

REALITIES ABOUT ROLE DRAMA
the trials of one teacher's year-long implementation

by

MARY LEIGH WARDEN

B.A.(Journalism), The University of Montana, 1963
B.A.(Education), The University of Montana, 1965
Diploma, Ed.(Eng.Ed.),The University of British Columbia, 1989

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of Language Education)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 1993

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(Signature)

Department of Language Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date April 26, 1993.

ABSTRACT

Although role drama is being regarded as a key ingredient in the recipe for children's learning, it appears to be making surprisingly little impact on the methods used by many teachers. After wading through related literature, and talking with colleagues, I realized that role drama is not growing to its fullest potential because it appears threatening to classroom teachers who are not drama specialists. In order to bring this problematic issue into clear view, I decided to document the implementation of role drama by a teacher in her classroom. Dianne, the brave grade one (year two of the primary program) teacher who volunteered for my study, had completed one Drama in Education teacher training course at The University of British Columbia. Like many of her colleagues, Dianne was hesitant about using role drama, but, since she was aware of its value as a teaching tool, she was eager to help me uncover the difficulties. Over a time span of approximately nine months, I videotaped 15 drama sessions, conducted audiotaped reviews with Dianne following each session, collected Dianne's reflective

notes related to her observations of the videos (and maintained my own reflective journal, too), and audiotaped two overview discussions regarding the entire implementation and the implications for teachers in classrooms and for Drama in Education teacher training courses. The documentation is sometimes exhilarating, sometimes disheartening -- but, invariably, it is honest.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vi
PROLOGUE.....	1
PART ONE.....	7
PRELIMINARIES.....	7
PART TWO.....	14
THE BEGINNING.....	14
December 3, Session #1.....	15
December 5, Session #2.....	21
December 10, Session #3.....	31
PART THREE.....	39
BACKTRACKING.....	39
December 12, Session #4.....	40
December 17, Session #5.....	44
PART FOUR.....	53
A NEW BEGINNING.....	53
February 14, Session #6.....	54
February 21, Session #7.....	61
February 28, Session #8.....	73
March 13, Session #9.....	79
PART FIVE.....	82
DISAPPOINTMENTS.....	82
March 27, Session #10.....	83
April 3, Session #11.....	90

PART SIX.....	96
TRIALS WITH LITERATURE.....	96
April 10 and April 16, Sessions #12 and #13.....	97
May 1, Session #14.....	102
May 8, Session #15.....	105
 PART SEVEN.....	107
REFLECTIONS AND CONNECTIONS.....	107
 EPILOGUE.....	114
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	116

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My gratitude to Dianne (not her real name), whose incredible courage and commitment must be, without doubt, unsurpassed, to Dr. Patrick Verriour, whose nearly undetectable persistence gave me wings, and to John Dinning, whose computer skills and equable problem-solving capabilities (unaltered by middle-of-the-night catastrophes) leave me in awe. Additional appreciation to Dr. Carl Leggo for his sensitive perceptions, and to Dr. Jim Anderson for his uncluttered reasoning. And my thanks to Christy Dinning and Rob Dinning for their patient willingness to listen and encourage (also unaltered by middle-of-the-night catastrophes), to the Leighs for their across-the-miles interest and for their occasional bits of financial incentive, and to Barry Warden for groceries and gourmet dinners and Mr. Misty floats.

PROLOGUE

Increasingly, role drama is being regarded as an educational tool that can facilitate the integration of various subject areas across the elementary school curricula (Tarlington and Verriour, 1983). Drama in education is considered to be a key ingredient in the recipe for children's understanding, internal learning and attitude change (Bolton, 1979 and Heathcote, 1984). Although drama may receive this recognition, it appears to be making surprisingly little impact on the methods used by the majority of teachers in schools (Courtney, 1980, O'Neill, 1987 and Ormiston, 1991). Assuming it is true that, potentially, drama is an important element in children's learning, why has its influence not spread more noticeably among teachers?

This problematic issue became apparent to me initially when I was enrolled in Advanced Drama in Education at the University of British Columbia. For the most part, the class was comprised of experienced, employed teachers, many of whom were working towards obtaining a graduate degree. Although the general

atmosphere of the sessions was friendly and comfortable, I was alerted to the fact that most class members seemed to feel hesitant about using role drama -- not just within the confines of the university course, but in their own classrooms with their own students. As I progressed through my studies and waded through literature, research indicated that not only do teachers feel threatened by role drama (Heathcote, 1984), but that teacher training for drama in education is inadequate and does not reduce the threats which role drama seems to pose (O'Neill, 1987).

The research of drama specialists fueled my need for a closer look at the problem. My path was clearly visible to me: a closer look meant going directly to a real-world classroom teacher (as far as I could determine, no one had conducted a similar study previously). With this in mind, I decided to recruit a volunteer from UBC's introductory Drama in Education course (summer session), then to observe and document that teacher's implementation of role drama in her classroom throughout the following school year. From a group of approximately 100 teachers who were enrolled in the summer course (ENED 335), four persons volunteered to participate in my

study. From the four volunteers, I chose one -- Dianne, an experienced teacher (at the time, she was employed to teach grade one -- year two of the Primary Program) whose students were representative of multi-ethnic, average income families. In addition to the fact that she offered a fairly typical lower mainland Primary class, Dianne seemed the perfect choice -- she was self-confident, had never before used role drama with her students and was eager to try. During our first get-to-know-each-other chat over coffee, Dianne told me that when she heard me outline my research intentions to the ENED 335 group she wanted to volunteer because she knew it was the only way she would be forced to try to use role drama in her classroom. Dianne, even with her self-confidence and eight years of teaching experience (and, I discovered later, an artistic background), admitted to feeling role drama's threat.

Dianne's willingness to participate in my study is appreciated far beyond description. She courageously put herself on display in front of a video camera for 15 drama sessions throughout the school year; she tirelessly gave time for audiotaped discussions following each drama experience, and she faithfully reviewed each videotape and maintained a journal

of reflections. As well, Dianne patiently and honestly shared her thoughts during two lengthy overview discussions which were audiotaped. All of this, combined with my own videotape reviews and diarized observations, provided detailed documentation of the implementation of role drama in Dianne's classroom; clearly, a heavy focus was placed on continuous reflection and discussion.

In return for Dianne's efforts, I volunteered my time as her classroom assistant one day per week throughout the implementation; upon reflection, my offering seems miniscule compared with the magnitude of Dianne's task. Because I felt that it was necessary for me to intervene as little as possible with Dianne's ideas for the drama sessions, she was out on a limb often; however, never was she without my empathy and my encouragement. As the implementation progressed, though, I decided to become slightly more vocal and attempted to provide optional considerations so that Dianne could try to extend her thinking and her experiences.

The actual implementation process spanned a time period of approximately seven months: from December, 1991 through June, 1992 (excluding January when Dianne was ill). A familiarization

stage, during October and November, 1991, allowed Dianne, her students and myself to become comfortable with each other (and with the presence of the video camera) prior to the beginning of the drama implementation. During this preliminary period, Dianne and I had two audiotaped discussions pertaining to the summer session Drama in Education course (ENED 335) and its influences on Dianne's ideas for implementation of role drama in her classroom. These discussions were necessary so that I could be aware of Dianne's relevant experiences during her participation in ENED 335, her drama-related knowledge base as an outcome of ENED 335, and her goals as they pertained to the use of role drama in the classroom. We referred to these issues throughout the implementation.

The documentation which follows is sometimes positive and exhilarating, sometimes negative and disheartening -- but, invariably, it is honest. The scenarios and reflections have been pieced together painstakingly and are shared for the benefit of educators who sense the value of drama, school boards and school administrators -- all of whom must unite in order to provide a framework of non-threatening, practical support which role drama requires in order to take its rightful

place of honor as a valuable teaching tool in today's classrooms.

PART ONE

PRELIMINARIES

Throughout the months of October and November, my visits to Dianne's classroom were frequent. I immersed myself in the role of teacher's aid so that Dianne, the children and I would feel comfortable together as quickly as possible. By November 8 the children seemed to accept my presence -- at this point behaviour was no longer exaggerated in pursuit of my attention, and two children who had appeared hesitant to hand me their trust were interacting with me in a positive and friendly manner. As I involved myself in the classroom activities, I realized that I would have to allow for a backing off time prior to the beginning of the drama sessions when I would have to be filming and, therefore, very much in the background and unresponsive.

Opportunities for casual conversation between Dianne and myself arose often and it was during this period that I discovered her artistic side: a wealth of experience in art, dance, theatre and music. This was a bonus, indeed! If anyone could help me to solve this teacher/teacher-training/role drama puzzle, it would be Dianne.

I was curious about Dianne's ideas for the implementation and our conversations often touched upon that topic. On November 4 I asked, "How long do you think each drama session

will be?" Dianne replied, "Forty-five minutes to an hour." "That long?" I questioned. Dianne's response was, "Oh, gosh. I don't know. Half an hour maybe." In retrospect, I shouldn't have questioned Dianne's first reply because it was my intention to be as non-intervening as possible. However, I did wonder whether ENED 335 had dealt with the reality of appropriate time frames for Primary role drama sessions. On the other hand, perhaps Dianne was simply leaving herself room for positive flexibility.

Tarlington and Verriour (1991) state, "In the hands of a skillful and sensitive teacher, role drama can be a powerful mode of learning across the school curriculum" (p.8). Drama in education is considered to be a key ingredient in the recipe for children's understanding, internal learning and attitude change (Bolton, 1979 and Heathcote, 1984). Ideas for this powerful mode of teaching surround teachers daily. Issues which emerge from literature are innumerable, and often a good drama topic will arise from a real classroom incident; whatever the origin, however, the focus for any role drama should involve an issue with which the children can relate.

Here is an example of a classroom situation which could have provided the base for role drama: one morning in November, a child, accompanied by her mother, entered Dianne's classroom in tears. Other kids in the class, the mother explained, were making fun of her daughter's East Indian name. The mother insisted that the child's name was no longer Poohnam -- she was to be called Jotte so that she would be happier and more willing to come to school. Dianne discussed the situation with the entire class and, later, she told me that she knew this issue would be a good topic for a drama but she wasn't sure how she could elevate it. Dianne's recognition of role drama's place here was positive; as I agreed with Dianne's belief that here lay a drama issue, I stressed the importance of using role drama as a tool for learning -- this was a prime example. I must admit my concern, though, about Dianne's uncertainty regarding how to elevate the issue. In my opinion, the issue did not require elevating -- it was a prime teaching situation just as it happened. Through role drama the children could have experienced the feelings of the hurt child, the distressed and protective mother, and the thoughtless, name-calling classmates. However, Dianne seemed to feel that the drama would have to be

extended, to go somewhere; in reality, the value was in that one little slice. Again, I questioned whether the realities of using role drama in the classroom were being stressed adequately in the teacher training course. Research shows that in order for teachers to be able to use effectively what Bolton (1979) describes as role function and what Heathcote (1984) terms role taking, there must be adequate teacher training. I suggest that Dianne's intuitive sense was nudging her along the right path; possibly, however, the teacher training course did not offer enough guidance that would allow her to take a role drama idea from a real situation and use it successfully and effectively with the children.

