she stood center stage, make-up and hair done, stylishly dressed and belting out the song “I Know Where I’ve Been” from *Hairspray with a strength and confidence that drew loud applause and a standing ovation from her peers. I knew *Debbie could sing, but I’d never seen her perform as a solo act. She hadn’t participated in a previous high school Talent Show. A self-admitted victim of bullying who thought seriously that she might not be able to deal with a play that hit so close to home, was singing a song about oppression and tearing the roof off the theatre with her voice. This certainly wasn’t a girl who felt powerless. Instead her presence and voice filled the stage and the message of the song lyrics resonated with the attentive audience.

There isn’t quantitative data to support a conclusion that participating in the theatrical process of *The Secret Life of Girls contributed to *Debbie’s ability to perform at the Talent Show however, qualitative data from the project suggests a relationship between theatre processes and developing the skill sets that make-up social and emotional intelligence. On February 18, 2014 Education Week published a commentary entitled *Preventing Bullying with Emotional Intelligence* that stated that despite an increase in bullying prevention efforts and the presence of anti-bullying prevention legislation in forty-nine states, bullying rates have not declined (Brackett and Rivers). The commentary goes to state “Emotional intelligence needs to be a central component of bullying-
Empathy, the ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people, is one of the five skills sets that Daniel Goleman describes as comprising emotional intelligence. If theatre helps develop the skill sets of social emotional intelligence and social emotional intelligence is a needed component of bullying prevention programs then certainly theatre processes can play an effective role in bullying prevention.

During rehearsals and performances of *The Secret Life of Girls*, the cast and crew were directly engaged with learning Elliott Eisner’s “Ten Lessons the Arts Teach”. Eisner’s lessons encompass what’s learned as youth (and perhaps people of all ages) engage in artistic processes. Through those artistic processes these students increased their awareness of bullying by exploring their own experiences, exploring the experiences of the other students involved with the play, and through exploring the lives of the characters they were portraying. They engaged in critical and cognitive thinking skills to fully explore the plot and themes of the play, and the multiple layers that existed in the characters. They further developed their ability to employ empathy, as that was necessary to react and respond truthfully and believably as the characters in the story. It took time for this process to occur and the results of this work may still be being experienced.

In *Critical Evidence: How the ARTS Benefit Student Achievement*, Sandra Rupert calls cognitive thinking skills “the operation of various thought processes” including “reasoning, intuition, perception, imagination, creativity, problem solving and expression” saying they are the basis of success in school, work and life (13). In rehearsals of *The Secret Life of Girls* the cast and crew began with reasoning, reading the script to for basic knowledge of the storyline and characters, quickly progressing to using
their imagination to fill in knowledge of who the characters were, problem solving to
discover clues within the script as to why the characters behaved as they did, perception
enabling them to use their own and other’s personal experiences to make authentic
connections with the characters and reasoning to put the knowledge gain during
rehearsals in the expression of the final production. There were several examples where
the students drew on these cognitive thinking skills Rupert discusses. On September 20th,
I led the cast and crew in exercises and discussions designed to closely examine their
relationships with one another in *The Secret Life of Girls*. We explored what friendship
was in the play and I led them in a pair exercise to discover details about what they like
and didn’t like about one of the other characters. In our sharing that day I specifically
asked they go beyond surface answers to discover core visceral answers, the “secrets”
that perhaps would expose core emotions (Dewey Rehearsal Notes).

The cast and crew of *The Secret Life of Girls* clearly used the skills sets outlined
by Goleman as comprising emotional intelligence. It’s interesting to look at the
similarities between those skills sets and the Elliot Eisner’s Ten Lessons the Arts Teach
Us”. The artistic experience of rehearsing and performing *The Secret Life of Girls*
provides specific examples of these similarities. Emotional intelligence calls for self-
awareness, the ability to recognize one’s own emotions and the effects these emotions
have on others. Lesson #9 of Eisner’s Ten Lessons says “The arts enable us to have
experience we can have from no other source and through such experience to discover the
range and variety of what we are capable of feeling”. This was demonstrated multiple
times and in multiple ways during *The Secret Life of Girls* rehearsals. All of the cast and
crewmembers spoke of experiences of bullying they had been part of, some as bullies,
some as victims and some as by-standers (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). Discussions included talking of how these incidents made the cast and crew members feel. These discussions helped the actors make personal connections with the feelings expressed by their characters. Expressing their own personal connections to bullying lent authenticity to their onstage portrayals, especially during the bullying that occurred during the play. To play the emotions of the characters, the cast and crew needed to understand their own emotions and open themselves to drawing on those emotions when appropriate in the play. In the story many of the characters were “shut out” by the other characters, for being “new”, for liking books, for being overweight, for not being “cool”, for not being athletic enough, for not wearing the “right” clothes. One of the cast members *Kayla discussed in rehearsals how difficult it could be to move from school to school, always being the new girl. She related how she sometimes felt like she needed to prove herself and often looked for someone, anyone, to hang out with, especially during those first few days in a new school. *Kayla spoke of feeling lonely, scared and of putting on a façade of being a little tough and over confident (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). This self-awareness and the ability to talk with the other cast and crew members about their experiences were essential in developing authentic characters with truthful responses to the situations in the play.

The ability to think before acting, self-regulation, is another emotional intelligence skill set that has parallels with another of Eisner’s Lesson, “The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships”. This relates to how the arts helping children realize that that judgment requires more than black and white rules. It requires careful consideration about the quality of a situation and relationship. While
the entire cast and crew were upset about the one school show’s audience reaction, they continued the play, remaining focused on what they could control and telling the story to the best of their ability. At the beginning of the rehearsal process, one actor left the room when confronted with a personally disturbing portion of the play. While direct cause and effect can’t be shown, the play didn’t stop when the actors were confronted with a difficult audience reaction. They were able to self-regulate making a judgment that it was important to continue the performance despite the reactions of some of the audience members.

The skill of doing something for internal rather than external motivations is something not always immediately associated with theatre, as people often (wrongly) assume that actors act for the applause and recognition. Remembering the time and effort expended by the cast and crew in creating this production, shows that the students created this theatre piece because they wanted to. They wanted to put in the time and effort it took to tell the story and tell it well. That they were doing it for internal reasons is exemplified by their willingness to do the play regardless of the issues that it brought up for them is also illustrated by this lesson of Eisner’s, “The arts help children learn what cannot be said; when children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job”. The cast and crew clearly recognized the need to say something about bullying and through the play found the words to address it.

How theatre develops social skills provides another lens of comparison. Eisner states, “The arts celebrate multiple perspectives showing that there are many ways to interpret the world”. It is often said that theatre in schools offers students who don’t “fit
in" elsewhere a place to be. It is thought of as an accepting place. Our cast and crew included students from three grade levels, four races and both females and males. It included an athlete, “smart” students, students with specialized learning plans and an English as a Second Language student. It was the work, the purpose and the creating of ensemble that brought them together. The developed social bonds that extended beyond the rehearsal hall developing friendships that led to making plans together outside of rehearsal, and supporting each other when things weren’t going well either in rehearsal or just in life. For example, during rehearsals *Andrea’s boyfriend of a year broke up with her. This stressed her to the point were it was affecting her work in a class that she was taking with me. When I pulled her aside to talk about her performance in class she confided that the only reason she was coming to school was because of the play. She cared about and wanted to perform well specifically so that she would not let the other actor’s down (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). The play was something that was keeping *Andrea connected to work and people that she cared about.

Perhaps most importantly to my thesis involving this project, Goleman includes empathy, the ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people, as an essential skill set for well-developed emotional intelligence. It was essential for the cast and crew of *The Secret Life of Girls* to clearly understand the emotional make-up of their characters. How the same character, who is bullied and ostracized one day, is able to turn around and bully another, someone who stood up for her, would be inconceivable to portray without an understanding of that character’s perspective. Without that understanding, the complexity of the characters would have remained flat and the bullying situations absurd and superficial rather than believable.
There are clear parallels between Eisner’s “Ten Lessons the Arts Teach Us” and Goleman’s research on social and emotional intelligence. Observations of the rehearsal process of *The Secret Life of Girls* document how the students in the cast and crew grew through an artistic process in which well developed levels of empathy and social intelligence were needed. Based on their scores from the Toronto Empathy Quotient, which was administered early in the rehearsal process, the cast and crew showed an above average level of empathy from the beginning. They engaged more deeply in the skills needed to bring the characters to life during rehearsals, including going beyond a preliminary understanding of the characters to engaging deeply in uncovering the layers of the character’s relationships. They did this through acting exercises, character exploration, and on-going discussion and reflection. Perhaps one of the most telling examples was their increasing ability to listen to each other about instances of bullying and go by the incident to what might make people bully in those circumstances. This allowed them to empathize with character’s even when they didn’t always agree with their choices as they were understanding what was underlying behavior. The examples from that process show increasing use of empathy and social intelligence to explore these complex character relationships.

While the students who comprised the cast and crew were deeply engaged with the artistic processes over a period of time the student audiences spent much less time with the theatre processes. While at least one of the schools reported preparation for the performance and post performance student learning activities it was challenging to discern how deeply the other schools engaged with the project outside of their attendance at the school day performances. A total of five schools with approximately 760 students
attended those school performances (Dewey TSLOG Beacon Findings. One school engaged in pre and post learning around the play as well as attending the performances. That school reported an increased awareness and understanding of the bullying issue by their students as identified by student reflection and educator analysis. Three schools attended the performance and participated thoughtfully in the talkbacks. These schools reported upon their arrival at the school show some use of the Danville Spotlight Study Guides to prepare students for the performance (Dewey Performance Notes). As noted in my observations in Dewey Performance Notes, one school audience reacted with inappropriate verbal comments both during the play and talkback. That school did not report preparation for the play and approximately one-third of the regular teaching staff was not present with the students during the play. One class from the school reported post play learning activities based on the play and there was a general report that all students were going to respond to the play (Dewey Performance Notes).

