

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

---

4-9-2018 1:00 PM

## Empathy in Inclusive Classrooms: Exploring Prosocial Behaviour Through Children's Academic Writing Skills

Erica J. Partridge, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Specht, Jacqueline A., *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Psychology

© Erica J. Partridge 2018

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Partridge, Erica J., "Empathy in Inclusive Classrooms: Exploring Prosocial Behaviour Through Children's Academic Writing Skills" (2018). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 5275.  
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/5275>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

## Abstract

**Background.** Empathy is a crucial means through which diversity is appreciated. Applying inclusivity at a young age and throughout the education curriculum is optimal for social and emotional development alongside academic development. **Method.** Nineteen students in Grade 5 participated in the language arts curriculum *Shakespeare Can be Fun*. Writing samples were collected before and after the perspective taking lesson and coded for empathy. **Results.** Independent t-tests comparing the pre-post writing categories of Organization, Creativity, Voice and Affect, and Grammar generated no significant results. Further t-tests were conducted within Voice and Affect and the item identifying Evidence for Empathy was significant. Qualitative themes were also analyzed. **Discussion.** Narrative writing supports the development of empathy but it remains unclear whether writing skills translates into prosocial behaviour. **Conclusion.** The “hidden curriculum” appears to aid social and emotional development in inclusive classrooms alongside traditional academia. Practical implications for school counsellors are discussed.

## Keywords

empathy, social and emotional development, inclusive education, diversity

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Jacqueline Specht for her support and guidance as my thesis advisor and Dr. Susan Rodger for her insight as part of the advisory committee. This research would not be achievable without the partnership with QWILL Media & Education Inc., and the help of Dr. Kathryn Hibbert and Mary Ott.

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Appendices.....	v
Chapter 1.....	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Theoretical Rationale.....	1
1.2 Stand-Alone Programs.....	3
1.3 Influence of Writing on Empathy.....	6
1.4 Interactive Methods on Empathy.....	7
1.5 Summary.....	9
1.6 Purpose and Hypothesis.....	10
Chapter 2.....	12
2 Method.....	12
2.1 Design.....	12
2.2 Participants.....	12
2.3 Materials.....	12
2.4 Procedure.....	13
2.5 Data Analysis.....	14
Chapter 3.....	15

3 Results.....	15
Chapter 4.....	17
4 Discussion.....	17
4.1 Relation to Stand-Alone Programs.....	17
4.2 Increased Empathy.....	18
4.3 Influence of Writing on Empathy.....	19
4.4 Translation Into Behaviour.....	20
4.5 Practical Implications of School-Based Counselling.....	21
4.6 Limitations.....	25
4.7 Recommendations.....	26
References.....	27
Appendices.....	30

## List of Appendices

Appendix A: See But With My Eyes.....	30
Appendix B: Ethics Certification, Letter of Information & Consent Form.....	31
Appendix C: Coding System.....	36

# Chapter 1

## 1 Introduction

Inclusive education classrooms are classrooms where students with and without exceptionalities learn together (Specht, 2013). Regardless of individual differences, the belief in inclusive classrooms is that all students belong, are valued members, and have the right to be part of the life of the classroom environment (Katz, 2012a). Moreover, inclusive classrooms hold a strong respect for diversity as their core value which is characterized as a concept that encompasses all children – personalities, intelligences, family structure, learning styles, as well as abilities (Katz, 2012a). A fundamental idea of inclusion appreciates that when students are segregated, the opportunity to experience diversity and difference is lost (Specht, 2013). That is why research in the area of inclusive education often emphasizes that the education system, from school boards to teachers, should work to create environments where students feel accepted, safe, and have a sense of belongingness (Katz, 2012a; Specht, 2013). The existing literature has demonstrated that inclusive classrooms work. That is, they produce more academic success for students in comparison to students segregated in special education classrooms (Katz 2012b; Specht, 2013). Research shows that inclusive classrooms function well. The underlying mechanisms of why inclusive classrooms work is of interest to the current study.