Key issues for role drama were abundant in Dianne's classroom: taking report cards home(Will they be good or bad? Will parents be mad? Will the children be punished?); bringing candy to school and sharing it with everyone except one child; taking a classmate to a makeshift, pretend jail on the school grounds and determining to lock her in to the point where she was frightened; coming to school tired and tense because of a sleepless night spent listening to a domestic fight. For the children, these concerns were real and important enough to

warrant serious attention during group circle times. Clearly, the children wanted to better comprehend what was happening around them. Dramas do not need to be about these very specific incidents, but they can be about the feelings, the thinking involved in these incidents. In this way role dramas have the potential to explore and to translate valuable understandings as they relate to the children's daily living.

On November 28 and 29 I audiotaped Dianne's impressions of the summer course, ENED 335. It is my intention to consider this information in Part Seven, "Reflections and Connections" ; at this point, however, I will acknowledge some of the positive concepts which Dianne acquired from the course -- role drama requires that the teacher release control (control in the traditional sense, as well as control over focus re classroom interests/topics); the children should be given roles of authority and expertise, and they should be cast as adults, not children; successful role drama allows for a slowed down pace; the teacher should be aware of giving the children ample space and time for exploration of thoughts/talk; the teacher's questioning skills play an important part in role drama. During these interviews Dianne also shared her goals as they pertained

to her implementation of role drama: long term -- "to be able to do role drama and feel comfortable"; short term -- "to survive the first few lessons." Dianne admitted to me her strong need to be a leader, and, coupled with this need, her great fear of relinquishing control and focus while using role drama in her classroom. An underlying reality seemed to be surfacing again and again -- Dianne, typical of many teachers, felt uncomfortable about using role drama. "Teachers tend to do what is safe," Dianne told me, "but I want to try this because role drama is the cheapest field trip going!"

And how was this "cheapest field trip" going to begin? Initially, Dianne considered two possibilities: entry through literature, or through construction of a village by the children, after which the children could choose roles for themselves (Who is living in the village? Who could you be?). Dianne commented to me that "Anything can be dealt with under the umbrella of a village." In the end, Dianne chose the latter option, the construction of a village (one which would have existed 100 years ago), and, on December 3, the implementation of role drama was under way.

PART TWO

THE BEGINNING

December 3, Session #1

On this rainy afternoon Dianne spoke with a hushed voice to her circle of six year olds seated cross-legged on the carpet. Unbeknownst to the children, the air whirled with a daring mix of tension and exhilaration, and the camera was loaded and recording.

Dianne: You know, 100 years ago people lived in villages and they didn't have phones or TVs or cars...I thought, for something special today, we might want to think about building a village. (Twenty voices cheer!) So, that's why I've created a space (all the desks are shoved to the sides of the room). You know, when people make villages they don't just sort of rush and go and build them. They plan them a little bit. So, we're going to do a bit of planning first.

Child: Like people. Like adults.

Dianne: Yes...we're going to be the town planners.

Child: We can make the London Bridge!

After recognizing this remark, Dianne suggested that the class could compile a list of what they should include in their

village. The ideas flowed: houses, wagons, horses, cows, a castle, books (a library), stores, a bakery, trees, a flea market, a candy shop, a shoe store, a shirt-making shop, fields/pumpkins, a clock-maker, a doctor's house, water (a river or lake), and a jewellery-maker. When the list was completed, Dianne asked the children to consider which parts of the village they would each be responsible for building, and to share their decisions with one another.

Dianne: I thought it might help if we think about materials -- who will use what -- and what the boundaries are (they designate the carpet perimeter as the boundaries for the village, and select various building blocks, popsicle sticks, styrofoam pieces, plastic packaging pieces, etc. for the construction materials)....Just to give you an idea of scale, here is a grown-up and here is a child (she holds up toy figures and sets them on the chalk board ledge). This shows you how big the people are so you can think about how big your buildings need to be....O.K., let's make a circle....(Dianne explains that she needs their commitment to this village-building effort. Each child, in turn, promises, "I will cooperate to make a good village.")....I would like to suggest an idea. I'm the head

town planner here. I'm hoping you will build this village together. I would like to suggest we have a town square. Would you like to have a town square?

Children: Yeah!

Dianne: The town square is where all the shops would be...where the center of the village is...where the people would come for meetings.

Dianne and the children determined the locations of the buildings, the cows, etc., then, as each child revealed his/her building choice, Dianne wrote the name of the choice on a card which the child took to a building location. The builders began to construct, with the name-cards propped beside their sites. (Many children worked in teams of two or three.)

Dianne: Everybody! Listen! It's necessary for builders to talk, plan before they start building. Talk to each other.

(Dianne moves from group to group and tries to encourage and extend planning and building discussions.) Stop! Freeze!

Stop! Listen up! (Dianne shakes the tambourine.) Town builders! Jeff! I'd like all the town builders over here.

(While the children watch, Dianne examines the building projects and attempts to engage the children in thoughtful talk.)

Dianne: What were some of the problems we had?

Child: Jeff wrecked our building.

Dianne: What were some of the good things that happened?

Child: We made some good buildings.

Child: Can we leave it up for tomorrow?

Dianne: No. The janitor needs to be able to clean.

Child: We could show it to Mrs. Shaw's (the grade 2 class next door).

Dianne: No. There's too much going on. They can see the video.

Child: We should draw a picture of it.

Dianne: We'll make a map of it later.

When the village was dismantled and put away, Dianne asked the children to draw pictures of people who might live in the village. She reminded them of the 100 years ago time frame and encouraged the children to consider that the people would not be wearing the kinds of clothing that we wear. The children's work produced such characters as farmers, a baker, a water man (the child's term), house builders and a teacher. A reflective time followed the picture drawing. The children indicated that they had enjoyed "the coloring," "making the castle," "nothing,"

and "the city part." According to the children, the activities they found difficult were "the water" (making the water/river), "working with rods" (building materials), "making the bakery" and "making the farm."

The time frame for this first session was two hours -- understandably, this lengthy period of tense concentration took its toll. Dianne admitted to me later, during the audiotaped review, "I feel completely bagged!" For the most part, I think this was a positive beginning towards building belief and commitment, creating a mental atmosphere from which further role dramas could develop. My primary questions following this afternoon, however, were: Did the children have any real concept of what Dianne was asking them to do -- what did they really know about 100 years ago? Had they seen pictures, books related to that time period? Were the children interested in people who lived 100 years ago? Maybe they would have chosen to build a different kind of village. And I had other concerns. There had been no mention of drama, no effort to discover what knowledge, if any, the children had of drama, no discussion regarding rules for drama (i.e., use of the tambourine and

verbal signals such as "freeze"), no explanation about the children and the teacher taking roles, and no talk about selecting a specific area of the room for group discussions when they are out of role -- when the role drama has been halted and the children and Dianne need to talk. Another concern: Dianne tried to believe that she was the chief town planner and that the children were the town builders (and, for a brief time, planners), but any attempts at role taking were inconsistent and unexplained. I do not think that the children shared Dianne's vision. I could see, though, that Dianne was leading the children closer to actual role drama by way of having them create pictures of people in the village; also, I thought that the next session might include a discussion about drama and role-taking. For these reasons, I chose to keep my questions silent for the time being.

December 5, Session #2

This session took place just two days after the first effort, so the village-building was fresh in the children's minds. Prior to the beginning of today's drama activity, Dianne showed the class a map which had been made by one of the children -- a map of the village that had been constructed on December 3 (the idea for making a map came from suggestions during the first session; this child took the idea and, with no external prodding, created the map at home). Then, with no further discussion, Dianne began session #2.

Dianne: Well, you know, I was sent by the king to meet with you builders. The king is very interested in having the builders build the village again today....He would like the village built in this (same) space....He thought it would be a good idea if we have some plans for the building....(Dianne puts building-name cards on display). Please partner up, or triple up and think of what other things we need. (The children talk together. Someone suggests an idea which Dianne refuses: "No, we're talking about the old days.") O.K., planners, these are the

ideas you have (she reads the cards aloud)...Planners!
Planners! (Dianne tries to get everyone's attention.) O.K.
I'm going to have to stop. I'm going to be Ms. D. now. We're
doing a pretend thing and we've got some kids who are not taking
this seriously. Do you want to do this?

Children: Yes.

Dianne: Well, you have to commit to doing it. You guys have to
get serious about being planners and builders. Do planners and
builders wrestle?

Children: No.

Dianne: Or fight?

Children: No.

Dianne: Planners have to pretend that they're really serious
about the job that they're going to do. Now, are you ready to
play the game, 'cause I'm going to go back and be the person the
king has sent and you guys are going to really build a village.

Child: And we're going to draw.

Dianne: And I'm going to give you a responsibility. Are you
ready to take the responsibility? Raise your hand. Now say, I
am ready...to take the responsibility...(the children repeat the
pledge). I'm going to turn around and when I come back I'm

going to be the person sent by the king. Can you pretend that? And we're going to be in a meeting and we've just decided that this is what will be in our village. Are you ready to be a serious town builder and planner? (Dianne gets up, turns around, and sits down in the circle again.) Good people of the village, the king has sent me to work on this village that we need to construct and we need to work on some plans. You know, from one of our planners we got a map of what the whole village will look like. We need to have some plans for the individual buildings....

The children repeated the process of choosing partners, deciding which building to plan and construct, and relating the decisions to Dianne. Eventually, each child took a building-name card and began to draw a building on a sheet of paper. Again, Dianne moved among the children, questioning and encouraging. Usually, Dianne addressed the children using their real names, but, occasionally, she remembered to use "Mr. Builder" or "Miss Builder". Later, a problem surfaced and Dianne called everyone to meet for a discussion.

Dianne: Builder Pablo has a problem he'd like to tell us about....(another child, Lonny, has been messing up Pablo's

paper, and Dianne asks for everyone's input for dealing with the problem.).... We have to decide what to do with the culprit....

Child: We could send him to the king.

Dianne: Do we have to send Lonny to the king?

Children: Yes!

Dianne: Can't we talk to Lonny ourselves?

Children: No!

Dianne: Why not?

Children: 'Cause....He's always bad....

Dianne tried to imply that the king was extremely busy and might be annoyed with having to tend to such a small problem -- couldn't the builders deal with it themselves? At this point, the children's reactions were becoming increasingly silly. One child suggested that Lonny should be flushed down the toilet -- everyone laughed uproariously.

Dianne: Wait a minute! This is 100 years ago. We don't have toilets.

Child: Put him in a dungeon?

Dianne: We do have dungeons, but has Lonny been that bad?

Children: Yes!

Before long, the children's behaviour was becoming disruptive. Dianne requested serious, thoughtful suggestions which she wrote on a chart and on which the children voted to determine Lonny's fate. The outcome of the vote was to send Lonny to jail.

Dianne: But there is no jail and we don't have a jailer.

Child: We could make one outside.

Dianne: But we're here, 100 years ago.

Child: This is not 100 years ago (she is angry).

Dianne: Everyone, sit down. Yes. This game we're playing is 100 years ago....Master Builders, please sit down. We have to get on with building our village. But we had a builder messing around and we need some consequences....O.K. I'm stepping out of role (she sits down). If we're going to have a big pretend like this, people have to concentrate. You guys are builders. You are not kids who put pencils in your sneakers. You are not gossipers. You are builders right now; so, what I'd like to get through is what consequences you builders would like to have for Lonny....having him go to jail is an outcome that isn't possible because in this situation we don't have a jail.

Child: Yes, we do!(refers to an earlier incident)

Dianne: No. We haven't built it yet. The people who are working on the police station and the fire station are going to build a jail. But they haven't built it yet, so there's no jail for him to go to.

Child: We could put him in the garbage and lock him up (others laugh and add to this idea).