This data supports the conclusion that students engaging with theatre processes develop and cultivate the skill sets of emotional intelligence and that growing these skill sets takes time, engagement and commitment. The group that showed the most growth was the cast and crew of The Secret Life of Girls. Administering the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire showed the students entered the rehearsal process with a strong level of empathy (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). The richness of their development through the rehearsal process, performances and Kentucky Theatre Association conference workshop is a result of their deep engagement with the theatrical processes they embraced in developing this project (Dewey Rehearsal Notes). They used Forum Theatre techniques, ArtsLiteracy strategies, improvisation, Living Newspaper
techniques and other physical and vocal work to bring this production to life. The confidence they developed that allowed them to perform *The Secret Life of Girls* in front of both responsive and challenging audience may stay with them. They certainly learned, as the song lyrics from *Hairspray*, so aptly express, “Cause just to sit still would be a sin”, that it’s important to use their voices to speak out, to start conversations about challenging topics (Shaiman and Scott).

The processes theatre artists undertake may offer unique insight into the topic of bullying and perhaps other social issues. When an audience engages in exploration of questions and topics raised by a performance in reflective and personal ways they too seem to grow in understanding of the issue. The school that treated the performance as a learning process with pre and post learning activities and multiple reflections used the theatre experience, the “Spotlight” study guide, attending the play and using further dialogue and learning activities developed from seeing the play self-reported increased dialogue and understanding of bullying in their student’s lives (Dewey Performance Notes). The other schools either didn’t report or reported generally or minimally leading me to believe that while they valued the topic enough to attend, insufficient time was spent on the topic as a whole to show or report any results or changes.

This study shows that bullying is an issue in our schools and that educators are continuing to search for answers. Researchers of youth and bullying look towards ways to develop student empathy and even convey the necessity of growing social and emotional intelligence to prevent bullying and its negative consequences. The theatre community has taken a stance and there are multiple companies and productions that are brought into schools as well as a sustained effort through the American Alliance of Theatre Educators
(AATE) and Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA). However, it would be my recommendation that production itself is not the answer. The answer may lie in combining student exploration of theatre techniques with seeing productions as part of a comprehensive school-wide anti-bullying curriculum. Student engagement with the topic and honest reflection through arts and writing can help students explore their role in bullying. Student engagement in the rehearsal process of *The Secret Life of Girls* showed numerous examples of empathy and an increased ability in the students to use that empathy to explore the complexities of characters who bully. Once that awareness is explored students can move forward having deeply explored their own and other’s experiences or as Shaimen and Wittmen wrote, “where they’ve been”. It seems that efforts to prevent bullying are “still a struggle we have yet to win” and that theatre can be a powerful ally.

**Implications for Future Research**

Future research into bullying prevention would be well served by additional studies that explore the effects of plays exploring bullying through complex characters and relevant (to a teen’s life) storylines have on both theatre artists and audiences. My recommendation is that seeing or producing these plays be part of a comprehensive school-wide bullying prevention program that includes using theatre techniques such as Forum Theatre scenes, role play and improvisation in small group or individual classroom settings both before and after seeing a play. In light of the positive findings of this study exploring the theatrical process and how it relates to both empathetic response and nurturing social and emotional intelligence could benefit both students and adults.

It might be optimal for a school or district to partner with a university education
department that is interested in collecting data on the topic. After experiencing a study such as this as a participant-observer, I'm much more aware of both the pros and cons of this type of study. The participant-observer’s closeness to the study can lead genuine insights. For example I had first hand observations of a great deal of the interaction of the cast and crew members. I didn’t need to have it recorded for me, or related to me in an interview or questionnaire. I watched the cast and crew members daily, and learned to understand not only what they said, but also what they indicated through their silences or activity. I saw them not only in rehearsal, but also in classrooms and in the hallway. Their parents contacted me with both concerns and logistics. I became close to the students and very knowledgeable about their lives both in and out of school. This allowed for nuanced observations and my ability to bring a more complete picture to understanding the conclusions derived from the observations.

However, it is essential for the participant-observer to realize when she is in observer mode and when she is in participant mode. The responsibilities of the participant, dealing with all the performance issues and logistics may not leave enough time for the observer to be as thorough as the research demands. For example, since there was a parent who objected to video recording rehearsals, I had to take notes following each rehearsal. Time constraints and simply not remembering may have had the effect of making those notes less complete than if I had been leading rehearsals and an observer had been taking notes. One step that could help avoid some of the pitfalls of being a participant-observer would be to further support the observational data with additional data from proven instruments. Administering the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire again at the end of the project could provide additional support for the conclusions reached in
this or future projects.

Due to the seriousness of the subject of bullying and the inability of current prevention measures to have a positive effect more needs to be studied about what makes bullying prevention successful. Larger scale research and additional studies with are needed to record and determine the true effect of theatre, both viewing and creating, on bullying prevention.
Appendix 1

Below is a list of statements. Please read each statement carefully and rate how frequently you feel or act in the manner described. Circle your answer on the response form. There are no right or wrong answers or trick questions. Please answer each question as honestly as you can.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Other people’s misfortunes do not disturb me greatly.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I enjoy making other people feel better.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>When a friend starts to talk about his/her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I find that I am &quot;in tune&quot; with other people’s moods.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I become irritated when someone cries.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I am not really interested in how other people feel.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him/her.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Toronto Empathy Questionnaire

Scoring Formula

Scoring Item responses are scored according to the following scale for positively worded items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 16. Never = 0; Rarely = 1; Sometimes = 2; Often = 3; Always = 4.

The following negatively worded items are reverse scored: 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15.

Scores are summed to derive total for the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire.
Appendix 3

The arts teach children to make **GOOD JUDGMENTS** about qualitative relationships. Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.

2. The arts teach children that problems can have **MORE** than **ONE** solution and that questions can have more than one answer.

3. The arts celebrate multiple **PERSPECTIVES**. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to **SEE** and **INTERPRET** the world.

4. The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity. Learning in the arts requires the **ABILITY** and a **WILLINGNESS** to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.

5. The arts make **VIVID** the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can **KNOW**. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our **COGNITION**.

6. The arts teach students that **SMALL DIFFERENCES** can have **LARGE EFFECTS**. The arts traffic in subtleties.

7. The arts teach students to think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which **IMAGES** become **REAL**.

8. The arts help **CHILDREN LEARN** to say what cannot be said. When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them **FEEL**, they must reach into their **POETIC CAPACITIES** to find the words that will do the job.

9. The **ARTS ENABLE** us to have **EXPERIENCE** we can have from no other source and through such experiences to **DISCOVER** the range and variety of what we are capable of **FEELING**.

10. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults **BELIEVE** is **IMPORTANT**.

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center Director Julie Hertzog stated, “The culture of bullying won’t end until people across the country take action and show kids that they care.” More information and resources go to http://www.pacer.org/bullyproof/.

"I’m going to tell you a secret," says the character of Abby and the story unfolds. It’s a look into the life of a group of girls who are friends and volleyball teammates, and Abby’s desire to be part of that group. Group dynamics change as each girl struggles to find her place in the changing world of that group. Invitations are extended and withheld, friendships are sacrificed and alliances are formed, changed and re-formed daily among the characters. The girls gossip and call each other names, include and exclude each other, and spread rumors. Relationships change quickly and often, and the question of what is friendship and which characters are friends becomes confusing. The adults in these young teen’s worlds range from concerned to enabling. You may see yourself or your students in some of the situations.

Ask yourself: What happens when we look secrets squarely in the eye? Can we change our behaviors? When does teasing cross the line into bullying? How do I know? And how can I resolve to raise awareness?
LIGTS UP! On your Role as Audience Member

Attending a play as an audience member is a unique entertainment experience. Theatre presents stories "live" onstage as they unfold. Although the stories are scripted, each performance is unique and you, the audience member, play a role. So, follow the story. Allow yourself to feel the emotions of the characters and the situations. Laugh when something strikes you funny; feel sad or angry when something moves you in that direction. Remember that you are part of a group, so while you're watching and sometimes reacting individually, keep the group's purpose, closely watching the play, at the heart of your audience experience.

Theatre is designed to both entertain and encourage thoughtful discussion about what are sometimes sensitive topics. As a middle school student you have probably encountered a situation in your school or community where someone is bullied. We hope this performance gives you the opportunity to explore your feelings about those kinds of situations, and how you (or the characters in the play) could make a difference. The "Secret Life of Birds" includes an audience "talkback" section. At the end of the play, the actors and crew will come up on stage and a facilitator will lead a discussion about the themes of the play and take some of the audience's questions. The cast may also reenact scenes from the play based on your suggestions.

Bullying is most common among middle school children, where
almost half of students may be bully victims.

- Between 15 and 25 percent of students overall are frequent victims of bullying, and 15 to 20 percent of students bully others often.
- About 20 percent of students experience physical bullying at some point in their lives, while almost a third experience some type of bullying.
- Cyber bullying statistics show about 8 percent of students have been the victims of a cyber-bully.
- Studies have indicated that females may be the victims of bullying more often than males; males are more likely to experience physical or verbal bullying, while females are more likely to experience social or psychological bullying.
- Students with disabilities are more likely to be the victims of bullying.
- Studies suggest only between 10 and 20 percent of noninvolved students provide any real help when another student is victimized.