### 1.1 Theoretical Rationale

Scholars in the area of inclusive education indicate that empathy is a social and emotional behaviour that may lead to more success in an inclusive classroom. To empathize is a state of emotion that stems from the same or a similar feeling as another being (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Hoffman, 2000). Hoffman proposed that there are multiple stages of empathy development in children (Hoffman, 2000; Scahffer, 1996). The first stage is *global empathy*. This phase occurs when babies match the emotions of others. The second stage is *egocentric empathy* and children at this stage actively offer to help others, but it is based on what they think would help themselves in that situation instead of

thinking from their distressed peer's perspective (Hoffman, 2000). The third stage is called *empathy for others*. Children who have reached this stage are able to feel for other people, characters, or animals like the Eisenberg and Miller's (1987) definition of empathy describes. Children typically reach this stage by kindergarten (Schaffer, 1996). Lastly, children may move into a stage called *empathy for another's life condition* by late childhood or early adolescence. Here, young people become aware that feelings may not be due to an immediate situation, but to an accumulation of life experiences (Schaffer, 1996). Therefore, given Hoffman's theory, it is expected that school-age children are capable of understanding the emotions of others.

The model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) also guides the current research. UDL's goal is to create a universally accessible curriculum for students (Katz, 2012a). Researchers at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) developed this framework because students with exceptionalities were gaining physical access to general classrooms, but the concern was with how those students were accessing the general curriculum (Edyburn, 2005). Early on, there was an evident disconnect between a diverse classroom and a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum. Thus, such disconnection did not produce academic achievement gains for all students, so CAST focused their research, development, and educational practice on understanding diversity. Investigators outline three core principles of UDL. These components consist of having multiple means of representation for inquiring knowledge, having multiple means of expression for students to demonstrate what they know, and having multiple means of engagement to gain interest in subjects, challenge and motivate students (Edyburn, 2005). Overall, UDL expands opportunities for learning for all students regardless of any differences and this is achieved through advocacy, accommodation, and accessibility in an effort to reduce barriers for learning (Edyburn, 2005).

Jennifer Katz (2012a) proposed a 3-Block Model for UDL that helps teachers create inclusive atmospheres and engage their students. The first block is labeled *Social and Emotional Learning*. The second block titled *Inclusive Instructional Practice* outlines practical instructional frameworks. Third, the *System and Structures* block embodies a systemic approach to tackling inclusivity that includes staffing, budgeting, and professional development in learning institutions.



The first block is of particular interest to this study. Within this foundational block, the aim is to develop schools that are compassionate learning communities that promote social and emotional learning and respect for diversity. Also, this block aims to support multiple modes of presenting the curriculum to students in accordance to UDL's principles (Katz, 2012a).

The Social and Emotional Learning block emphasizes a Respecting Diversity (RD) program that outlines four constructs that lay the foundation for social and emotional learning (Katz, 2012a). These include self awareness, awareness of others, self respect, and respect for others. Self awareness and respect allows children to answer broad spiritual questions. Awareness and respect for others builds perspective as well as positive relationships. To extend the RD program, schools should emphasize social curriculum as extensively as the academic curriculum (Kats, 2012a). The current study seeks to implement a curriculum program that encompasses the values expressed in Katz' (2012) model in hopes of sustaining a positive learning environment.

## 1.2 Stand-Alone Programs

Specific curriculum-based programs have been implemented in inclusive classrooms to encourage prosocial behaviour. In particular, the prosocial behaviour of empathy can be improved in students due to the interactive and collaborative nature of inclusive classrooms (Maine, 2013). Perhaps increased empathy in classrooms allows for greater success for all students involved.