Dianne: How would you like to be in the garbage...O.K. I think I'm going to have to move this along. We're getting bogged down. (Dianne tells Lonny to sit at a desk for his consequence and directs the builders to go back to the task of planning.)

Throughout the remainder of this session, Dianne wrote dictated descriptions on completed building plans, then marked each paper with a stamp which she explained was "the king's stamp." Having been given the king's approval, the builders took their plans to selected classroom sites and commenced construction. Minutes before the end of the drama time, Dianne shook the tambourine and called "Freeze! Freeze!" After this signalling was repeated, Dianne told the children that she wanted them to really freeze when she used the tambourine, and that the recess bell was about to ring so clean-up would take place after recess.

Later, during our audiotaped review, Dianne offered such comments as, "Well, stepping in and out of role was much easier than I imagined -- I could see where it was necessary to do it....The stuff about Lonny -- I didn't know what I was going to do. I didn't really want to send him to jail....I wonder why I was so hesitant about drama -- I think it's giving up control."

Although today's session had its pot-holes, I could see clearly that Dianne was attempting to take some positive steps: she did try to explain that some of the time she would pretend to be the person sent by the king and that some of the time she would be Ms. D., and she did try, once, to be clear about this change; Dianne did try to address the children as Master or Miss Builder; she did try to solve a behaviour problem from within the drama, and she did try to explain the game-playing, the pretending. However, the children were no less confused and no more satisfied. There had not yet been any real discussion about drama and roles. Dianne still had no hint of what knowledge, if any, the children had about drama, and I do not think the children were connecting with the concepts of a village and people 100 years ago, notwithstanding the idea of role-playing in this framework. The children's confusion was

evident when they wanted to build a jail for Lonny outside. Previously, a group of children had created a jail outside in the school grounds and had tried to imprison a child. Now, the children were associating their present reality with what Dianne was attempting to instigate. Add to this confusion the fact that the children's own ideas were not being accepted (their interest in a jail was real and important -- but Dianne did not see this) and that they were having to repeat a building task which they had completed two days earlier, it is understandable that the children became inattentive and disruptive. I was surprised by the repetition of the construction and by the lack of follow-up on the pictures of the village people which the children had drawn in the first session. Also, the rules for drama were appearing in unexplained spurts (the use of the tambourine, and freezes, in role and out of role changes and related group meetings and meeting places).

The problem-solving episode (regarding Lonny) provides a good example of the kinds of real issues that can erupt during a role drama. As I have mentioned, Dianne did recognize that the incident could be handled in role; considering that this happened so near to the beginning of the implementation, her

recognition and resulting effort was commendable. Difficulties sprouted, though, for these reasons: no roles were clear at this point (Dianne tried to think of the children as builders and of herself as the king's representative, but her confusion was obvious and the children's confusion was only heightened); the discussion was too lengthy and lost its potential impact; the children's ideas were not being accepted (perhaps a letter could have been sent to the king, not telling about Builder Lonny, but requesting a set of rules for builders and planners; perhaps a meeting could have been called so that the builders could plan to construct a jail; perhaps Builder Lonny could have been given a special job related to constructing the jail -- community service -- which would have given him another chance and no jail sentence). Throughout this entire episode, Lonny became more and more disinterested (along with the others) when, had the matter been treated more positively, he may have felt happier about participating. This incident also exemplifies how easily role drama's spontaneous crux can be missed. Here was the opportunity to help the children work through a problem cooperatively, with thoughtfulness and caring for a fellow human being. The jail issue was meaningful to the children -- they

were experiencing related difficulties on the playground; perhaps they were hearing about incidents at home. But this experience also exemplifies how difficult it is for a teacher to relinquish her ideas and control. As Dianne said earlier, teachers tend to do what is safe, so they tend to stick with their own plans. In order for a teacher to feel safe while going with the flow of the children's ideas, a teacher must be adept at questioning. Spontaneous, skilled questioning is an essential element in successful role drama -- it is this element, however, that is one of the most difficult to master.

December 10, Session #3

Dianne: I have heard from the king. He is very happy with your buildings, with the village you made.

Child: He is?

Dianne: Yes. He is wondering whether you would be interested in planning some more towns.

Children: (groans)

Dianne: Well, you know, we have some plans of some towns here (real plans are on display)....Now these plans would be like a map showing some other villages that maybe we could build. Are you builders interested in making another town -- the plans for a town?

Child: Did the king...did he thought that we were good map-making? (this is the child who made the village map at home)

Child: But who's the king?

Child: Is it Mr. J.? (the school principal)

Dianne: Who?

Children: Mr. J.!

Dianne: No. He's Your Majesty, King Charles. Would you like to meet him?

Children: Yes!

Dianne: Well, perhaps he will come after we've made our villages, our plans.

Child: It's Mr. J. -- I know.

Dianne: Who is Mr. J.?

Child: The principal.

Children: Yah!

Dianne: A king is not a principal.

Children: Yah!

Dianne: Good builders! You don't understand....(the children try to explain and are becoming annoyed and determined).

Dianne: Well, we'll have to ask the king when he comes...good people of the village, before we make our villages, our plans and maps, are there any questions you would like to ask the king?

Child: We can show him our drawings.

Child: Who's the king? Who's gonna be the king?

Child: Who is it?

Dianne: King Charles is the king....O.K., the question is, "Who is the king?" We'll have an answer for that in a little while. Do you have a question for the king?

Dianne explained that in the last session the children made pictures of buildings; today, they would make pictures of whole villages. What did they need to ask the king in order to do this task? The children, however, were losing interest and becoming inattentive.

Dianne: I'm going to stop. I'm going out of role now. I'm going to be Ms. D.

Child: Role?

Dianne: Yes. I'm taking a role. I'm pretending to be this person from the king. Now I'm going to be Ms. D. (the children are restless and giggly)...Now look! Are you guys really prepared to think of things to ask the king?

Child: What about the queen?

Dianne: Well, we could meet the queen, too.

Children: Yeah!

The children's demands continued. They needed more information and they wanted to meet the king and the queen right away. Dianne asked the children to get into groups of two or

three and talk about what they would ask the king and queen. The activity was not being taken seriously and the resulting commotion compelled Dianne to call "Freeze!" and to shake the tambourine.

Dianne: Freeze! Freeze! Your job in your little groups is to talk about the questions you have for the king. Your job is not to make silly jokes. If you're going to do drama, you have to be serious about it. This isn't just being silly.

Children: Drama?

Dianne: This is called drama. Are you ready to think about questions you want to ask the king, because we can't have a lot of dopey questions. He'll be upset if you come and ask him stupid questions. His time is valuable and so is Queen Eleanor's.

Child: It's Queen Lisobith.

Dianne: No. This is Queen Eleanor. This is 100 years ago, remember?

Eventually, the groups managed further discussion and a list of questions for the king was compiled on a chart. At one point, Dianne stopped to deal with a few disruptive children.

Dianne: When we do drama you have to concentrate!

Child: What's drama?

Dianne did not hear this question; however, it resurfaced later.

Child: What's drama?

Dianne: We're doing a drama -- a big make pretend. Now, we're going to get ready to meet the king and we need to have a place where the king is going to sit (she gets a chair while the children announce "I'm a prince!", "I'm a princess!", then everyone sits in a circle)....Who would like to go on with the drama....O.K., what do we need to know about behaviour with the king? (The children respond with laughter and silly answers; Dianne shakes her head, sighs, and takes off her glasses.) I don't know...you know what? I don't really feel like going on. I'm scared. You guys are being so silly...so silly that I'm scared to go before the king. I'm afraid that he's going to get really angry with you because you're not able to concentrate.

Child: That's not a real king! He's not real! That's why you're not taking us (to meet him)!

Dianne: (exhausted and exasperated) It's PRE-TEND! It's pretend. Are you really master builders? It's just pretend. So, the queen is going to be pretend, too. (The children start

calling out what they want to be, again.) I think I'm going to shift here. I think I'm not going to send you to the king until you've done your city plans -- your village plans. I think you guys need to get a little more serious, so I'm going to back off from the visit with the king until I'm sure that you really have a lot to tell him.

Child: I know...You're lying...There's nothing! (He is angry.)

Dianne: Good city builders...(children are calling "Yes, yes," and "No, no, no!")...I have some paper...(children are getting angry)...some old paper from 100 years ago...

In the end, the children who wanted to continue to work at village pictures did so, and the others were sent to their desks for a quiet time.

Clearly, these children were feeling cheated. First, they needed information, and second, they wanted their ideas to be of value. These issues, combined with the lengthy time frames (each session has been 1 1/2 to 2 hours long), too much out-put from Dianne and not enough in-put from the children, plus too much repetition of the same picture-drawing, village-building activities had resulted in the children's disinterest. At some points during this session, I thought Dianne would move ahead

with the children's interests in meeting the king; however, too much time had been spent without a strong, clear, appealing focus. The children were bored and disruptive, so Dianne's decision was to stop and, again, stick with what was safe: her plans, and drawing pictures of villages. As difficulties arose during the session, Dianne worked hard at dealing with them from within her visions of roles for the children and for herself. Unfortunately, at this stage of the implementation, the children still were not able to share Dianne's vision.

During the audiotaped review following this session, Dianne and I talked about the children's confusion between what was real and what was not real and about her own assessment that the children needed to work on their own roles in the drama. Another concern for Dianne was the introduction of the element of surprise -- in other words: tension, wrinkles. She questioned, "How do you do it? What is surprising enough?" Dianne mentioned, too, that she had been having difficulty with remembering to announce when she was going in and out of role; related to this issue, we talked about establishing a particular place for out-of-role group meetings.

Dianne's reflective notes from her review of the videotape acknowledge that she felt vulnerable during this session, and she admits that she hadn't been aware of the significance of the children's questions about the king and about drama until she and I discussed the issues later. Dianne writes, "Interpreting their reactions when I am so much worrying about myself and my behaviour/performance is one of the problems."

PART THREE

BACKTRACKING

December 12, Session #4

Dianne: First, I'm going to tell you about drama. Some people are kind of mixed up. Drama is when you all do a make-believe all together and everyone in the classroom goes into role, pretends to be somebody else. Now...I've been pretending to be...who?

Child: The king.

Dianne: No.

Children: Ms. D....a builder...a master builder...the planner guy.

Dianne: I've been a planner guy, and I've also been someone who's come to you from who?

Child: The king.

Dianne: Do you remember....(she reviews the details regarding King Charles, Queen Eleanor, etc. from the previous sessions)....Now, today I'm going to ask you to do some pretending and I want you to think about becoming someone in the village....I want you to spread out, get your own space. Close your eyes and imagine yourself in this village 100 years ago.

Imagine the kind of house you live in. Open the door. Look around. Who are you? (etc.)

Dianne continued to guide the children's imaginations and, when the children responded in a silly manner to prompting that maybe they imagined themselves to be married and have sons and/or daughters, Dianne reminded them that they were to be grown-ups, not children, and that they should not be silly. When disruptive behaviour continued, Dianne stopped; she asked the children if they were ready to go on. At this juncture, Dianne placed the children into pre-planned pairs for the sharing of who each imagined him or herself to be in the village. Following this discussion in pairs, Dianne asked the children to sit in a circle and to take turns telling about themselves as people in the village. The children began to talk about their real families, so Dianne reviewed the task and began again. Any mention of marriage continued to bring gales of laughter but Dianne persisted; eventually, village characters began to emerge: Mrs. Wong, the teacher; Nick, the farmer; Michelle, the gardener; Lanny, the apple tree planter, and so on. Again, this session culminated with the children drawing pictures (of themselves as villagers).