Of children in sixth through tenth grade, more than 1.2 million—nearly one in five—are victims of bullying each year, while 3.7 million bully other children.

The 2009 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that about 1 in 5 teens had been bullied at school in the last year. Other findings from the survey show...
Look Fors!

Before you go... Discuss what the three categories of performance elements are. Definitions can be found online in KET's Drama Toolkit Glossary, http://www.ket.org/artstoolkit/drama/toolbox.html#. Look for elements of drama.

- Have students pair-share their definitions and compare to the glossary.
- In small groups, have students create Tableaux to reflect the definitions.

While in the theatre, have students observe the following:

- What did you notice when you entered the theatre?
- Describe the scenery? What about the set "struck you"? How was the stage used to tell the story?
- Describe the lighting? When did the lighting make an impression on you? How was the lighting used to help tell the story?
- Describe the costumes? What do you think the costume designer considered in making the costume choices?
- How was projection, sound and music used in the play?
- Did you feel caught up in the story? Why? How did the actors use physical and vocal choices to help bring the characters to life?
- What did you notice about the actor/character's movement or blocking in the play?

When you return...

- Have students discuss or write about their observations.
LIGHTS UP! Usina Theatre in the classroom to raise awareness about bullying

Students can explore what bullying is.
Students can explore the various perspectives and emotions that occur when bullying is happening.
Students can "try on" the various roles that people take on when bullying occurs.

Preparation for Teachers
You may be aware of role-play and have used it in your classroom. Role-play has its roots in Forum Theatre, a system developed by theatre artist Augusto Boal. In Forum Theatre, audience members participate by stopping what is happening and changing the action. Boal actually used this during performances by having audience members "stop" the action. Audience members participate by offering a suggestion or by stepping into the play changing the action themselves. Participatory theatre blurs the lines between audience and actor. These techniques were developed and have been used to challenge oppressive systems including bullying behavior.

New DRAFT National Arts Standards in Theatre
New National Standards are currently in DRAFT form. K - 8 was released for public comment over the summer. The artistic component "Connecting" provides structure for student learning in theatre and the human experience including the process component "Empathize". The component provides guidelines at each grade level for how theatre creates a learning environment for students to explore and gain understanding about their own experiences and the experiences of others. Please keep in mind that input is still being gathered on the standards and this may not be the final form. If you are interested in commenting on the standards click on the link below.

DRAFT From SEALAC on behalf of NCCAS [http://nca-wikispace.com/]
Anchor Standard: Communicate how and why responsiveness to relationships between self, others, drama processes, play, and theatre experiences may be used to make meaning of the human experience.
Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists allow awareness of interrelationships between self and others to influence and inform their work.
Essential Question(s): What happens when theatre artists foster understanding between self and others through critical awareness, social responsibility, and the exploration of empathy?

7th Grade: Challenge perspectives about self, others, and feelings/emotions, and offer alternate explanations of how they may affect traditions of drama- and theatre-based work and create understandings of the human experience.

It has long been thought that stories can help us understand our own behavior and the behavior of other individuals or groups. During National Bully Prevention month, October 2012, Clinical Social Worker Diane Murrell discussed how empathy is about developing "connectedness" with others while bullying is about "disconnectedness" in her Huffington Post blog. Stories, both actual and fictional,
Appendix 4 – Continued

connect audiences and the “tellers” to the subject matter through engaging plotlines and twists, compelling characters and character relationships, and thought-provoking themes and action. Theatre and storytelling have done this for centuries engaging audiences, helping artists and audiences question events and actions, and shaping their own beliefs. Merriam Webster defines empathy as the feeling that you understand and share another person’s experiences and emotions: the ability to share someone else’s feelings. Stories portrayed through live theatre can provide that opportunity to share another’s feelings. Theatre techniques used in the classroom can expand that exploration.

Using theatre as an exploration tool in the Classroom

Building on The Secret Life of Girls

Below are two short scenes from the play.

First have students pair up to come up with descriptions of the characters in the scenes based on what they say and do in the play (i.e. Is the character shy, out-going, kind, nervous etc). Or brainstorm as a class.

Have volunteers act out the scene.

Freeze/stop the scene at a certain point and ask the audience for suggestions on what might happen next. Look for specifics - i.e. this character could say or do this.

Have that student or another volunteer take the place of the actor playing that character. Allow the scene to play out improvisationally in that new direction.

Discuss what occurred in each tableau or scene. Ask students to reflect orally or in writing on the classroom drama exercises by responding to prompts including:

- “What character appealed to you most?”
- “Do you think the level of behavior among the characters was bullying?”
- “What suggestion do you believe could help change the situation?”
- “What would you do if you were one of the specific characters in the scene? (Remember to include the bully as a character. While students won’t want to identify with this character there is value in understanding the bullying behavior.)

Characters: Rebecca, Sutton, Stephanie

Rebecca: Why did her parents give her that friggin’ volleyball?

Sutton: She probably asked for it.

Rebecca: Lame. Jeez, take a hint, Abby.

Stephanie: Next, she’ll probably want to play basketball, too.

Sutton: It’s gonna run everything.

Rebecca: She just can’t be on our team.

Stephanie: Even Coach doesn’t want her.

Sutton: Did Coach say that?
Appendix 4 – Continued

Stephanie: Not really, but I know.
Sutton: That’s not the only lame present she got.

Character: Abby, Abby’s Mom

Abby’s Mom: You’re home? I thought you were going to eat pizza with everybody.
Abby: I wasn’t hungry.
Abby’s Mom: You weren’t hungry?
Abby: That’s what I said.
Abby’s Mom: Abby, is everything going okay with volleyball?
Abby: Not really.
Abby’s Mom: I thought you liked volleyball.
Abby: They don’t want me to be on the team.
Abby’s Mom: Who?
Abby: The girls. Everyone. Hello?
Abby’s Mom: Abby, you don’t need to talk to me that way.

Using the student’s own experiences

- With a partner have students write down their definition of bullying and two examples of bullying situations that they have experienced – either been part of or observed (15 minutes)
- Pairs share out and a scribe writes them on the board.
- Put pairs together to make small groups of four. The group chooses one of the situations that has been shared and creates a tableau (frozen picture) that depicts the action of the situation.
  - Remind students to show character relationship, actions, and emotions through facial expressions and body language.
  - Each group shares.
- Ask the group to unfreeze their tableau and begin acting it out with dialogue.
- Freeze/stop the scene at a certain point and ask for audience suggestions on what a character could do or say next to change the situation moving it away from bullying. Have someone new step in or have the group use the suggestion to take the scene in a different direction.
- Include the discussion suggestions from the play-based activity above.
Appendix 4 – Continued

**Another Way to Debrief**

Crossing the Line can be a powerful and effective activity to build both self and group awareness. This activity could be used after the play or following the scene/role play activities outlined above. This activity demands intent listening and respect and only you, as the teacher, will know if this is developmentally appropriate for your students. Here are two links to the ways to do the activity. The first provides excellent guidance for the facilitator. The second provides questions that relate to bullying. Remember to thank students at the end of the activity for their honesty and respect.

* http://www.unc.edu/depts/sca/programs/articles/crossing_the_line.pdf

Here are some additional statements to use for a Cross the Line activity from "The Bullying Solution"

- Read the following statements:
  a) Have you ever been teased because of your height or weight?
  b) Have you ever been teased because of your hair colour?
  c) Have you ever been teased because of the way you talk or walk?
  d) Have you ever been teased because of the colour of your skin?
  e) Have you ever been teased because of your faith?
  f) Have you ever been teased because of the way you play sports?
  g) Have you ever been teased because of your gender?
  h) Have you ever been teased because of the clothes you wear?
  i) Have you ever been teased because of the car you drive?
  j) Have you ever been teased because of the job you have?
  k) Have you ever been pushed by somebody?
  l) Have you ever been hit by somebody?
  m) Have you ever been yelled at by somebody?
  n) Have you ever been excluded from an activity?
  o) Have you ever been gossiped about?
  p) Have you ever gossiped about somebody else?
  q) Have you ever purposely excluded somebody from an activity?
  r) Have you ever teased somebody because of their height, weight, hair colour, colour of skin, gender or faith?

**Yours sincerely, A follow up request**

This play was produced as part of my final project for an interdisciplinary master’s degree in theatre, education, and human behavior. I’m interested in both your reactions and the reactions of your students. If you have time please respond to the following questions and return this to me following the production. Scan or email to dewey@duke.edu or mail to 203 E. Lexington Ave, Danville, KY 40422. No school, teacher or students will be identified.

Thank you for your time,

Jane Dewey
Appendix 4 – Continued

Please check or make an ‘X’ next to the response that most closely reflects your response.

1 - strongly disagree  2 - disagree  3 - neutral  4 - agree  5 - strongly agree

1. I perceive bullying to be an issue among my students
   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

2. In general my students believe that bullying is an issue at our school.
   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

3. My school actively looks for ways to address bullying among students.
   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

4. My students had spontaneous discussions about the play (in the bus, on the way out etc)
   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

5. My students participated in classroom discussions and/or theatre activities after the production designed to further explore the topic of bullying and raise their awareness of the topic.
   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

6. I believe that theatre can be an effective way to explore bullying and raise awareness among students.
   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

Please include any additional comments about the play, study guide or follow-up with students.
Appendix 5

The Secret Life of Girls – Rehearsal Notes
*Names of all performers have been changed
Performances – School Shows Oct 24th (9:30 and 12:45), Oct. 25th School Show (8:45), Oct. 26th (7:30), Oct. 27th (3:00)

Prior to auditions
• spoke with *John about assistant directing – yes
• Scripts available for check out prior to auditions
• Informal discussion with Adv. Acting 1st week of school re: fall production- no roles for males, what can males do to be involved (I thought about devising another piece of the play – perhaps a movement and spoken word piece that starts play, but decided against). “We haven’t done a play about bullying before” which led to discussion about intersession production which of couple of students in class had been involved with.
• Informal discussion with Tech Theatre Club Tues. 8/19 about production, tech theatre club role – projections, sound, props. “It would be a change from the musicals to do a play about bullying.” Students brought up bullying in their own lives. **There always seems to be a lot of stories around the topic. Discussion of projections – how the texting conversations could be created.

