First Graders, Superheroes, and Princesses: Bringing Literacy To Life Through Dramatic Play

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explore the idea of dramatic play in an emergent literacy classroom. Can dramatic play enhance literacy development? The finding of this research has shown that imaginative play with the students invites them to use knowledge of their play experiences during reading and writing lessons. Students made connections between their play and the characters from the texts. The students also began playing out the story during their free play. As Dyson (1997) stated (as cited in Ahn and Filipenko 2007), "Play allows children to both explore emerging ideas and to create 'possible roles in possible worlds" (p. 14). By using language during their play students can describe other worlds, events and characters. Young children's worlds are filled with diverse stories and experiences that they can bring into their learning. The students work hard at their play. During this study I observed how they became problem solvers, played make-believe, and grew socially through their play and their literacy development. My reluctant readers and writers became excited about writing and reading with other peers. They wanted to write and draw about the characters and make up new stories of their own. Early childhood teachers must remember, play acts as a powerful learning tool that students can use to develop their physical, emotional and social skill and emergent learning abilities around. Children who are offered playtimes during their school day can expand their reading and other academic skills. By inviting the students to explore these characters and literacy activities, I created rich dramatic make-believe play experiences and literacy lessons that enabled students to bring their prior knowledge in make connections to text and real world experiences to life.

Repository Citation