Later, after each picture was shown and explained, Dianne and the children reflected on the drama session.

Dianne: What was hard about the work we did today with drama?

Children: Nothing....It was hard to draw....It was hard to color....

Dianne: What did we do today in drama?

Child: Think.

Dianne: How many of you found the thinking hard?....How many of you found the partner work hard?....Do you have any ideas about what we could pretend next time? (In pairs, the children discuss the question which Dianne has posed.)

My review notes for this session state, "Finally, Dianne tells the children what drama is, and what role taking is...." Dianne felt more positive, too. During our audiotaped discussion, she acknowledged, "I thought this was a bit better, although I wasn't particularly in role -- but I thought they (the children) were getting a clearer picture of what was going on." This time, the drama began clearly; talk was explicit, concise. Dianne did not allow any segment to become too long or too loose -- there was a clear focus. Dianne did not ask the children if they knew anything about drama, though -- I think it

would have been interesting to learn what base they were coming from; in all probability, Dianne did not want to give the children too much room for manoeuvring because she wanted to retain control (and she wanted to stay away from the king issue). In fact, Dianne's notes from her review of the video include these comments: "It looks and felt so much better! More control...I feel/appear more relaxed, positive and in control."

Although there had been no attempt to use tension yet, I felt that today's session had helped to regain some of what had been lost earlier when there had been no discussion about drama and no follow-up on the first set of pictures of villagers. Also, Dianne was trying to develop the children's understandings of the 100 years ago time period -- now there were many pictures, books, maps and related artifacts on display around the room.

December 17, Session #5

Today, Dianne and the children gathered on a different rug, in another part of the classroom (Dianne planned to establish this location as the out-of-role drama meeting place).

Dianne: We haven't really done very much drama yet, so you don't know very much about it.

Child: It's pretend.

Dianne: It is. It's pretend. It's make-believe. So far in our drama work, mainly it's me who's been in role...I was the person who came from the king, I was the person who tried to help organize all the planners and builders. Last time we started to think about you being somebody in the village -- not just a planner or a builder. Do you remember that?...Do you remember last time we did something where we closed our eyes and imagined? There were some rules about closing your eyes and imagining. Who remembers what the rules were?

Children: Don't open your eyes....Don't say anything....You're pretending....

Dianne: Where?

Child: Inside your head.

Dianne: (stops some disruptive behaviour, then carries on) So, today we're going to do a little bit of that pretending in your mind like that again.

Children: Awww!

Dianne: But we're also going to do some real pretending where you start to be that person who lived 100 years ago in that place where there are so many apple growers. You will be that person that you drew on your piece of paper. Now we need to have some rules about going into role. We're here -- we're just Ms. D. and the gang. But when we leave this place (on the rug), we will all be pretending to be somebody else. I have to tell you who I'm going to be.

Child: The king.

Dianne: No. I'm not going to be the king today. I'm going to be the town crier.

Child: Town crier?

Dianne: The town crier is kind of like the radio -- the town crier tells people what's happening. He tells the people the news because in the old days you didn't have a radio or TV to find out what happened. You had to go outdoors and listen to

the town crier tell his news. I'm going to be a man -- I'm going to pretend to be a man, and I'm going to be the town crier.

Child: He cries?

Dianne: He's called the town crier because he shouts....he might shout SIX O'CLOCK AND THERE'S NEWS FROM THE PALACE! (The children giggle.) And then everybody would know that they should come down to the town square to hear the news from the palace.

Child: Is the king coming?

Dianne: I don't know if the king's coming today.

Children: (groans of annoyance)

Dianne: Oh, there's one other thing I need to tell you -- there are some different ways that we go out of role. One way is I'm going to call everybody over here... 'cause we're just going to be kids and Ms. D. again -- and the other thing I might do is shake the tambourine if there's something quick that I have to tell you.

Child: Shake the tambourine (being a bit silly).

Dianne: I will shake the tambourine.

Child: Shake, shake the tambourine...(the children are restless -- there is a lot of laughter and chatter)

Dianne: ...Do you want to do this -- or not?

Children: NOOOO! (two or three yahs)

Dianne: Well some people are behaving in a sort of silly way....boys and girls....this is important....(Finally, Dianne gets everyone settled and asks them to close their eyes.) I want you to think about this old fashioned house that you live in, in this town where there are so many orchards...and you go downstairs, and you make breakfast....and today you are going into the market place. Some of you are going to be selling things...some of you are going to be buying things...

Children: (laughter -- the children are inattentive and restless)

Dianne: STOP! Open your eyes....(Dianne asks children to come out from underneath desks and to stop making silly jokes.) Close your eyes again...(some children groan)...I want you to think about what you need for going to market. Are you going to need a cart?

Child: Yah.

Dianne: Ssh. You're not supposed to say anything. Are you going to the market on a horse? Are you going to walk?....(etc.)....Now I want you to partner up and talk to someone about getting ready to go to market....Has everyone had a chance to talk about...

Children: YAAAHHHH!

Dianne: That means you're going to start pretending to be this person. The first thing I'd like you to do is stand up and think about how your person is going to walk....(Dianne asks the children to walk around the room to show how their characters would walk. This results in disruptive behaviour and an irritated "FREEZE!" from Dianne. When walking begins again, Dianne asks the children to think about what they want to do at the market today -- after a bit more walking, she calls "FREEZE! FREEZE!" and moves around to question each villager, "What are you going to do at market today?")

When Dianne was satisfied that this segment had been completed, she instructed the children to partner up with someone in the town square and talk about the news of their families (their village families). The ensuing commotion caused Dianne to hit and shake the tambourine and call, "STOP!" and to

hold a group meeting in the newly established drama out-of-role area. Following a discussion about the silliness, the misbehaviour and the lack of concentration, Dianne asked the children to walk around the market again and talk with each other about their family news. Eventually, Dianne asked each child to tell his/her news to the whole group. Further disruption took the class back to the drama meeting area again. Dianne: I want you to think about what we just did. I know there were parts that were really hard, and some parts that were easy. Let's think about what was hard.

Children: Thinking....Hard to think....About the market....Hard to find a partner.

Dianne: Do you think it would be better if we made the market square a bit bigger and moved the desks? Do you think the next time we might set the room up...(more disciplining is done)....It might be, if we went back into the market place, something exciting might happen -- or, it might be that you're not up for trying something new. How many of you would like to try to go back to the drama again and see whether something exciting might happen? (There is no enthusiasm from the children.) How many would rather do some other activity? (Most

of the children put up their hands.) That's fine. You can have choice time before the bell goes. (The children cheer loudly.) But wait -- before you go, your exit visa is to stand up, one at a time, and tell who you are in the village. (Each child stands in turn and speaks to the group.)

Children: I am Michelle and I work in the book store....I am Rog and I help poor people....I am Miss Wong and I am the teacher....I give people meat....I have apples....I am Bart and I build houses....I am Lanny and I am a apple planter....etc.

Out of this troubled session came a wonderful ending, one which emerged spontaneously. It just happened that the first child to speak told her name and her occupation, then remained standing. All the children followed her pattern and the resulting scene was powerful. The children demonstrated a certainty about their characters; in fact, the characters were the same ones which the children had chosen for themselves in the previous session, and, even earlier, in the first drama session when they were asked to draw pictures of people who lived in the village.

Behaviour problems were abundant during this session. The children were bored, and they were given little opportunity for

the expression of their own ideas. Today Dianne talked considerably -- she devoted a substantial amount of time guiding the children's imaginative thoughts from one vision to the next (I assumed she was trying to help them with a task which was unfamiliar to most of them). Problems arose, however, because the activity was lengthy and restrictive. And, later, when the children tried to be creative with their walking styles, they were reprimanded; so, although the children were given the opportunity to be active physically, they were restricted once again. Dianne's intention was to help the children move through the developmental stages which she had planned. In reality, though, she was stifling the children's reactions and imaginations. Today, the children had very little real in-put because what Dianne was doing -- although she did not realize this at the time -- was controlling. Along with feeling the need to control, Dianne was feeling the need to see her plan through from beginning to end. Actually, I think it was a more specific problem than that -- Dianne thought that a role drama should have a clear beginning and a middle and an obvious, resolved ending. This is not so, but I think this is a difficult concept for most teachers to accept because planning

occupies a place of importance throughout their training and their employment.

Dianne told me, during our audiotaped review of this session, that, "There still is the message that the kids are being cheated." Although she was right, Dianne's awareness of that problem was, in itself, positive. The children were being disappointed constantly -- they sensed that they would never be able to meet the king, they seldom were able to use their creative ideas, and, usually, they had to listen to a great deal of Dianne's talking. Also, the children were tired of the repetitious activities. Each of these issues is connected by a single rope: Dianne was doing what, for her, was safe. But Dianne was doing something else, too -- she was continuing with brave determination. Following today's session, Dianne confided, "I feel like I'm on this runway and I'm putting down these various pieces....I'm still finding resistance -- they're saying they don't want to do it, and I'm just sort of plowing on ahead 'cause I know once we get lifted off they'll be O.K."

PART FOUR

A NEW BEGINNING

February 14, Session #6

Nearly two months had lapsed since the last drama period (for medical reasons, Dianne had been absent for the month of January). This interruption in the implementation had given Dianne the opportunity to reflect upon the first few drama efforts and our related follow-up discussions, and to reconsider her strategies. For Dianne, and for myself, today's session represented a new beginning.

Dianne: Let's talk about drama. Put up your hand if you remember what drama is.

Children: You drew pictures....You made up a name for yourself....Pretending....You make a village....You act....

Dianne: Yes. You pretend.

Child: NO! You ACT!

Dianne: Yes. Well, that's close to pretending. (Dianne writes all suggestions except "You act" on chart paper.)

Dianne: How many of you remember the rules about drama?

Child: No fighting.

Dianne: Oh yes. That's class rules -- let's think about rules that we had for drama.

Children: We made some maps....We did journals....

Dianne: Yes. Were there any special rules about drama that anyone remembers? (No one answers.) How many of you remember sometimes we went in role and we were here (on the large meeting-carpet), and we went out of role and we were over there (on the smaller rug). Remember, sometimes I needed to be Ms. D., the teacher, and I'd talk to you over there, and then we'd come back over here and go on with our play and pretend that we were in the village....O.K., so one of the special rules is that we have a special place for teacher and kid talk (she writes this on the chart then asks another child what he remembers about the rules for drama).

Child: But you still didn't show us the king.

Dianne: The king.

Child: You forgot the king.

Dianne: I haven't forgotten the king.

Child: Where's the king then?

Dianne added "Where is the king?" to the compilation of ideas on the chart, paused briefly, then, after further

discussion unrelated to the king issue, she asked the children whether they remembered who each had pretended to be in the village. A few children do recall their village identities but many do not.

Dianne: O.K. I think what we need to do is to start again a little bit, 'cause some of you have forgotten. I'm going to show you these pictures now (she shows illustrations from Johnny Appleseed. This is from a little town where...do you remember a lot of you decided you wanted to be apple growers...so I got this book to show you pictures of apple growers (one child, who was determined to be an "apple planter" in December, comes up to have a closer look at the illustrations -- he is the one who said that drama is acting), and pictures of other people, and homes, and a villageNow what I'm going to do is put out some pictures from this book (Dianne has made enlarged, black and white xeroxed copies of some of the book's illustrations), and I want you to decide -- are you a tree planter, someone who puts shoes on horses, are you somebody who makes dresses, are you a teacher...who are you? And I want you to add yourself to one of these pictures....and when we've figured out who you are, we'll write it on the side of the picture.