8/20/2014
Auditions first day – 14 attended
Warm-ups, 1 – 10 Shape scenes prompted by a variety of bullying situations
different bullying scenarios, cold readings
Can cast the play
Conflicts may determine who gets cast
Ask *Lydia about stage managing

8/21/2014
2nd Day – 12 attended – 2 new
Warm-ups – ensemble theatre games, auditionees enjoy and respond well
Abby and Stephanie – these two characters are pivotal. Did several readings with these two characters in mind.
Character of Stephanie needs meanness and vulnerability – meanness
masking vulnerability, but actress will need to access both
Ensemble nature of play looks to work with any combination – it will take some digging to find the “meanness” of these very nice girls. The characters all pretty desperately want acceptance – to varying degrees – how do we approach this – what does each character do to fit in?
Rebecca – this character has to be played by someone of a certain type – keep in mind that this student may be self-conscious about weight or coordination.
*Lydia agrees to SM
Appendix 5 - continued

8/26
Cast List UP, Some disappointments.

8/27
Rehearsal
Hand out script
Ensemble games – Kitty Wants a Corner, Twizling and Turning, Zip, Zap, Zop
Bully discussion – bullying you’ve seen or experienced – Victims, Bully’s, Bystanders – can one person end up in all three categories? How? Discussion – actors are easily relating to this in the script from their knowledge of the script learned in cold readings and by checking the script out prior to auditions. Went over definition of bullying – “aggressive, unwanted, repeated or the potential to be repeated and there is an imbalance of power”

In pairs something no one would know about you by looking at you. I used this to start them thinking right out of the box about “secrets” about what we don’t know about people or what we think we know about people by looking at them.

What don’t we know? What don’t we know about the characters? What do we assume about the characters based on how they are described and how they interact with others?


8/29
Rehearsal – No rehearsal – Frankfort meeting

8/30
Rehearsal
Had to track down one cast member prior to rehearsal. She backed out. Will need to decide how to recast.

Warm-ups – Large bouncy ball – as a group keeping the ball from touching the floor and counting hits together – surprisingly difficult

Read through – get through sleep over scene

*Debbie – upset with what happens at sleepover

Talked with *Debbie – upset because she had been bullied in this way

Talked with *Debbie parents – they seem very down to earth about the situation and very non-confrontational about what has occurred.

Talked with *Laura’s parent – she wants to know how I’m handling this and if the actors knew ahead of time about the content of the script and how mean the characters sometimes were to each other. Got to be careful not to second-guess myself on this as students get emotional and parents get involved. Tried to reassure that while the students were prepped both in auditions and during previous rehearsals it’s often different when we have to read the scene. One parent won’t sign video release.
Appendix 5 - continued

I had made a conscious choice not to make a big deal about what was happening in certain scenes at the beginning. To allow a gradual exploration of subject matter that I knew could be difficult. I want to build a safe place where actors are OK with exploring very mean behavior both as recipient and as giver – as victim, bystander and bully. However this has me thinking that our conversations may need to deepen quickly and that I’m going to need to be cautious when asking cast to draw connections to their own personal lives. I can’t avoid personal connections completely because making those and opening themselves to honestly feeling as the characters will create a more interesting, honest production.

9/3
Rehearsal
- Warm-ups – both traditional and with bouncy ball
- Finish read through
- Begin Blocking
- Introduced Warm and Fuzzy Board – actors really seemed to like the idea – good idea to leave positive messages for each other.
Begin after rehearsal discussions with SM and Assist. Dir. – these are good – SM has lots to say about how she relates her own experience with family divorce to Stephanie’s divorce. Good for her to be able to talk about this I think, maybe the openness of rehearsal gives her permission, but it takes the character of Stephanie in a very different direction, although it also strengthens the character’s sense of isolation (“Lydia doesn’t play Stephanie and her communication skills may make it difficult to use her experience as part of the rehearsal process – how to tell this to her?)

9/5
Rehearsal
- Warm-Ups – Traditional and bouncy ball - need to get volleyball and start cast using this (Hayes suggestion)
- Blocking
- Bullying discussion – Can friend’s bully? *Carrie living as immigrant in several different countries states, didn’t want to make friends, 1 – 10 shape scenes friendship, keeping a secret, confronting scene partner about something that the “character” had said about the other person – continuing to develop non-verbal expression
- How are the characters in SLOG bullied? Not athletic enough, weight, “new” girl, not doing the “right” things – hanging out with the new girl, liking books, not wearing the “right” clothes. Talked about how the line can be really thin and when does the line get crossed. Several noted that it’s “when the person starts to feel hurt by the conversations or actions of others”
Appendix 5 - continued

Took time to remind actors about warm and fuzzy board and there were several notes there at the end of rehearsal. I’m watching this closely and writing to anyone who isn’t receiving notes.

*Lydia wants to read a lot of her own experience with divorce into the portrayal of Stephanie. She’s telling the actress that she’s doing it wrong, that it would be like this. I had to pull her aside today and be very direct that I while I’m open to discussion and will often ask questions about the character and circumstances that she can’t take over. I asked her if this was bringing up subjects and emotions that were very close for her (I knew the answer, but wanted her to realize) and she said yes. I reminded her that while making personal connections can be valuable for the actor – the given circumstances of the play, which are different then her given circumstances always have to be primary. I also encouraged her to talk to me or to someone else about the emotions and experiences this rehearsal process was stirring up inside of her.

I’m noticing that cast/crew are openly making plans for outside of rehearsal.

9/6
Rehearsal

Toronto Empathy Questionaire administered to 9 actors. We didn’t discuss this although we did discuss empathy today. I brought up what I had learned about the idea of empathy and connectedness and I asked them to consider this as we worked. Can we develop empathy with the characters they’re playing and how do we go about do that? I suggested the acting idea of personal connections... how did I feel when I was in a similar situation. I broke them into pairs and asked them to tell their partner a story of a situation that they were in that might be similar to a situation in the play – describe the situation, describe their role, think about and describe how they each felt in the situation. I only wanted them to share that with their partner – again trying to get a strong emotions and memories while keeping the rehearsal space safe.

Warm-ups - Volleyball – oh no we have to be volleyball players – use in warm-ups regularly – 1st day with volleyball pretty much a fiasco, actors afraid of the ball, awkward and uncomfortable – ask *Brenda to work on fundamentals (how to hit the ball, serve the ball, how the team works together) all non-verbal expression – working on this with actors – getting them as comfortable relating to each other with movement as with dialogue.

Continue blocking

Ask *Kaylato double – yes

Conversation following rehearsal with AD and SM – would they begin warm-ups if the actors happen to arrive before me?

9/10
Rehearsal

Added up results of TEQ over weekend for actors who took. Shows that these students already have an average to high empathy quotient. Scores 31 – 64.4
Appendix 5 - continued

highest, 1 lowest. 5 ones on single statements indicating low empathetic response on a single statement. 2 ones on the same statement - #14 “When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not see much pity for them” negatively worded and I wonder if the two didn’t read clearly. Use in paper analysis.

Warm-ups “passing” volleyball around – lots of “I can’t do this” – some trying harder than others, *Carrie is good. We need to go watch volleyball team.
Walk around – various tempos – when I say go you stop when I say stop you go when I saw jump you say your name when I say say your name you jump. Help develop them into a group that can react together and are individually focused.
Worked on blocking for Abby’s birthday party – from opening through – work on finding non-linear groupings. They do have a good feel for “fun” although there’s some inhibitions about “breaking loose” with dancing. We worked on this some – need to find music. Worked through gift giving.
Run portions of blocking – still need to block VB scenes. Talked to girls VB coach about rules of the game.

9/12
Rehearsal
Warm-up
Work scenes VB girls – who’s friends and when does it change? Each actor needs to follow that transition for him/herself
Abby and mom – what does Abby’s mom know
Reminded actors to write and read warm fuzzies – don’t need to remind as much any more – Need to write one to ALL cast/crew so that we can share that together
Watch volleyball practice – thought it was a game, but it turned out we were only there for the warm-up and start of game. This was OK as it really illustrated how the team drills skills and works together.

9/13
Rehearsal
Warm-ups – Walk around making eye contact – need to continue to stress this connection with actors
Cross the line exercise – we used these statements which I’ll also include in Study Guides for classroom exercises. Take three steps forward if ....
• Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your height or weight?
• Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your hair color?
• Have you ever been teased or bullied because of you’re the way you talk?
• Have you ever been teased or bullied because of the color of your skin?
• Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your faith?
• Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your lack of athletic ability?
Appendix 5 - continued

- Have you ever been teased or bullied because you're “smart”.
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your gender?
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of the clothes you wear?
- Have you ever been called "stupid" or "dumb".
- Have you ever been pushed by someone (not accidentally)
- Have you ever been hit by someone.
- Have you ever been yelled at by somebody?
- Have you ever been excluded from an activity?
- Have you ever gossiped about?
- Have you ever gossiped about someone else?
- Have you ever purposely excluded someone from an activity?
- Have you ever gossiped about others?
- Have you ever teased someone?

