

# Drama helps students work better in groups and solve problems

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This research was conducted by **James S. Catterall** at the **University of California, Los Angeles, USA**

## Summary

This paper describes an experiment conducted with children using drama to enhance the acquisition of a range of social skills. The results showed that students who participated in the programme had significantly increased perceptions of their ability to work in groups, to solve problems and stronger self-efficacy (the sense that 'one can make things happen and overcome obstacles').

## The sessions took place after school

The programme comprised 24 after-school drama sessions (with allied activities like writing and drawing) lasting 90 minutes once a week. The first 12 sessions were dedicated to workshops exploring various aspects of the dramatic process (including story and character development) and the remaining 12 sessions comprised the creation original plays and performance pieces. The participants were aged between 11 and 14 attending three schools in Los Angeles, USA.

## The study compared participants with non-participants

71 students participated in the programme and the paper compares them with a group of 84 students who did not, although the comparison group was drawn from students who attended the same schools as the programme participants and they had indicated an interest in participating in the programme but for a variety of reasons were unable to do so. All 155 children completed

questionnaires before and after the programme that asked about their attitudes and motivations.

## Drama is about 'doing'

There are many theories about how children acquire knowledge and the authors suggest that drama could be a vigorous and effective way of enhancing children's learning experience because it involves 'doing' rather than 'absorbing', it is social, and it develops over time through rehearsal, feedback and modification.

### Keywords

**problem-solving** **education** **theatre** **children** **USA** **performance**  
**experiment**

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