When the children's pictures were finished, Dianne wrote dictated information on the papers, all the while addressing each child according to the name chosen for his/her village character. Following this activity, the children talked with one another about themselves as villagers and, eventually, this information was shared with the entire class and was recorded by Dianne on chart paper. During this sharing time, one child stated that he wanted to be a doctor in the village; however, two or three others had chosen to be doctors, too.

Dianne: I think we're going to have too many doctors -- you might have to think of something else.

Child: I'll be the king.

Dianne: Well, you wouldn't have a king for a village....but you could be the mayor of the village.

Child: O.K. (When Dianne asks him to think of a name for himself as the mayor, he says he can't think of one.)

Prior to the end of this session, three children had not chosen village identities. Acting on a suggestion made by Dianne, the other class members assisted the three with their decision-making.

Today's session suggested that Dianne's medical hiatus from the drama implementation had yielded positive results. Here was the opportunity for Dianne to do what she had neglected to do in the first session on December 3: she discussed drama and asked the children what they knew (remembered) about it; she reviewed the rules for drama (with the exception of the signals for stopping the drama), and she showed the children excellent illustrations that depicted what a village and its people might have been like 100 years ago (this was a good way to build belief). Also, Dianne worked on stimulating ideas for the children's roles rather than for her own role. Earlier, in the December sessions, Dianne over-focussed on her personal drama identities, to the extent that she was unaware of the children's often shallow experiences. In fact, it is my opinion that teacher-in-role should be used sparingly, as it is needed to change direction, or add tension, or to handle a problem (i.e., a behaviour problem). I believe that a teacher who is too involved in the drama may be relied upon unnecessarily by the children, or may overpower the children with the result that their potential creativity could be stifled.

Although the discussion about drama provided a worthwhile beginning for this session, I was not convinced that the children's understandings were sufficient. It was important, though, for Dianne to hear first what the children knew; perhaps, however, she could have built upon this base a bit more than she did -- possibly by delving into Lonny's offering that in drama "you act." Maybe the children had more drama knowledge than Dianne realized -- their terminology may have included the word acting rather than the word drama.

The drama review also reconfirmed the fact that the king still held an important place in the children's minds -- they were adamant about wanting to explore the king issue in December, and, two months later, with no hint of drama during that time, they were as determined as ever to know about the king.

Later, during our audiotaped review of the drama session, Dianne told me that it was her idea that perhaps the children would keep their roles (which they had chosen today) for the remainder of this school year's drama times. In Dianne's view, the village idea would be an umbrella for such projects as quilt-making, printing fabric, bread-making, butter-making,

weaving, etc. The child who had chosen to be the village seamstress, for example, would be a key person during the quilt-making, and so on. At this point, I realized that Dianne was viewing role drama almost as she would view the incorporation of a theme around which activities/lessons are planned. It appeared that Dianne was thinking in terms of a relatively loose, long-term plan for role drama -- a continuing saga, a sequence of connected events. In fact, Dianne told me during our audiotaped review that she had been nervous about beginning again today. "It wasn't so much that I had sort of withdrawn and wasn't wanting to do it -- it's just that I had lost the threads...." So, perhaps Dianne's long-range, united ideas offered her further means of retaining what she termed a safe environment.

February 21, Session #7

(Dianne begins by addressing each child with his/her village role name and asking what job each one has to do today - the list of characters determined during the last session is on display.)

Dianne: Would Jesse, the tree planter, please stand up?

Child: That's Matthew! (Dianne ignores this reference to the fact that the "tree planter's" real name is Matthew.)

Dianne: Jesse, what are you going to do today in your tree-planting orchard? (He doesn't know.) Are you going to plant some more trees? Nancy, the teacher...what are you going to do....etc. A few of the children offered information about the jobs they might accomplish in the village today: the banker -- "Give them more money"; the policeman -- "Find some robbers"; one of the doctors -- "Help poor people." Interestingly, the child who Dianne said could be the mayor (when he really wanted to be another of the village's doctors) insisted today that he is a doctor, not the mayor. After everyone had been given an opportunity to share ideas, Dianne took the children to the out-

of-role drama meeting place on the rug. This move was chaotic, however, so Dianne called the group back to the original location and told them they needed to "practise doing this right." Eventually, the children were relocated and began to work in teams of two or three, deciding who would be A, B and C.

Dianne:Now listen...I know you all have jobs, but we're going to go to market today.

Children: For real?....A real market?....

Dianne: We're really going to market...because you know villagers in the old days went to market everyday. Now I want you to think about two things: something you will buy -- it might be eggs, it might be milk, (etc.)....and the other thing I want you to think about in your imagination is who you might meet and talk to in the village.

Several times during this portion, Dianne had to stop to quieten children who were attempting to interject -- they were becoming fidgety; however, she continued to offer her ideas ("Do you need to go to the florist?...Do you need to see the Doctor?...Do you need to talk to the banker?...Is there somebody you need to talk to in the village?...etc., etc.). Dianne asked the As, the Bs, then the Cs to share their ideas with each

other, then everyone shared the information with the whole group. One child stated that he was going to play in the park -
- Dianne reminded him that he was a grown-up in the village, not a child. Another child announced that he was going to see the doctor in the village because all his kids were sick. Following the sharing, Dianne resumed her talking.

Dianne: O.K. now, in just a minute we are going to go into the village. We are going to start thinking about being this person ...that means you're going to stop being a kid and start being a grown-up. (Dianne asks the children to set up a row of chairs, then she tells them that she is going to be the town crier. Throughout her explanation of her role as the town crier who will give the news of the village, Dianne stops often to discipline children who are being disruptive -- but she persists and carries on.)So, I need to figure out when it would be a good time for me to give my news...and I need to go shopping for some fruit....but, just for right now, I'm going to be the photographer who has come to the village....(Dianne organizes the children around the chairs for a group photograph.) You have to be very still....think about who you are in the village

and how you might stand...and the photographer has come many miles by horse and set up his camera here....

Finally, the photograph was taken and everyone began to walk in the village; the children were boisterous, though, and Dianne instructed them to go back to the rug.

Dianne: Can I have your attention, please? I'm Ms. D....over there is the market place....(She tries to get the children's attention, but this is difficult -- many of them have climbed onto the chairs or crawled underneath desks.)....We can't do drama if you're not going to be obedient. I need to give directions and I need you to be responsible. Do I have your ears?....Now, look. When you go into town, you're going to really pretend to buy things....You might have a basket over your arm to put groceries in (Dianne explains that there were no plastic bags 100 years ago)....what else might you have?

Child: Did they have boxes?

Dianne: They had boxes. You might have your children with you.

Child: Right -- in the box. (laughter)

Dianne: Think about where your money is...

Child: In the box. (laughter)

By now, the children were extremely restless and their responses were silly, but Dianne continued.

Dianne:Think about whether you've got a hat on....I want you to really start thinking about pretending to be in the village. Now, grown-ups, when they go to market, are they running around like children? No. You have to really pretend that you're a grown-up and you've got something to do in the village -- so I don't want to see a lot of silly behaviour because then I just have to bring you back here and then we have to think about whether you can really do drama....We're going to have to do some pretending now. How many of you are ready to do that? (About half the class raise their hands slightly and slowly. O.K. When you're really, really ready, you can stand up and start going into the village. (A few children go into the drama space but several stay behind and sit on the chairs. Dianne talks with a three children in the "village" while others wander aimlessly and watch those who are seated. When Dianne notices the group on the chairs, she calls, "Freeze!" and instructs everyone to go back to the rug.)

Children: Aaawww!

Dianne: Why are you people here?

Child: We already been.

Dianne: You bought all your groceries?

Children: Yah!....The stores weren't open!....

Dianne: The stores weren't open! Well, why did you go to market if the stores weren't open?

Dianne decided to end that battle. She pressed on with the announcement that the town crier would be going into the village and calling, "Ten o'clock and all is well!" and that, then, the children would know that the stores are open. When Dianne, as the town crier, gave this news, everyone ran into the market space shouting like charging warriors. Dianne glanced in my direction, grinned, shook her head, and called, "O.K. Back! Back to the rug!"

Dianne: O.K. We're back in Ms. D.'s class...(etc.)....Now, do the townspeople go "YEAH" and run into the town? (No, say the children blankly.) The townspeople don't run into the village, they walk -- and they visit with each other (Dianne demonstrates several examples of visiting). You do not come back here (to the rug) -- this is not part of our drama space....

Dianne reviewed how the children should behave, then they tried the task again. This time, as the children visited with

one another in the village, Dianne (as the town crier) declared that something terrible had happened -- she had just heard that 200 trees had been cut down. Everyone stopped to listen, then several children ran back to the chairs, some rushed around the room, a few wandered, and two or three went to talk to Dianne. Dianne: STOP! O.K. Now all the people who are sitting on the chairs...will you put the chairs away! (When this job has been done, Dianne talks with the group about obedience and about the fact that she does not understand their behaviour when they have just been told such terrible news. Following this talk, Dianne asks the children to get into their A,B,C groups to discuss what each one's character would do upon hearing such news. Ideas are shared with the whole class and, eventually, everyone returns to the village for a repeat of the town crier's announcement and another attempt at reaction. With this activity completed, Dianne calls, "Freeze!", and takes the children back to the rug.)

At this point, Dianne gave the children paper and asked them to draw something about the trees being cut down -- a picture of some of the trees, of who may have cut down the trees, of how this problem could be resolved. Later, Dianne

involved the children in a discussion by questioning, "What can we do about this?"

Children:Find out who did it....Hide out in the forest, jump out and get him....Put him in jail....I know who did it (Dianne doesn't hear this remark)....

This discussion paved the way for small group meetings (committees of three or four children) for further deliberation of the tree-chopping issue, and, after the interruption of another talk about not listening, the whole class reconvened for a committee meeting with Dianne in role as the committee leader. In the meantime, however, when the children did not walk to the meeting area (instead, they ran, skipped, jumped, and then, rather than sit on the floor, they pretended to sit on benches), Dianne called them back to the rug for more talk about cooperation, focus, and not being silly. Eventually, the class met as a committee and consideration of the trees issue resumed. Dianne:What if we get the wrong person? We have to think about that carefully....

Child: I did it!

Dianne: You did it? Then what are we going to do? This man says he did it.

Children: Get him....kill him....

Dianne: It seems to me we should put this man in jail.

Children: NOOOO! Kill him! (Two other children now admit that they chopped the trees down, too.)

Dianne: Mr. Policeman, I think we have no other choice but to detain these gentlemen. The jail is over there....(The policeman takes the three tree choppers away. Several other children dash off excitedly. Dianne stops the drama, calls the children back to the rug -- this time, not to discuss behaviour, but to express her surprise about the three people admitting that they chopped down the trees.

Dianne: Why would these people get up in the public meeting and say, "I did it?" It doesn't make sense. Does anyone else have a problem with this?

Children: I think they're lying....Yah, they're lying...(and they begin to call out punishments).

Child (one of the tree choppers): But we told the truth! (This comment receives little acknowledgement.)