This was done in silence, all together. I asked them to consider what was going around in their minds as they responded to each question and how they could use these personal connections to dig deeper into the characters they were developing.

The we did another walk around first making eye contact and then adding physical contact with they made eye contact – could be a high five, a slap on the back, a hand shake, hug, something else, but they needed to make eye contact first. There were lots of hugs.

Short discussion on cross the line and walk around. Let’s take this to the next step through additional improvisational role-plays - * Mary “Sometimes you have to be really sensitive to the other person who you’re teasing... they might laugh just to cover up how they really feel”

Abby and Chandler scene work – work into this by running scene before and after. Discussion among cast members of how it feels to be the new girl at school. Kayla shared that this can be really tough. She’d changed schools fairly often and that she would always look for someone to hang out with at least for the first couple of days because it was lonely. She said she even sometimes acted like she didn’t care that she didn’t know anyone or didn’t have friends.

Abby and Stephanie scene work – end of sleepover scene work into this through full sleep over scene - Have you ever needed to be accepted? Discussion – with all at rehearsal. With just Abby and Stephanie – why does Abby care so much that Stephanie accepts her – “it’s more than just her”, can it be important to try to get someone who’s been mean to you like Stephanie was in the beginning, to accept you” *Denise “maybe even more when you feel like an outsider”

9/17
Rehearsal

Warm-ups – ball in the air, when I say go you stop
Discuss watching practice
We can never be the volleyball players
Appendix 5 - continued

What characteristics you observed – focus, confidence in game, always looking to teammates. Qme - How can we find this? A – keep working on it in warm-ups, take volley ball home, How does this make the betrayals worse? Here's where things are right now – they are saying all the "right" things in these discussions.

Work games – just blocking over and over. This was a good thing starting to get it – this may also be helping answer some of the questions I asked how do we build those characteristics. Certainly doing the blocking over and over began to build their confidence. They would build focus and then loose it again and then bring it back. Interesting – after a couple of times through when it just kept falling apart they started taking the lead on putting it back together "no – you go there" "This is the second serve and you're moving forward on the third serve" that kind of thing without my directing that – they were taking charge – showing confidence and working together as a team – no one "director" among them. A couple of times that fell apart and I needed to step in, but it was a change for them to look to each other to figure it out rather than me.

9/19
Rehearsal

Warm-ups – now they are warming up with volleyball as they come in -
*Denise, *Mary working on serves.

44 – end of play – work/run (still have not worked on scene between Abby and Stephanie when Abby goes to Stephanie's house to bring her notes at the very end of the play) The cutting will be challenging and I've asked *Laura to do some reading/research on this and we'll talk more later

Improvise bullying scenes outside of play when is character bully, victim, bystander. We don't want to play these states, but it can be helpful to as actors be aware – stop – "what does each character want" even in these scene which are outside of text. Discussion - *Denise - "I tease the people I love, but sometimes the teasing goes too far". I asked them after each role play to think about how they felt during the exercise – when were you hurt, upset, what did you do – laugh it off, get silent etc. the person who was bullying – what were you trying to accomplish?

Kayla monologue – spent some time with this today. Actor has the ability to drop into this conversation and open up about what's bothering the character. Talked about if the character really doesn't feel well or if it's an excuse coming to the conclusion that she just needs her mother, but that the stress of being blown off by another character who she thought was a friend could cause her to not feel well. I reminded her that this had been going on for a little while, but that the scene prior where she overhears Abby say that she's a loser is the final straw for her. That she needs to take that moment as she moves in to call her mother to respond to that. We worked through the monologue a few times after talking about that with me asking questions. When we finished I about Kayla's need for acceptance by Stephanie – what is it that drives this friendship? A couple of scenes later even though Kayla's overheard Stephanie bad-mouthing her and has this little breakdown when she calls
her mom she reaches back out to Stephanie – “I think it’s because she (Stephanie) has all the girls on her side. It’s kind of like there’s no one left to be Kayla’s friend so she just has to take that chance to reach out to Stephanie and then to get back “in” joins her in bullying others” Insightful.

9/20
Rehearsal

* John works with two moms – lots of non verbal they need to know how they know each other
I pair them up – some of them do more than one session. Spend about 10 – 15 minutes talking about your relationship before the play. Questions like how long have you known each other, decide on a recent experience (good or bad) that you had with the other person – improvise that “scene”. Say one thing you really like/love about the other person. Say one thing that bugs you about the other person. We shared these and I encouraged some of them to dig a little deeper into these relationship as they continued exploring them in rehearsal. Go beyond the CM “I don’t like that she’s not a very good player and is bringing the team down” or CM “I would do anything to get back into the group” to maybe something like Me “She makes us loose” or “I don’t want her on the team” or Me “Try dropping in that you don’t understand why she’s being mean to me” or what “anything” would you do? I’m trying to get to core visceral feelings that they can access during the play so that these characters aren’t just saying the lines, but they’re meaning the lines – living the situation in that moment.

Abby/Mom
Sutton/Mom
Step/Kayla
Steph/Rebecca
Rebecca/Anna Marie
Sutton/Kayla
Abby/Anna Marie

Discussion – what is friendship- “I can tell you anything”. Have you ever been bullied by someone who you thought was a friend – back to what is bullying – maybe betrayed. Maybe friends don’t even know that sometimes what they’re doing doesn’t feel good.

Girls begin recognizing that sometimes they have bullied?? This is an interesting step in the process. *Denise had previously talked about “bullying” her sister, but that that was really teasing. Today she talked about MS. How she had felt that she’d been bullied by others in MS, that she was shy, introverted and a good student with a few friends by not a lot of friends. Now, she thinks maybe she did some bullying as well, holding herself as better than many of the students and not really getting to know them.
Appendix 5 - continued

This was kind of a deep rehearsal and I’m wondering if doing this on a Monday and not seeing them for a couple of days was a good thing. I’m going to back off this a little bit in the next couple of rehearsals – give them some breathing room maybe.

9/24
Rehearsal
   Warm-ups – back to fun ensemble theatre games, a couple of rounds of Zip, Zap, Zop and Kitty Wants a Corner.
   Coach and game scenes
   What role do the adults play and have you ever been bullied by an adult – has an adult ever been aware of bullying, been present at a bullying occurrence and not intervened. This was an interesting discussion as they talked about how the coach bullies in the scene kind of, but that coaches sometimes do that to get the best from their players – so I asked them what makes it bullying and a couple of them this time said “it depends on the situation and your relationship with the adult” The discussion also included how teachers in our school often don’t address what they view as bullying – just let it go on and hope that it gets figured out.
   What are the secrets in this play? Does each character have a secret? *Amy – probably not my character* I ask why she thinks that and she says because her character doesn’t get as involved with the bullying – I agree, but encourage her to go deeper into who this girl is – maybe the secret has something to do with why she isn’t part of the bullying. I don’t think she wants to go beyond the surface at this point.

9/26
Rehearsal
   Sutton’s mom scene – run this several times we all actors, working primarily on pacing of entrances/activities
   Gabe work with Sutton’s mom on lines, pronunciation and rhythm of the language.
   Sleepover scene – We had worked on both before and after Rebecca’s phone call, but hadn’t done any real work on the phone call just on the blocking of it with lines and running through to set up for Abby and Stephanie scene at the end of the sleepover. I knew this would be big as this is one of the cruellest bullying scenes in the play so I pulled *Debbie aside briefly to ask her how she felt about working on the scene. She said it was fine and that she was really OK with it. I think she’s holding this at arm’s length, but really who can blame her. This is very emotional stuff and maybe the character – at least during that scene is also holding the bullying behavior of her “friends” at arms length. Maybe holding it at arms length lets her get through the day. All the cast is clearly somewhat uncomfortable with this as in working through the phone call they all are still distancing themselves and again maybe that’s kind of a common practice among teens – not really looking to deeply at what they’re doing because if they do look deeply they might see parts of themselves that they don’t like. There’s enough wishing I was something different
Appendix 5 - continued

than I am. I write a warm fuzzy to ALL about how much I'm enjoying working on the play with them and how proud I am of their willingness to explore difficult subjects after the rehearsal – we'll read it together next time.

Costumes Talk – what are we doing, what's needed etc. chart for costume changes presented and reviewed. This is a big piece.

9/27
Rehearsal

Warm-up with the volleyball. Walk around (when I say stop you go/when I say go you stop etc) they are becoming more comfortable with volleyball.

Still thinking about Amy's reaction. We work Sutton and Anna Marie p. 37 shirt scene p. 37 – 44.

Me – what is Stephanie's relationship with Dad? With Mom? To whole cast while Stephanie, Abby and Sutton parent relationships are the only ones clearly drawn in the script, think about your character's relationship at home, parents, siblings etc. Remember that each character has a full life of experiences that she brings to the story – get your clues from the script and don't change the givens in the script, but round this out for yourself.

Work on Stephanie and Rebecca IM conversation – R family life?

Had John and Lydia work on music for volleyball games and Abby's b-day party. Problem they don't know that kind of music - May and Carrie took over.

I pulled Andrea aside earlier in the week during class. In class she's not paying attention, constantly talking, and when I call her on it or ask her to stop she just ignores me and keeps right on or says she'll stop and then doesn't. Her participation is really off. She continues to be fine in rehearsal though. She told me the only thing she cares about right now is doing the play and that's why she's coming to school. I tried to remind her that the skills she was building in class would help her in the play, but that didn't seem to matter. It doesn't help that this ex-boyfriend is in the class I'm sure.