Curtis & Norgate (2007) studied 287 primary students from five inclusive schools and evaluated their Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) program. The program outlines six volumes of lessons and teachers had two days of training. PATHS curriculum included various activities such as role play, storytelling, and modeling. These multimethod ways of representing and expressing knowledge to students is a key concept in the current research. The PATHS program encouraged the students to reflect on their impact on others and to consider what others are feeling. The pre-posttest design incorporated a control group and used the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to measure behavioural changes. The SDQ is a 25-item questionnaire rated on a 3-point

Likert scale. This tool measures emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour.

Results indicated that the intervention group improved on all five domains of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the control group did not change posttest (Curtis & Norgate, 2007). Teacher interviews acknowledged that the program helped their students understand emotions, foster empathy, develop cooperation as well as respect for their peers. They expressed how more practical interactive programs, such as PATHS, are desirable compared to traditional curriculum that has the children sitting and listening to lessons. Also, teachers saw an increase in empathy especially in regards to perspective taking skills. The authors recommend that the PATHS curriculum can be used for children up to Grade 6 (Curtis & Norgate, 2007). It is expected that programs of a similar nature will also be appropriate for school-age children and yield positive social and emotional outcomes.

Hinnant and O'Brien (2007) offered converging evidence for perspective taking and its relation to empathy. Their purpose was to understand processes that underlie empathy. They hypothesized that cognition and emotion are integrated in control and perspective taking. They also thought that relationships between these variables would relate to children's empathic responding. This mixed method study used the character Elmo with the children to test their cognitive perspective taking. Children were asked to describe to Elmo what he could see from his point of view. To measure emotional perspective taking, children saw Elmo as happy, sad, scared, or angry and had to identify that in 17 vignettes. Two raters scored each child's answers. Results found that empathy was significantly related to emotional perspective taking and researchers found support for the idea that cognition and emotion interact in empathic responses. Researchers inferred that these findings were important because they interpreted that their study was the first step in understanding processes that underlie empathy responding in young children. Moreover, they highlighted how the development of empathy is essential knowledge for psychologists, teachers, and parents to understand.

Another program called Roots of Empathy (ROE) was evaluated (Schonert-Reichl, Smith, Zaidman-Zait & Hertzman, 2012). Roots of Empathy focuses on reducing aggression and facilitating development for prosocial behaviour. Specifically, they

examined the effects of ROE on social and emotional competence in children. Participants were 585 fourth to seventh grade students from 28 inclusive classrooms. Researchers used a quasi-experimental control group design with self-reported pre-posttest measures. Although the ROE study's design was not randomized, it did have high ecological validity. The program's curriculum spanned over the entire school year. Instructors had three days of training with one booster session half way through. Teachers also had an "expert" mentor to turn to if they had any questions about the ROE curriculum. Outcome measures after the program intervention included distress levels, empathy, perspective taking as well as peer and teacher reports of aggression.

The variables of empathy and perspective taking showed no significant changes after the implementation of the ROE program (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). Researchers were perplexed by the non-significant results and attributed the effect to the methodology concerns and to confounding factors that were not considered in the study. First, the design was not as rigorous as a randomized control trial and the variables were measured using self-report. Researchers identified a need to specifically approach empathy with different methods, not just self-reported measures (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). Methods that are directly embedded in the educational curriculum, which already incorporates a multimodal approach, should be studied. Second, researchers controlled for some demographic characters such as age and ESL status (English as Second Language) as confounding variables but failed to consider other potential factors such as program effects due to differing age cohorts or cultural background (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012).

Although significant results were not found, the research still provided empirical evidence for stand-alone programming for social and emotional development in school-age children. Researchers identified that the ability of implementing such programs under "real world" conditions was a relative strength (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). Despite the null findings, the initial hypothesis of seeing an increase in empathy and perspective taking post-intervention remains promising. Since the ROE program demonstrated high external validity by assessing a vast sample, if future research addressed methodological concerns significant findings may emerge (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). Researchers insisted that clinicians, researchers and teachers continue to attend to the needs of an increasingly diverse population in inclusive classrooms.