Several children announced that they wanted to be tree choppers, too; Dianne decided that the idea was a good one and, finally, after more talks about disruption and back and forth attempts, Dianne and the children were in role as tree choopers who were in jail. During the jail scene, as the children expressed many ideas for further action, Dianne looked at me and said, "I don't know how to do this." Her decision was to resort to writing the children's ideas on chart paper.

A few milestones were passed during this session, but problems emerged as well. First, the children presented some excellent ideas during the beginning stages (the doctor wanted to help the poor people, another person's children were sick and needed to see a doctor), but their ideas were not utilized or extended. Later, Dianne missed the opportunity to explore another worthwhile issue -- telling the truth. Second, the children continued to question "real" versus "pretend," but Dianne was not aware of the magnitude of their concerns. When Dianne told the children that they were going to market, one child asked, "For real?" Dianne's response was, "We're really going...." I think the children had not forgotten December's king episode -- they had felt cheated when they couldn't meet

the king -- and now they sensed that nothing would happen with the market, either. The children were distrusting and weren't interested in giving serious attention to Dianne's ideas. The issue of the use of the word "real," though, may be another terminology problem (as in the case of "drama" and "acting"). Third, Dianne's need to control resulted in tiresome and interruptive disciplinary measures whenever the children's behaviour did not meet Dianne's expectations. Also, Dianne tended to favour a discussion on the rug, or a list on chart paper, whenever she didn't know how to move spontaneously ahead with the children's ideas.

Regardless of today's problems, however, Dianne did manage to take some positive steps. First, in a few instances, Dianne tried to use the children's ideas. When the children didn't want to participate in the going to market, saying that the stores weren't open, Dianne handled the potential problem in role and tried to incorporate the idea in the drama. Later, Dianne consented to working with the idea that one child (then two others) had chopped down the trees, and, eventually, that everyone should go to jail. Second, Dianne attempted to encourage the children to consider a meaningful issue when the

children wanted to find out who chopped down the trees and she questioned, "What if we get the wrong person? We have to think about that carefully." (Unfortunately, this question was not dealt with because, at that point, the child volunteered that he was the culprit. However, the thinking could have been directed to "Why did you do it?".) Third, Dianne employed tension during today's session (with the announcement that 200 trees had been chopped down). With this introduction of tension, Dianne stepped courageously forward.

February 28, Session #8

When Dianne told the children that they were going to do drama, they complained and groaned openly today -- this prompted Dianne to ask them what they didn't like about drama. The children's replies were honest.

Children: I don't like drawing....I don't like the talking (pretending to talk to the people)....I don't like the drama....We have to walk around, keep on walking, keep on walking....I hate it when we have to walk and talk....I hate it when you have to talk to other people and do A,Bs....I don't like walking back and forth so many times (to the rug)....

Dianne: I thought today we would stop going back and forth 'cause I find that going back and forth is really a problem, so I'm going to try to find another way of going from pretend to just doing the stuff that we need to do. (Someone suggests that they just shouldn't do drama.)....There's something else I wanted to ask you about...(Dianne reviews the tree chopping, the confessions of the three people, and the talk about punishment.)

Dianne tried to encourage thought about telling the truth (as a result of our audiotaped review after the last session), but the children were not eager to involve themselves. When Dianne continued and asked, "Should we pretend that we're policemen?" some of the children responded with a subdued "Yah" and some with a lethargic "No."

Dianne: Most aren't interested in doing this, so let's have the people who want to pretend to be a policeman find a partner....(There is commotion and Dianne tries to get everyone's attention.)...I want you to pretend you're talking to your policeman buddies about someone who has told the truth...

A few children participated in this activity. Dianne called the group together again and proceeded to the next part of her plan -- the announcement by one of the children (Dianne had prearranged this) that he had found a treasure map. Dianne asked the children what they thought would happen next, and what they would like to have happen. While some of the group shared their ideas, several went to their desks and took out their math books. Meanwhile, one child had gone to a corner and started to pretend to dig with a real shovel kept there (and others quickly joined him). Dianne brought them back to the group stating,

"Lonny and his team were digging and they dug and dug and they found a huge, huge chest filled with -- "

Children: Gold!

Dianne: And -- what else? (They offer many ideas.) Good townspeople, what are we going to do with this treasure?....I want you to find a partner and discuss what you are going to do....(some children groan, don't want to participate).

While the children shared their ideas and voted on their favourite one, a child went off to dig again. Dianne called him back to the group telling him, "No. We're not doing the drama part -- we're doing the talking part before the drama." The children were restless by now, and Dianne had to stop often to discipline. At this point, Dianne gave each child paper and told them to draw a picture about what they wanted to have happen with the treasure. Although the children were discontented with having to do this task, their ideas on paper were interesting (Use magic to open the treasure....Take it to see if it's real, then give it to the poor people....The gold will blow up and all the people will share the money....etc.)

Later, when the pictures had been displayed, Dianne told the children that she thought last week's drama had been too

hard and that today's was more fun. In response to her comment, one child offered, "Can we do something funner?" Dianne ignored the question and continued to the next stage.

Dianne: There's a rumour....the king has heard about this treasure, and you know what he said? He says he's going to be sending a messenger to us because he wants the treasure. (There are several gasps from the children.)

Child: But we don't know where it is.

Child: I hid it. I digged.

Dianne: Did you hide it again? Well, what are we going to do?

Child: Pretend we don't have it.

Dianne: But he knows we have it. But does he know where the money is?

Child: Yes! I told him! (Several people run to the corner to dig.)

Dianne: O.K. Can all the children come back here?

Child: We're not children!

Dianne rephrased her question to replace the word "children" with "grown-ups" and she asked the main digger to come and report to everyone.

Child: I digged and digged and it's really down deep.

Dianne: Does Noni know where it (the money/gold) really is?

Child: No. (The bell rings and the session is over.)

Again, today's session showed many signs of progress, even though the beginning was unsuccessful. When Dianne tried to re-discuss the honesty issue from last week's drama time, the children were not interested, nor were they eager to be policemen. I think the children had grown weary of the village, the reviews, the slow, step by step, sequencing of events, and talk. Today Dianne worked hard at staying away from the reprimanding and the interruptions (she ignored the children who indicated that they would do math instead), and she allowed room for the children to be heard, for their own ideas to be used (Dianne incorporated Lonny's idea of digging with the shovel, and, at the end of the session, she encouraged those who had run off to do more digging to report back to the group). For the second time, Dianne added tension to the drama: by way of the discovery of a treasure map, and by way of the rumour that the king knows about and wants the treasure. The children did not question the return of the king to the drama today, perhaps because they could see that Dianne was listening to them and allowing them opportunities for the active development of their

own ideas -- I believe that it is the active expression of their creative ideas that the children desired.

March 13, Session #9

Because there was a new child in the class, Dianne asked everyone to help explain drama and the events of the past sessions so that he would be somewhat informed. When the review brings the class to the finding of the treasure map and the rumour that the king wanted the treasure, Dianne signalled for a grade two (year 3) student to come into the classroom and read a letter from King Charles (all of this was arranged by Dianne earlier). The letter indicated that the king must receive the treasure today or else dire consequences would follow.

While the children and Dianne discussed possible solutions to the problem, one child slipped away to the corner, picked up the shovel and began to dig (he was the original digger during the last session).

Dianne: Wait a minute! Do we want citizen Lonny going out and digging up the gold?

Children: Yah!

Dianne: What will we do then?

The discussion that ensued revolved around trust -- could citizen Lonny be trusted to dig up the gold by himself (several children offered to go along and watch him) -- what if everyone ran off with the money? Enthusiastic participation lead to commotion that was too rough -- one child was bumped and began to cry. Dianne called the group together to talk about people getting scared and hurt when activities get out of hand (Dianne refers to the incident which occurred in the Fall when a child was frightened as the others tried to imprison her in a pretend jail outdoors).

When Dianne had settled the injured child, she told the class that she wanted them to compose a letter to King Charles. In order to think of ideas for the letter, Dianne placed the children with partners (she selected the pairing) and eventually, although the children had become restless again, a list of ideas was compiled (Say we're sorry....Give the treasure back....Tell the truth....The treasure falls in the water, people dive in for it and are eaten by sharks....). Following a vote which determined that the most popular thing to tell the king was the water/sharks idea, Dianne began to write the class letter to the king. One child insisted that the treasure could

not be in the ocean because he and Lonny had dug with the shovel and buried the treasure. Noisy arguments erupted. Dianne attempted to regain everyone's attention, then chose to give the children paper so that they could show/tell what happened to the treasure. Prior to the bell, each child shared his/her picture and/or letter with the class.

Dianne's review notes (written following her observation of today's video) provide food for thought: "I went into this lesson with much less on paper, feeling less prepared, but it felt like my best lesson so far for me being open to their suggestions and allowing them to move the action of the drama themselves."

Indeed -- Dianne moved forward today. Because she continued to hear the children's ideas and to provide freedom for the creative and active exploration of their ideas, trust was growing. The children were allowing themselves to place their trust in Dianne, and Dianne was allowing herself to place trust in the children -- she was, in fact, relinquishing some of her control. And today, the children did not complain about being asked to draw pictures.

PART FIVE

DISAPPOINTMENTS

March 27, Session #10

Dianne (following a brief review of the last drama session): I wanted to tell you that the king got your letters -- and I thought we might have a new adventure in our drama and you could pretend to be the advisors to the king....The king has heard about all this treasure going overboard and he's pretty upset and he doesn't know what to do...he want to call together his advisors to ask for their help. You wouldn't be meeting him as the villagers, but as the advisors -- the wise men who are around the king. (There is a lot of talk that is irrelevant to this issue, so Dianne stops and tries to regain everyone's attention.) What kind of advisor would you be if you lived in the castle close to the king?

Child: I'd be scared.

Dianne: No, you wouldn't be scared, you'd be a helper to the king....so, raise your hands if you have some ideas about being a helper to the king.

Children: Wash dishes....guard the king....be the princess, (etc.)....Guard his room....

Dianne: O.K. I'd like you to close your eyes and think about the room where the king is going to meet with all his helpers....(Dianne prods the children's imaginations with several suggestions; then, she asks for their ideas which reflect things that are actually in the classroom -- Dianne redefines the task and they offer new ideas: people standing up and talking....soldiers....gold chairs....)

Eventually, the children asked, "Who is the king?" When Dianne replied that she was going to be the king, the children showed disappointment. Dianne helped the children to determine their roles, then everyone rearranged desks so that there were two rows facing each other, side by side down the centre of the room, and a throne was constructed out of plastic crates and a chair and pillows. The children selected items from the costume barrel, and Dianne showed them a medallion which she would wear to indicate that she was the king, not Ms. D. Dianne reviewed what was about to happen, the children sat at the long table (the desks), and Dianne went to the throne.

Dianne: Good morning, my royal subjects! ...How are you this morning?

Children: Good morning....Fine....

Dianne: I have come this morning to tell you of my terrible problem. As you know, many years ago, I did a very bad thing. I lied to one of the fairies in our land. She said she wouldn't punish me if I'd give her a lot of money...I didn't give her the money and I lost the money -- that bad, mad fairy took away my first child and I haven't seen my child for many years. Now when citizen Jeff, in that town of Apple Grove, found that map showing where the money was buried, I was very happy....and when that money went to the bottom of the sea, I was very upset again....I don't know what to do....I need your help....

Child: We could go together and kill the sharks.

Dianne: But there are many, many sharks.

Child: We could get submarines.