First of two off book
Warm-up traditional vocal/physical

*Andrea came late – getting dress – her mother had emailed me about missing rehearsal to go get a dress for a dance. That it was the first time she'd been excited about something since her boyfriend had broken up with her. Her mother also said that she didn't want to miss rehearsal because she didn't want to let the rest of the cast down. How could I say no?

We got through it.

Did warm and fuzzies – there were a couple to all – general words of encouragement, especially for Andrea – they all went out to eat together.
Appendix 5 - continued

9/30
Rehearsal - everyone
This rehearsal was planned to work trouble spots. Ran full sleep over several times – also worked into volleyball sequences and back out

Kept *Denise and *Laura to work on final scene. Worked through blocking and talked about what's going on with both characters. Detail needed in blocking in entrance (what does *Denise see and when does she see it) to establish cutting and also block from *Denise's character's view. Logistical questions – what is used as cutting instrument, blood. What *Laura is wearing.

Also worked on shaping each moment of the scene so that actor's knowledge of story doesn't supersede character's knowledge of the moment. *Laura is holding character at arm's length. Challenging, while in some ways this is easier, because no one seems to have personally been involved with cutting that may also be the barrier. *Laura has confided that she knows “people” who cut. Her mother has also said that *Laura knows people who cut. She seems to be intellectualizing this – I wonder how I can harness her distancing of self – is there some distancing of self in the act itself?

10/1
Rehearsal
Actors working with volleyball while I'm setting up for rehearsal. Observed strong group skills among them. Comments like "Yes, you’ve got it" “Let's try this again" “Watch how I serve" (from the actor on the volleyball team), “Watch the height", "I'm less afraid of the ball now"

Warmups – focus on vocal. Actors getting expressiveness mostly through work on given circumstances, what they are reacting to and listening and responding, but I need to focus on projection and articulation.

Run first half of play again off book.


10/3
Rehearsal

Warm-ups – traditional and volleyball – continue focusing on project and diction

Stumble through off book 46 – end. This is much less successful than off book of first half of play. Basic focus of this rehearsal was on line work. *John holding book, *Lydia taking notes.
Appendix 5 - continued

Go over script cuts and language changes/issues. This is the performance cutting.

Mention that they might want to plan cast party. Thankfully I did this at the end as there's immediate discussion.

10/4
Rehearsal – all called, couple of no-shows, last day of school before fall break.
Reminded them of the importance of working on lines and character over break – look at lines and visualize scenes daily. Get to know your character over break.

Did elongated ensemble work – walk around, tempos, bouncy ball, zip zap zap, both volleyball games (run choreography) have added music.

Went back to the beginning and did stop and go on opening scenes. Beneficial for actors to “live in” those opening scenes again. How does the “new girl” get accepted. What’s the relationship between the characters that opens the play. Asking questions like – “What do you want” “What do you need” “What happened right before what you’re doing now” “How does what she just said make you feel”

Skipped to championship game – had each actor identify character’s intention going into game.

All leave except *Denise and *Laura – track their characters relationship over the course of the play.

They want to rehearse with their fathers over break. I say fine, but am a little concerned as this tends to lead to a pre-planned course of actions (which can be committed) but often isn’t genuine. The final scene demands honesty. Of course the whole play does as well.

*Denise takes home volleyball

10/13
Rehearsal – just *Denise and *Laura

Discuss again – “What is bullying” they are willing to do this, but seem a little bored with the conversation – a little like why are we going over this again – I need to find a way to renew their interest. It’s like with anything if you don’t continue to dig deeper and/or find new approaches a thing can start feeling like same old same old. I want them to open themselves to the given circumstances of this scene rather than decide how they would play it. What does Abby want more than anything else? What does Stephanie want more than anything else? As actors they need to know this – as characters they need to let this drive what’s happening in the scene.
Appendix 5 - continued

"What is empathy" I ask – answers – walking in their shoes, understanding how someone else feels... So since neither of you have experience exactly what’s happening in the scene – cutting and discovering someone in the act of cutting how do we discover this? What’s the difference between empathy and sympathy – “Sympathy you feel for, empathy you deeply understand the feeling”

Work moment to moment in the cutting scene to try to get to that empathetic response. What to you want here – what are you doing to get want you want – live in that world – rather than stepping out and analyzing character’s behavior.

End – Run end of sleepover with these two actors then go back to final scene. Go through 3x.

End by asking – how are you? They seem confused by this – a little shell shocked – maybe a little overwhelmed

10/14
First time we're all back together again – Reminder of warm and fuzzies – but they don’t really do these through rehearsal. I observe that when they are offstage they're busy consulting each other or scripts on what’s next

Excitement is there - actors realize it’s the final push towards performances and they are clearly excited about this.

They've clearly been away from this for a week.

They are practicing with volleyball when I arrive

Full warm-up including vocals. Think of a line – moving around stage – finding different ways to use the line – using the line intentionally – allow yourself to respond to the given circumstances – whatever prompt I give through the line

I look at projections while they warm-up (until vocals) with *John and *Lydia. Text too small – what to do? Audience needs to be able to read

Do dress parade – notes on costumes – things missing – things to get – still waiting on shirts and sweatshirts.

Run show from beginning. No stopping. Don't get through to end. There are lots of logistical issues – props not there. set pieces not moved at the correct time. Working with some lighting cues – those are off. Despite lots of things not being there or saying the wrong lines at the wrong time, off bits of blocking and the distractions of constantly needing to think what’s next while still trying to play what they're doing this is a good first step.

I wish that we would have time to do cross the line again
Appendix 5 - continued

10/15
Warm-ups on own with *John and Lydia
Cue to cue, sound, lighting and projects

still rehearsing, but some shift in priorities
Making sure puzzle pieces in addition to actors all working to tell the story

Need to reblock exit p. 33, look at blocking p. 60, p. 24, 33 – 35, 40

After cue to cue students leave quickly, but need to have them run lines for sleep over

Props:
  Bowl
  Sleep over snacks – take from what parent’s are bringing for rehearsal
  Pizza Boxes
  Kindle
  Gifts

Sound – different song p. 29 exit

Lights – work on volleyball scenes

Go over cube placement – remember to move – need to glow tape
Cue to cue through to end of Championship game – Need to start with Championship game – rerun cues on this with blocking

10/16
Finish cue to cue – work Abby’s bday party, Steph and Rebecca and scene before SO if time permits

Warm-ups – again on own, but group – projection and diction are slipping

Start with Championship game – this goes better – light and sound cues more successful, but projections not quite right – very challenging. Meet with Mark and projection operators at end of rehearsal to trouble shoot – can one person watch and cue the other?

Finished cue to cue and went back and worked scenes, but epilogue projections not ready (not all photos in) MUST have these. Start with this tomorrow.

All costumes here. Tomorrow run with costumes for costume changes.

10/17
Appendix 5 - continued

Warm-ups
Do vocal expression line prompt.

I remind them that we're running with costume changes and to refer to the charts that I created and are taped up backstage. These also give them options for underdressing. “This could be very messy” this changes are really tough

Started with epilogue – reworked blocking umpteenth time – still missing 2 photos, but I think we have this. Have to keep pacing alive – this tends to really slow down.

Run with costume changes – this is a mess – changes are really fast and need continued work. Most of work right now is concentrated on getting through this with the right clothes on.

Run tomorrow w/o costumes – concentrate on what you're saying and what you're doing. Remember relationships, eye contact, listening and responding.

10/18
Warm-ups –
Line bash Abby's bday party, Stutton's mom entrance and scene, sleepover scene

Run w/o costume changes, but with all other cues – Transitions are definitely working better. Actors were able to bring “acting” back focusing on what was happening, what’s in the way of them getting what they want – working together.

No Weekend rehearsals. Mon – Weds dress/techs next week

Find Ouija board

The next three rehearsals are really focused on polishing the storytelling of the play through all aspects. Notes are primarily about specific things that can be fixed through a note – e.g. begin your exit a little earlier, make sure that the dialogue starts as you enter, know we're you're going when you enter and exit – don’t wander, fix the light cue at the end etc.

10/21
Warm-ups
Dress/Tech – Ran whole play – worked last scene between Stephanie and Abby at end of rehearsal. Still working on getting the actors to really connect to everything that is happening. Spoke to Mark about light cue length on this and beginning of sound cue. It helps set the mood and the actors really need the help on this.

Notes
Warm-ups –
Cross the line – we did this in silence with no discussion just prior to beginning rehearsal. I was attempting to bring them into the world of the play while opening themselves to allowing their own personal connections to have an impact on what they were playing.

Take three steps forward if ...

- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your height or weight?
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your hair color?
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of the way you talk?
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of the color of your skin?
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your faith?
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your lack of athletic ability?
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because you’re “smart”.
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of your gender?
- Have you ever been teased or bullied because of the clothes you wear?
- Have you ever been called “stupid” or “dumb”.
- Have you ever been pushed by someone (not accidentally)
- Have you ever been hit by someone.
- Have you ever been yelled at by somebody?
- Have you ever been excluded from an activity?
- Have you ever been gossiped about?
- Have you ever gossiped about someone else?
- Have you ever purposely excluded someone from an activity?
- Have you ever gossiped about others?
- Have you ever teased someone?

Dress/Tech – at end went over movement in epilogue one more time and worked curtain call. While this is stylized it isn’t monotone – I think we have it.

Saved Notes until the beginning of tomorrow’s rehearsal. I led a conversation in how the audience might respond reminding them that what they have control over is their work in the play – playing each moment, listening and responding. The audience might be silent, might be talkative – you never know with students. They might laugh in places that are very unfunny and when that happens it usually because they are uncomfortable or don’t know how to react.

We talked about the Talkback at the end of the play. I’m concerned that we haven’t done enough work on this. We went over that I would lead all, but the one middle school’s talk back. We were going to loosely follow the outline in the back of the script – we’d talked about doing that earlier in rehearsals – but would the audience would help share the talk back. I’d keep things moving and they all might not get to say everything that they want to say because the focus at that point is on deepening the audience’s experience, helping them make further connections to both the
Appendix 5 - continued

theatrical elements of the play and the content of the play. While the theatrical
elements would be secondary, I was sure there would be questions about those. I
told them I would try to save time to do an improvised scene with audience
suggestions (Forum Theatre). We tried a couple of scenarios and they seemed most
comfortable with a cafeteria scene with all the girls except Abby and Stephanie
talking about who should be on the team and why. It was interesting that it was
really kind of gossip fest and I'm not sure if they recognized that they really were
talking about these two characters? What was very reassuring is that in this improv
they were there characters – talking and responding as these characters they had
developed showing they were really comfortable enough to just be the characters.

10/23
Warm-ups
Dress/Tech – call time was right after school – we warmed up then they did
hair/make-up and costumes, while tech ran cues, checked props made sure
everything was on and ready to go and they we did the show. There were a couple
outside people in the audience, which made them care just a little bit more. It’s good
– they’re ready for that. We did the whole show and I gave a couple of notes on
specific things.
Warm and Fuzzies – Mostly break a leg, excited for 1st performance. Many read
aloud. I praised all – cast and technical crew specifically for the good work they
were each doing – went around in a circle saying one specific thing about each. Two
shows tomorrow. We’re ready.
Appendix 6

The Secret Life of Girls – Performance Notes
*Names of all performers have been changed

Performances – School Shows Oct 24th (9:30 and 12:45), Oct. 25th School Show (8:45), Oct. 26th (7:30), Oct. 27th (3:00)

5 schools attended three performances
All schools received study guides
All schools reported using the study guides in various ways although I didn’t learn this until they came to the show or until they sent responses following the show.

School Show Oct. 24th 9:30
Audience - KSD Middle School – approximately 50 students and 15 chaperones (this performance was interpreted for the deaf and hard of hearing).

When making reservations teacher reported that bullying is an issue in their school and both the counselor and teachers work with students engaging them about what bullying is and helping them recognize bullying.

Lead teacher reported on arrival that they had done preparation with their students and had used study guides.

Observations: Audience was very attentive and performance went well. Following the performance I (director) led a 30-minute talkback with the audience. All cast and crew members were onstage for this and we continued using the sign language interpreters.

Talkback

- Each cast and crew member introduced self and said what they were in high school and what role they had or what job they had in the play.
- Facilitator gave a short overview of this opportunity to ask questions of the cast/crew and discuss issues in the play.
- Initial questions from student audience were about
  - How long did you rehearse?
  - How did you memorize all the lines?
  - How did you make all the projections happen?
  - The volleyball games worked really well, what did you do to practice those?
  - Why do you think Stephanie was so mean?
  - What was it like to play Rebecca, Abby, Anna Marie, and Kayla when they were being bullied?

Facilitator asked audience if they saw any behavior onstage that they have also seen in their school or community. Several students
Appendix 6 - Continued

commented on this. A couple of students related how they get picked

- on because they speak differently. They also said they other deaf
  students sometimes pick on them (it doesn't seem to be solely based
  on disability).

- Facilitator asked if any of the audience members had any suggestions
  for the characters. One said that Abby doesn’t need to feel so much
  like she has to fit in. Another then asked the character playing Abby if
  she had ever wanted to fit in like Abby did. A couple of the cast/crew
  members talked about experiences they have had fitting in and how
  they've felt lonely at times. This led to a couple of audience members
  also sharing about how it can be difficult at first to fit in at KSD
  because they come from all different communities, but how they it can
  also be difficult then fitting in when they go back to their communities
  from KSD.

- Actors did an improvised scene in the school cafeteria about who
  should be on the team and why. They got up in each other’s faces just
  a little even saying things like “well you don’t play well all the time” to
  each other. I stopped the action and took suggestions from the
  audience, which we then played out in the improv.
  - “One of the characters should try saying that everyone should
    get a chance” To Play? “Yes” We tried that and the others took
    some convincing, but went along. I had them try it again and
    with some of the characters insisting, “no, why give her a
    chance?” I asked if this could realistically happen and both
    actors and audience said they had experienced times when that
    kind of thing did happen.
  - “One of the characters should talk about why the other
    character shouldn’t be on the team, like she’s never played
    before and she doesn’t seem to know the game very well” We
    did this and several of the characters responded that they
    didn’t know how to play or play very well when they first
    began playing either. The scene changed ending in the
    character being accepted on the team.
  - “The mean girl who’s the Captain should be in the scene and
    say that anyone who wants the other character to play is
dumb’. We did this and then the characters talked about how
    difficult it was in the play to stand up to the character of
    Stephanie even if they had different opinions, like that it might
    be OK for a new person who hadn't played before join the
    team.

Email Exchange following the Play
Appendix 6 - Continued

Ann
Sun 11/3/2013 12:14 PM
DHS Play
To:
Dewey, Jane;
Sure you can use it. I will try and fill out the survey when I get home.

Sent from my iPhone
mark as unread

Dewey, Jane
Sun 11/3/2013 8:32 AM
DHS Play
Thanks so much for sending this. We have a cast/crew meeting on Monday and I will share this with them. You may be aware that this is part of a final project for a masters degree that I'm working on. There's a short survey on the last page of the Study Guide for that. Could I use the information on what your school did to follow up including the student responses in my paper? I won't identify the school or which performance you attended to try to keep it as anonymous as possible.

Let me know what you think?

Jane

From: Arnold, Ann
Sent: Friday, November 01, 2013 4:48 PM
To: Dewey, Jane
Subject: play

Thank you so much for allowing us to come to the play. It was really good. I am sorry the girls/actors had a rough audience during a performance, so I wanted them to know that all their work was worth it. When we got back to school after the play, the students wrote reflections. The counselor has them now and is going to use some of the things written is some of his counseling sessions.

Appendix 6 - Continued
Appendix 6 - Continued

We also had the weekly question this week that said, “Did the play “Secret Life of Girls” impact you?” Here are a few of the responses from the students:

• I felt bad that Abby was picked on. I understand that I need to be nice to other people.

• Yes, I see kids suffering from cyberbullying and bullies and I should help stop the bullies.

• I know how it feels when someone bullies you. I just laugh at them.

• I saw the girls were gossiping, verbal bullying and cyberbullying. They felt hurt. Next time, I will try to tell the bullies to stop or tell the adults. I felt hurt that kids were suffering with the bullies.

• I felt bad for them who were suffering from the bullies. I should help them.

• It was a good and interesting play. We must solve problems.

• Yes, A lot of kids suffer from bullying and it makes them depressed, sad, and lonely. I don’t like to see kids getting bullied.

• Yes, I have seen a lot of bullying. I am feeling regret because I should have helped people that were bullied and cyberbullied.

Teacher also reported that a student wrote a poem about being bullied and that students discussed the play on the way back to school.

School Show Oct. 24th 12:45
3 schools in attendance – approximately 310 students plus chaperones
Audience – 6th – 9th grade students and chaperones. KSD 9th grade, Burgin middle school, Boyle Co. 6th grade
Performance interpreted for hearing impaired/deaf audience members

Lead teachers at all three schools did report using study guides to prepare students upon their arrival.

Observations
Audience seemed engaged and attentive – there were no observable behavioral issues or audience members falling asleep, a lot of up and down of audience, or side audience conversation.
Appendix 6 - Continued

The audience did laugh at a couple of places in the play
- Towards the beginning of the play when Rebecca, Sutton and Stephanie make horse sounds and movements
- When coach is sarcastic to a couple of the girls about not playing well because they're lazy
- When Sutton makes fun of her mom
- During sleepover when the girls tease Abby about liking Brad during the Ouija session

There did seem to be almost a collective sharp intake of breath – like the audience was particularly effected by some portions of the play including:
- During the sleepover when the Stephanie's talking to Rebecca and the girls are passing around an unattractive photo of Rebecca
- Right before the Championship game when Abby falls apart and Sutton calls her a “bitch”
- During the last scene when Abby goes to Stephanie’s to give her notes from school and she walks in on Stephanie cutting

It was also very silent at the end of the Championship game once Abby had missed the shot and the action stopped and one by one each of the girls has a line that places the blame squarely and unfairly on Abby’s missed shot.

Talkback – This was a larger audience and the talkback lasted about 20 minutes as buses were waiting to take the students back to school.
- Each cast and crew member introduced self and said what they were in high school and what role they had or what job they had in the play.
- Facilitator gave a short overview of this opportunity to ask questions of the cast/crew and discuss issues in the play.
- Questions from student audience were about (many of the questions were the same or similar)
  - How long did you rehearse?
  - How did you memorize all the lines?
  - How did you make all the projections happen? Did you use a computer?
  - How did you figure out the volleyball games?
  - Are the people in your cast friends with each other outside of the play?
  - What was the hardest thing about doing the play?
  - Was it hard to be mean as your character?
  - Playing Stephanie at the end – what do you think makes her cut herself?
  - What was it like to play Rebecca, Abby, Anna Marie, Kayla and Stephanie when they were being bullied?
Appendix 6 - Continued

- Facilitator asked audience if they saw any behavior onstage that they have also seen in their school or community. Some audience members commented on bullying behavior they see in their school: students picking on other students, students being called names, students being teased repeatedly. A couple of students also commented on how they try to defend others when they think someone is bullying.