Dianne: What are submarines? (Children try to explain.) I have never heard of this -- this sounds like a machine from the future. (A few children have left the desks and have gone back to the barrel to look for more costuming.)....Perhaps my loyal advisors would talk amongst themselves about what to do...(More children go to the costume barrel.) Wait a minute! Whooooaaaa! Ease up on the costumes, please. No more costumes....I'm out of role now....I'm Ms. D. (Dianne tries to get everyone back on task

but the costumes are a strong attraction -- she tells everyone to get one piece of costuming so they can get that out of the way, and she announces that there will be no additions or changes in costume after this. Finally, the children take their seats again and the drama resumes. The children are restless, however, and one child has become particularly disruptive. Dianne chooses to recognize him as being the court jester and suggests that he do some clowning for everyone; when the "jester's" silliness becomes too extreme, Dianne calls the group over to the out-of-role rug.)

Dianne (after a review is interrupted by several disciplinary measures):O.K. I have an idea -- I want you to...

Child: Draw a picture.

Dianne: Yes. Draw a picture of the solution...of what we're going to do (the children groan).

Before the children began to draw their pictures, Dianne told them that the mad fairy had written her (the king) a letter indicating that the solution must be a kind and good one, not a bloody, violent one; otherwise, an evil spell would be cast on everyone. While the class busied themselves with the drawing, some of the children began to express serious concern about

aspects of Dianne's story (the king's story about the child having been stolen by the mad fairy). Several questions were asked, and comments such as this one were volunteered.

Child: You know what? In real life a seven year old went to a store and someone took her and he raped her.

While the pictures/ideas were being shared, three children (who had been maintaining their roles as guards) finally succeeded in getting Dianne's attention and insisted that the mad fairy had arrived. Dianne attempted to talk her way around this and, in the end, said that the mad fairy was invisible and no one could see her. But the three guards were not about to give up -- before long, they began to peer through small circles of colored cellophane paper and announced that they could see the fairy with their magic glass. Meanwhile, Dianne continued to wade her way through the sharing of the drawings. Eventually, before the bell ended the session, the group briefly discussed today's drama. One child commented that he hadn't enjoyed the drama because he "didn't get to do much being the prince," then that same child gave Dianne a container which he said had the money inside. He told Dianne that he had dug it up and that now she could get her baby back. Others continued to

express concern about the stolen child: "....the fairy might have killed him....or tortured him..." At this point, Dianne assured everyone that the fairy wasn't a bad fairy -- she was just a mad fairy.

It is my belief that today's session was not a satisfying one for the children or, after reflection, for Dianne. As far as the children were concerned, they were back to listening while Dianne talked, and, primarily, it was Dianne's ideas that were being discussed. Also, I don't think the children were clear about being advisors (and not villagers, Dianne had told them). For Dianne, there was dissatisfaction because the children were restless, disruptive and often disinterested again. Today Dianne had reverted to being too much in control and overly planned -- there was not enough room for the children's own active responses. Clearly, for example, the three "guards" wanted to involve themselves actively with their own ideas when they persisted with the notion that they could see the fairy. Another difficulty arose with the costumes. Ultimately, the problem was resolved somewhat, but, in the meantime, it had been interruptive. The children should have been given clear instructions about the use of costuming prior

to the beginning of the drama; however, this was a first try with costumes, so it was a learning experience. (In fact, costumes are tricky to incorporate because they can be distracting.) Behaviour problems were difficult for Dianne today. Although she tried to handle them within the context of the drama (the "jester" episode, for example), Dianne wasn't able to spontaneously think of meaningful dialogue that might have given the action a more worthwhile focus.

The issue of the stolen child again raises the problem of real versus pretend. While I listened to the children, as they expressed their concerns, I wondered whether they were uncertain about Dianne's story -- did they think any of it was real?

Today's session held positive bits, too, however: the setting up of the room, the attempt at costuming, the use of tension through the story of the mad fairy, and the effort to steer the children away from using violent solutions in their pictures. So, amid the disappointments there flickered glimmers of light.

April 3, Session #11

Prior to the beginning to this session, Dianne and the children reviewed the events of the previous drama. The parts that the children recall are the ones in which they themselves were actively involved -- seeing the mad fairy, using the magic glass, digging up the gold (and offering the container to Dianne at the end of the session). Dianne attempted to establish what the king did last week, but no one had an answer. She re-phrased her question.

Dianne: Didn't the king meet with someone last week? Who did he meet with?

Children: Yah....The guards....The fairy....(then, after more prodding from Dianne) He met with all the people who help him.

While Dianne tried to review who had been in the room with the king when the meeting happened, she had to stop often in order to tell children to listen.

Dianne: Do you want to do drama today, you guys?

Children: NOOOO! (A couple of children quietly say yes.)

Dianne:Doing drama takes concentration and if you can't concentrate on what's happening here, then maybe we can't do it....so, last week, did the mad fairy finally get her money back?

Children: No. (One says yes -- the one who dug up the gold and presented the container to Dianne.)

Dianne (to the child who answered "yes"): And how did she get the money back?

Child: I went down to the bottom of the ocean and I got the money.

Dianne: How did you get the sharks to leave you alone?

Child: Because I talk to them. (Others laugh.)

Dianne: Did you do magic on the sharks? (He nods.)

The children moved the focus of the discussion to the fairy -- they wanted to know why the mad fairy took Dianne's child (Dianne's, not the king's). One child said that the child was taken because Dianne lied. Another child questioned the reality of the story.

Child: That wasn't for real....

Dianne: Oh yes. That was for real. The king and queen had not seen Roland (the name Dianne has used for the stolen child) for ten years...and now, Roland is back at the castle....

Child: Did you kill the mad fairy?

Dianne:Nooooo...fairies don't die....

While Dianne continued with further discussion about the fairy and the letter requesting a kind and good solution to the king's problem about the lost money, the children became increasingly restless and inattentive. Dianne stopped the discussion and sent the children to their desks for a quiet time. Eventually, Dianne appointed two children to go to the others and ask, "Do you want to do drama?" Those who chose to participate met with Dianne (about 7 or 8 children), and the rest of the children stayed at their desks to do journals. Dianne could not sustain the interest of the drama group and, finally, she called the effort to a close.

In the afternoon, Dianne told the class that there were some questions she wanted to ask them about drama. Initially, the children were upset because they thought they were going to have to do drama again; however, when Dianne assured them that

this was not the case, they presented their reasons for disliking drama.

Children: We have to go back and talk.... We had to go to our desks.... I hate drama 'cause it's so boring....

Dianne: Well last week you didn't seem bored....

Child: It's because this time I had to sit on the carpet and talk.

Dianne: Well we have to do that just to get going.

Child: NO! A little bit...You talk about a little bit -- but we talk about it longer.

Dianne: Well, did we talk too long this morning?

Children: YAH!

Dianne:O.K....but, you see, even now we have people who are fooling around....Now...if we're going to do drama and we're going to sort this out, then I need your help. I can't make drama better unless I have your help.

Child: It was so boring sitting on the carpet -- and talking, talking, talking.

Dianne: O.K. You felt there was too much talking.

Child: And you never got to DO anything!

Children: YAAAH!

Dianne: O.K. There's too much talking. What else?

Child: We don't get to do fun things.

Dianne: Last week we didn't sit on the carpet the whole time.

Child: We sat at our desks for a long time (at the desks that had been placed side by side for the meeting).

Dianne: O.K. Now, I have a question. There was a suggestion this morning that the mad fairy had put a spell on the king, and I ...(the children begin to complain again)....Do you want to do the drama...?

Children (loudly): NOOOOOO! (Dianne asks the children to clean out their desks, then gives them choice time.)

The children's reasons for not wanting to do drama clearly describe most of the problems that occurred in this session (these problems were an extension of the difficulties from the previous drama time: too much talking (by Dianne), not enough action. The children were not being given enough active, creative space. Also, I think the children had become distrusting again, because of that key issue of real versus pretend. Today, they attempted to sort out any confusion about Dianne's story regarding the stolen child; unfortunately, Dianne told them, "Oh yes. That was for real...." This is a question

of terminology and meaning, as I have indicated earlier -- it is an important issue that warrants ample consideration by any adult who works with children.

Dianne's review notes for this session include the following: "....One of the things that was troubling me....was that I had picked an issue and was going to tailor a drama to that issue. To me this felt like I was backing into the drama and 'manipulating' them somehow....I realize I want to talk to R. about it...as we have had many discussions of 'following the kids' rather than 'imposing teacher prepared units' on kids...."

PART SIX

TRIALS WITH LITERATURE

April 10 and April 16, Sessions #12 and #13

April 10 marked the first time Dianne used literature as a base for drama. She began the session by reading a portion of Rumpelstiltskin (without telling the children the title), stopping the story at the point where Rumpelstiltskin tells the queen that she must guess his name or he will take her first baby. One child quietly says that he knows the story, and another child asks whether they could do their journals instead; but, Dianne continues.

Dianne: So, the queen didn't know what?

Child: It's just like the story we did on the king.

Dianne: It's a little bit like that story....

Following further discussion, Dianne told the class that the queen wanted to call her royal advisors together for a secret meeting so that she could be helped with her problem of having to find out the little man's name. When Dianne asked the children if they would like to be the queen's advisors, a few of them answer, "Yah," and several insist, "No. No drama. No drama." Regardless of the showing of disinterest, Dianne

proceeded and helped the children to choose roles for themselves -- one child wanted to be the queen, but Dianne told her that she needed to be the queen; another child asked to be the little man, but Dianne informed him that there would be no little man in this drama. Other children selected roles similar to the ones they had taken in previous dramas (prince, guard, knight, princess, etc.). The next steps involved the class in rearranging the room (a "pillar" in the middle to hold up the castle roof, a flag on the pillar, desks in a circle, and a throne), and in choosing a costume piece. For the entrance to the meeting place, Dianne quietly jingled a tambourine while everyone walked in silently (she had told them that it was the middle of the night and no one must hear them).

When the children (advisors) were seated at the desks, Dianne (the queen) began to explain her problem, and, in doing so, she started to re-tell the story.

Child (interrupts Dianne): You told us! You told us! You don't have to make it long!

Dianne continued with her story, then encouraged the children to suggest what she (the queen) could do. Meanwhile, one child had gone off to the door to listen -- he came rushing

back, announcing, "He's coming! The little man is coming!" Initially, Dianne tried to carry on and considered incorporating the idea into the meeting; instead, though, she decided to take the children over to the rug to talk about the arrival of the little man and to ask for ideas about how to deal with him. (One child interrupted and asked, "Can we do journals?") While the children talked (and were losing interest quickly), Dianne arranged for a boy to be the little man when they returned to the drama space -- the meeting eventually resumed and the boy, in role as the little man, made his announcement.

Child: Good evening...I want the child...guess my name.

Dianne: Well, let's try to guess.

Children: Darryl....That's Darryl....Darryl C.....Little Man....Leprechaun....We give up.

Once the little man had departed, the children began to socialize boisterously and to make up silly names. Although Dianne tried to win the children's attention by pretending to cry (in role as the queen), they were not willing to listen. As a result, Dianne stopped the drama and, following further discussion and increased restlessness, asked the children to

write a letter (or do a picture, or both) to the queen to tell her how she could find out the little man's name.

Again, the same problems were re-surfacing. The children did not want to be subjected continually to so much talking; they wanted their ideas to be used, and they wanted action -- they wanted to DO something. Later, during our audiotaped review, Dianne admitted that she found it difficult to go with the children's ideas (thereby relinquishing her own control) and she realized that she was saying "no" and "yes, but..." too often -- she understood the children's frustrations. Also, Dianne confided that she often resorted to calling the children over to the out-of-role rug for a discussion so that she could have time to collect herself -- this, she admitted, was her tactic often when she couldn't think of a means of working with the children's spontaneous ideas.