- Facilitator asked if any of the audience members had any suggestions for the characters. One student suggested that the characters might want to stand up for themselves more and for each other. One student asked about.

- Actors did an improvised scene in the school cafeteria about who should be on the team and why. They got up in each other’s faces just a little even saying things like “well you don’t play well all the time” to each other. I stopped the action and took suggestions from the audience, which we then played out in the improv (with this group we only had time to try one suggestion):
  - The suggestion that we improvised with was about having the new girl, Abby, who was trying out for team come up to the table during the conversation and seeing how the other characters reacted to her face. During the playing of this suggestion a couple of the characters tried to convince her not to try out, that it wasn’t a good idea, because she’d never played before. Another character took her side and said that she should get to play if she wants to and that she should have a chance to learn how to play and how to be part of the team. I stopped the action and asked the audience what they think she would do and the audience said that she would try to play. I then asked the character of Abby and she said that she wasn’t sure. She felt good about the one girl who was standing by her, but felt intimidated by the others how were telling her she was “nobody” and to quit.

Buses came soon after and the students had to leave, but it was interesting to have both the audience’s response to the Forum scene and the actor’s. It really showed 2 different perspectives of bullying.

I never heard about follow up or post-production learning activities from any of the three school that attended the afternoon performance.

**School Show October 25th 8:45 am**

Audience Bate Middle School Grades 6 – 8 approximately 400 students plus teacher chaperones.

It’s unclear if there was any preparation with the students for the performance.
Appendix 6 - Continued

Observations
Audience reaction was mixed. It was clearly an active audience. They never really stopped talking at the beginning of the show. There were many conversations going on and several of the teachers stood or sat in the back of the house separate from the students. The audience was often distracted. Students getting up during the performance. A few students had phones out.

These students laughed at the same places the afternoon audience yesterday laughed. They also called out in several places and laughed at the places that yesterday afternoon’s audience seemed effected by:

• During the sleepover when the Stephanie’s talking to Rebecca and the girls are passing around an unattractive photo of Rebecca (loud laughter and some outbursts)

• Right before the Championship game when Abby falls apart and Sutton calls her a “bitch” (loud laughter and loud comments about the language)

• During the last scene when Abby goes to Stephanie’s to give her notes from school and she walks in on Stephanie cutting (students talking loudly during this scene and loud laughter). This may have been the high school student’s best show. It was very well paced, focused and the energy was solid. I learned later that the student actors were very distressed during the show due to the audience’s reaction.

Talkback – This was the largest audience and the talkback lasted about 20 minutes as buses were waiting to take the students back to school. The talkback was facilitated by the middle school Youth Services director.

• The facilitator took some time quieting down the audience.

• I had gone backstage to catch up with the cast/crew. A couple of the cast members were very upset about the audience reaction and had a difficult time composing themselves to go back out for the talkback. *Amy was crying and had a particularly difficult time. Some of them were very angry - *Andrea and *Debbie.

• Each cast and crew member introduced self and said what they were in high school and what role they had or what job they had in the play.

• Facilitator asked students to raise their hands if they encountered any of these incidents in their school. Many hands went up, but also the audience just started talking at that question. The facilitator struggled to regain structure.

• Facilitator asked how the girls bullied each other.
  o Lot’s of talking with some responses.
  o “They were mean to the new girl on the team”
  o “They were mean to the fat girl” lots of laughter and this caused two of the actors to leave the stage returning in a couple of minutes.
Appendix 6 - Continued

- They were mean to each other”
- What was going on with the girl who was cutting”?
- “One character called another a bad word” lots of laughter and you heard “Bitch” a couple of times. The facilitator again regained control.
- “This same kind of thing happens at our school”

Once the audience met I regrouped with the cast and crew who were clearly upset by the whole experience. One of the cast members had already called her mother who picked her up shortly afterward. She couldn’t stop crying and the mother asked if she should contact the middle school administration. I suggested that she might wait and see how her daughter felt in a little while that while this was a difficult audience, the whole impact might seem a little different once she got some distance from it. Many of the other called parents and checked out for the rest of the day rather than go back to class. I did discuss the audience reaction with them reminding them that it was out of their control. They were all visibly upset so I checked in with the few who stayed in school throughout the rest of the day. The general consensus was that the behavior of the audience (and this in general they all realized it wasn’t everyone) was poor and that the adults didn’t prepare the students well for the performance. I thought it was fortunate that we had two successful school shows before this school show. I did send an email to all of the parents describing the situation. Later that day I met with the middle school principals who informed me that what was reported to her didn’t seem that bad and that the students would be reacting to the play. She also said that she thought the students felt free to verbally respond to the play because they knew several of the cast members and because she had approved nine teacher absences that day to visit another school. I asked to be kept informed of the reactions and I received one classes written worksheet responses that had been created based on the cross the line exercise and included a definition of bullying. Also, four teachers from this school responded to the teacher survey and all responded that bullying was an issue at the school and that theatre could be an effective response to bullying. I let the principal know that she might hear from cast or crew member parents.

The cast members spoke about this several more times and seemed unanimous in their thought that bullying is a problem at the middle school that isn’t being adequately addressed. One cast member spoke to me about going to the middle school either by herself or with other cast members in hopes of continuing a conversation about the play, bullying and the issues raised both by the play and the audience’s reaction. She was very mature in her request and I passed it along to the principal who initially said she would think about it and never responded.

Additional Performances
There were two additional public performances attended by approximately 80 people/performance. These were successful and had unique talkbacks of their own with mostly adult audiences.
Appendix 6 - Continued

\textbf{KTA Workshop}

Nine students (cast, Assistant Director and Stage Manager) facilitated a student workshop about producing an issue oriented-show at the Kentucky Theatre Association High School Conference held at Morehead State University on Nov. 15, 2013. The workshop was attended by sixteen students representing various high schools from around Kentucky. The students talked about the rehearsal process, including the emotions experienced and the personal connections to issues they have experienced and led improvisation Forum Theatre based role-play exercises. The students met on Monday Nov. 4\textsuperscript{th} to plan the workshop. It was a great day at Morehead State University. The workshop was attended by about 25 other high school students from around the state. I was leading a teacher round table at the same time, but managed to look in a couple of times and it seemed to go well – whenever I looked, the students were actively involved. I did observe that my students became friendly with other students who attended their workshops and periodically hung out with them throughout the rest of the day.
Appendix 7
*The Secret Life of Girls: Findings*
Beacon Youth Services – December, 2013

*The Secret Life of Girls* by Linda Daugherty – Danville High School Fall Production
Report to Beacon Youth Services Center Advisory Council Dec. 12, 2013

- Cast/Crew of 15 DHS students assisted by Tech Theatre Club
- Directed by Dir. of Arts Education, Jane Dewey/Design & Projections by Mark Hayes
- Breakdown of school performances
  - Thursday Oct. 24th am – KSD middle school approx. 50 students plus chaperones/65 total
  - Thurs. Oct. 24th pm Boyle County Middle 200 students plus chaperones
  - KSD High School (9th grade females) 10 students plus chaperones
  - Burbin County Middle School 100 students plus chaperones
  - Fri. Oct. 25 am – Bate Middle School 400 students plus teachers

Talk backs followed each performance facilitated by either Director or Ms. Marlowe (Bate) in which cast and crew participated. This included short “Forum Theatre like improvisations which allowed the audience to make suggestions to change the direction of the scene.

School received Study Guides created for the performance and to draw awareness to bullying issues in schools

Study Guides included teacher survey about perceived bullying and impact of performance – 5 were completed/showed bullying to be perceived as an issue by both teachers and students. All responses said that theatre is an effective way to raise awareness of bullying. All responses said that there were some spontaneous conversations about bullying experiences following the performance.

Combined Audience Total all performances: 920 approximate

One class completed bullying surveys based on the Cross the Line exercise statements in the Study Guide. This data showed:

**Bully Survey Bate Middle School 10/13**
22 Responses middle school students

Definition
21 out of 22 were able to define
21 out of 22 gave 2 examples

When asked to write, “two examples of bullying you have experienced”
13 identified verbal bullying as an example
9 identified physical bullying such as being pushed as an example
9 identified cyber bullying as an example

Teasing - 8 characteristics
Have you ever been teased because...
4 all no
11 more no’s than yes’
4 half no, half yes
3 more yes’ than no’s

Physical Bullying – 2 characteristics
2 no
13 yes
7 – 1 yes, 1 no
Appendix 7 - continued

Have you ever been excluded from an activity – 14 yes, 8 no
Have you ever been gossiped about – 18 yes, 2 no, 2 I don’t know

Have you ever
  Gossiped about someone else – 13 yes, 8 no, 1 I don’t know
  Purposely excluded someone from an activity – 6 yes, 16 no
  Teased someone – 16 yes (2 specified only with friends as “kidding”), 6 no

One school followed up with reflections and sessions for students with school counselors (KSD)

Public Performances
  • Talk backs following the performances showed an interest from community members about what kind of bullying students experience, how the students deal with it and how adults in the schools deal with it.

KTA Workshop
  Nine students (cast, Assistant Director and Stage Manager) facilitated a student workshop about producing an issue oriented-show at the Kentucky Theatre Association High School Conference held at Morehead State University on Nov. 15, 2013. The workshop was attended by sixteen students representing various high schools from around Kentucky. The students talked about the rehearsal process, including the emotions experienced and the personal connections to issues they have experienced and led improvisation Forum Theatre based role-play exercises.
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