Later in the month, on April 16, Dianne attempted to do another drama based on literature -- this time, The Great Quillow. Basically, the results were the same as they had been for Rumpelstiltskin. The children were disinterested and disruptive when Dianne attempted to instigate a sharing of ideas, and, often, disciplining interrupted discussion. Again,

the session ended with the drawing and sharing of pictures. Dianne was obviously disheartened, but, through reflective discussions, we continued to hammer away at these difficult realities of too much talking, no real action, not enough spontaneous use of the children's ideas. Also, there seemed to be the notion, in Dianne's mind, that a story should be started, then the drama should provide an ending. Why not, I suggested, try to veer away from this pattern and, instead, take a snip from a story and try to do something different with it?

May 1, Session #14

Today Dianne briefly told a version of The Boy who Cried Wolf. Following the story telling, Dianne asked for a few ideas regarding what to do about the children in the story; then, she determined that the class should be villagers. Eventually, Dianne asked the children (at this point they had costuming again) to share their village identities; however, rather than do what Dianne had requested, the class resorted to presenting ideas about solving the problem (i.e., capture all the wolves, put the kids in jail, kill the children and the wolves, shoot the wolves). One child said that he was going to be a wolf and Dianne told him maybe they could be wolves later. In the meantime, though, Dianne tried to steer the group in another direction.

Dianne:Don't you adults try to keep your children away from the forest?

Children:I spank them....Ground them....They don't listen....Keep them in their rooms....Put them in the attic with no windows....Make somebody adopt them....Put them in a cage....

Dianne continued to talk, then paused, uncertain of what to do next. (At this point, one child asked if they could draw pictures now.) Dianne decided that, once all the costumes were put away, everyone could be wolves. The remainder of the session focussed on the howling wolves as hunters who killed and ate a child; following this wolf scenario, Dianne tried to engage the children in further discussion ("What would the wolves do when the hunters come?"). The drama time ended with picture drawing.

Dianne informed me later (during our audiotaped review) that she had chosen this story to work with because it focussed on the responsibility of children; however, she wasn't able to guide the group in that direction during the drama time. Instead, the children wanted to dwell on violence (although Dianne had chosen to engage the wolves in killing a child) and Dianne admitted that she was quite weary of such results. When I suggested that Dianne needed to try to steer the children away from their focus on violence, she replied, "I know, but every time I have to do battle with that issue....it's exhausting....and I get caught between taking their ideas and deciding which one I'm going to jump in and run with....when do

you choose one?....which child's idea do you choose?...."

Again, I mentioned the idea of trying to use snips of a story; further to this, I suggested that Dianne should consider doing tableaux -- making frozen (still) scenes of parts of a story, with the children in the scenes (as though preparing to be captured by a camera for a photograph).

Although the class had enjoyed being wolves (and Dianne had used a child's idea), potential key issues were missed during this session -- what about the importance of telling the truth? Also, the children's ideas seemed to suggest that possibly their problems at home were being handled punitively and aggressively -- what about steering the drama in the direction of learning to deal with problems in positive, cooperative ways? However, here lie the issues of spontaneity and skilled questioning -- important but difficult territories for any teacher.

May 8, Session #15

For the final trial with literature, Dianne used The Pied Piper. This time, Dianne had read the story to the children the day before drama was scheduled; therefore, the children didn't have to spend a lot of time sitting and listening. And today Dianne did take tiny snips of the story -- she had selected four scenes to work with. Following explanation and demonstration, Dianne involved the children in doing tableaux and using pretend cameras to take pictures of their creations. Later, after the class had shared their suggestions for getting the children back from the Pied Piper, Dianne bravely jumped in with one of the ideas -- before long, everyone was climbing a mountain and trying to break through a magic wall of rock in order to reach the Pied Piper and the stolen children.

Dianne felt somewhat frustrated about the direction of the drama -- for her there had been no conclusion, no resolve (the group never did reach the Pied Piper -- Dianne had asked them to stop so they could discuss the situation and draw pictures and/or write letters). The children, however, seemed to love

it. In fact, I think they enjoyed this entire session -- there was no groaning, no restless or disruptive behaviour. Today, the children were not subjected to lengthy talks or boring periods of uninvolvedness; instead, they were given the opportunity to participate actively in a variety of experiences.

PART SEVEN

REFLECTIONS AND CONNECTIONS

As Dianne pointed out earlier in the implementation, "Teachers tend to do what is safe." With the exception of a few occasions, Dianne resorted to playing it safe when she used role drama in her classroom -- through the use of discussion (and, often, talking only by Dianne), stopping the drama and calling the children back to the out-of-role rug, writing lists on chart paper, assigning the drawing of pictures/writing of letters, and planning (so that the dramas had a beginning, a middle and an end and, often, a continuing story for use in upcoming sessions), Dianne managed to maintain a familiar classroom management kind of control. The children sensed Dianne's control. They quickly learned, I think, that there was no point in extending their imaginations and in being eager to do drama because Dianne's plans were set and their own ideas were not going to be acted upon.

Dianne was aware of her fear of relinquishing control. Also, she realized that she had not yet learned to control (in the guiding sense of the word) from within the drama. Although

Dianne attempted to use teacher-in-role (and to steer the drama from within), she discovered that the method is not free of flaws. She confided, "It's hard to be the teacher and be the other (role) and keep the whole thing going....Interpreting their reactions when I am so much worrying about myself and my behaviour/performance is one of the problems." Teacher-in-role is a valuable tool, but, as Dianne learned, it is a tool which can be damaging if not used sparingly, with great care -- this is my opinion. I believe that even a teacher in role as an unassuming character can be too domineering -- just by the very nature of the teacher-pupil relationship, regardless of what role the teacher adopts, the children are going to be somewhat stifled if the teacher is a constant participant in the drama. Teacher-in-role is a successful guiding tool, in my opinion, if the teacher is often out of the drama altogether, and has the opportunity to observe the children as they carry the drama on their own.

Regardless of the approach taken to the use of teacher-in-role, however, the tool must go hand in hand with skilled, spontaneous questioning. This pairing is what can make role drama the meaningful, thought-provoking learning experience that

it should be. Here we have what is probably the most crucial of the problems which role drama holds for teachers -- to be skilled with questioning is difficult, but to be skilled with spontaneous questioning is extremely tough. For teachers, who are trained to be excellent at planning and working in units/themes, spontaneity does not come easily.

During one of three overview discussions, Dianne told me that, prior to the implementation, she had no idea of what grade one role drama would look like. "I hadn't seen any examples of work with small children, and I hadn't participated as a practising teacher (in drama) with children so I had nothing to go on." Further, Dianne expressed her disappointment to me because her expectations for role drama hadn't been realized -- she knew that the drama sessions should have provided worthwhile learning experiences for the children; however, Dianne maintained that she felt cheated and she sensed that the children felt cheated, too.

To begin with, Dianne explained, the summer course (ENED 335) had not prepared her for the realities of the implementation of role drama. "Our only field of operation was with adults....seeing a few ace teachers (drama specialists such

as Dorothy Heathcote) on film. We didn't get to see any of the rough edges of what the process was going to look like -- of how we were going to stumble and fall." Dianne added, "I really do wonder -- how would I put it together if I didn't have someone (S. -- a colleague, and myself) to talk to. I don't know how I would do it."

More specifically, Dianne suggested that perhaps ENED 335 could offer students (training teachers) more opportunities to experience the leadership role -- the teacher role -- rather than the usual involvements as the child/pupil. Peer workshopping should be utilized as a means of providing students with practise in the teacher role, too, Dianne added, and for the purpose of reviewing and discussing reading assignments. And readings, Dianne said, should be better tailored to the level of the course -- there should be a more broad, but selected, exposure to different scholars so that students receive a clear flavour of each. Also, Dianne stressed the importance of separating elementary teachers from secondary teachers for the purpose of drama in education training (and, more specifically, separating the elementary sections into primary and intermediate).

I concur with Dianne's emphasis on the necessity for drama in education students to receive considerable practise in the leadership/teacher role. In keeping with this belief, I suggest that, somehow, teachers training to use role drama should be given the opportunity to practise working with children -- during the summer session, perhaps children could be registered for a summer drama day camp which would operate under the umbrella of ENED 335 (and ENED 435, the advanced drama in education course). Also, Dianne and I discussed the possibility of ENED 335 students (teachers in training) working in twos or threes when practising to use role drama with children so that, while one teaches, the other observes (and vise versa), followed by overview discussions and , then, a sharing of experiences with the entire ENED 335 group (these methods could be used for ENED 435, too). During the fall/winter session, many students are employed teachers and can work with the children in their own classrooms (but I think that even these teachers should practise using role drama in pairs, or threes, taking time to visit each other's classrooms); however, some students do not have classes to practise with -- a "buddy system" such as the one I have described would address this need. Daytime

undergraduate students (enrolled in drama in education courses) who are not yet employed as teachers should be assigned classrooms so that they, too, can practise using role drama with children (again, in pairs). Only through considerable practise in using role drama with children will teachers (or training teachers) learn to become skilled with spontaneous questioning and comfortable with relinquishing control. In support of this system, Dianne emphasizes, "When you're teaching, you can't see everything -- another can observe what one misses."

Adequate teacher training for drama in education is crucial. In Dianne's words, "Role drama is a neat idea, but it's so easy to be discouraged with it if teachers don't know enough about how to use it. It's essential to give people (teachers in training) support during the time they are learning to teach -- like learning to drive a car, or to ride a bike and having help finding your balance."

EPILOGUE

At the beginning of this implementation, Dianne, like many teachers, was reluctant to use role drama in her classroom; however, because she realized role drama's value as a teaching tool, she was willing to set aside her hesitancies and become the focus of this project. Now, following Dianne's brave efforts, I think it is fair to say that we have a clear picture of the real problems which role drama can pose for classroom teachers -- all of which could be addressed through teacher training courses.

Change does not come easily -- teachers are often most comfortable using their own familiar methods in the classroom. Morgan and Saxton (1987) support this view and add that it is possible to train teachers in the kind of thinking and planning that leads to successful drama teaching. Teachers are concerned, at some level, with problems of control and predictability. Heathcote (1984) is more specific. In her discussion of the threats which drama holds for teachers, she includes the following as being security thresholds: the noise

level, the space level, decision-making, and subject interests of the teacher (Dianne clearly demonstrated her need to control each of these thresholds). Another common threat for teachers is the use of teacher-in-role. The idea of role-taking frightens uninformed teachers who incorrectly presume that they must be skilled actors in order to use role drama and teacher-in-role (Heathcote, 1984, and Bolton, 1979). Dianne, for example, acknowledged that she was overly concerned about her own "performance" when she tried to use teacher-in-role. (Again, I stress my belief that teacher-in-role can be misused.) However, the most difficult aspect of teacher-in-role (and out-of-role) is the necessity for skilled, spontaneous questioning through which the teacher applies pressure and deepens the children's experiences (Davies, 1987).

As Dianne emphasized, "Teachers tend to do what is safe." It is time for drama educators to see the realities of role drama in the classroom -- perhaps this clearer vision will allow them to successfully guide teachers towards the notion that, not only is role drama a valuable teaching tool, it is non-threatening and reliable, too.

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