### 1.3 Influence of Writing on Empathy

Social and emotional development can be guided through literacy. Literacy is commonly linked to reading skills, yet literacy also encompasses other cognitive aspects such as oral, numeracy, and writing skills (UNESCO, 2006). In addition, literacy considers contextual factors, such as cultural and societal features, to which a student is exposed. Interdisciplinary research and practice has expanded the concept of literacy to be an applied, inclusive process of development rather than fixating on individual skill change (UNESCO, 2006). Hence, literacy has the potential to influence students in other competencies beyond their cognitive skill development. For instance, using writing has shown promising results to increase empathy. Deen, Mangurian and Cabaniss (2010) aimed to determine if writing narratives fosters empathy in medical residents using a first person narrative. The first-person narrative allowed the writer to imagine being the patient, minimize the emotional distance between writer and story, and encourage the writer to be more emotionally invested in the task (Deen et al, 2010). The resident attended weekly supervision where the narrative writings were discussed to enhance awareness of internal feelings and possible countertransference toward patients. The study looked at writing style, word choice and story line to analyze feelings of empathy in each narrative. Results found that narratives promote self-reflection, adds emotionality, and increases perspective taking which are all integral parts of empathy (Deen et al., 2010). Literacy that continues to encourage these competencies may nurture social and emotional development.

It is recommended that education programs, such as those for medical students and residents, incorporate narrative writing (Deen et al., 2010). Perspective writing was implemented with 92 medical students and the data provided evidence for increased empathy after writing from patients' point of view (Shapiro, Rucker, Boker & Lie, 2006). More emotional awareness was shown in participants who wrote from the patient's perspective compared to using clinical reasoning during the writing task. Researchers emphasized that training can improve affective dimension in their writing skills, but it is still unclear if writing skills translates into prosocial behaviour (Shapiro et al., 2006).

Researchers inferred that the ability to empathize is crucial to becoming a moral citizen (Upright, 2002). To better promote good citizenship, empathic training through writing should exist throughout the lifespan and formal learning should begin early, during grade school would be feasible (Upright, 2002). Children tend to have greater imaginations and the ability to imagine requires understanding the experiences of others (Brill, 2004). Hence, the idea of empathy also involves creative thinking as well as perspective taking. An exploratory study using school-age children looked at the results of four writing tasks, two literary and two non-literary tasks (Brill, 2004). Textual analysis of the letter writing tasks included writing style, imagination and writer empathy. In all four tasks, degrees of empathy and imagination were present. Results also found that empathy and imagination were more common in the literary writing samples. Researchers believe that the education system undervalues the influence of empathy and creativity. Thus, they suggest that future studies on writing development explore classroom samples in hopes that curriculum-based social and emotional learning is transferable to behaviour development (Brill, 2004).

## 1.4 Interactive Methods on Empathy

To supplement writing, an increase in student's social and emotional development is often found by using more interactive methods. Programs that incorporate interactive learning may be more successful in increasing social and emotional development in students. For instance, Favor and Alanis (2012) studied eight families that had children with exceptionalities. The research looked to challenge emotional issues through storytelling. An open-ended evaluative survey warranted the general trend that the story helped parents and children see their other family member's perspectives. This pilot suggested that the stories helped families challenge emotional issues, such as empathy (Favor & Alanis, 2012). Researchers interpreted that challenging emotions allows collaboration and understanding in inclusive settings. Specific to inclusive classrooms, Riquelme and Montero (2013), looked at the emotional development of 92 school-age children and its relationship with school performance. Students were measured pre-post for emotional recognition, empathy, and emotional liability. Researchers found that the children's emotional development significantly increased after the program (Riquelme &

Montero, 2013). It was interpreted that the students' emotional development was encouraged through a more interactive reading program. In particular, the mediated reading group had a positive effect on empathy compared to traditional reading or the silent reading conditions.

Further research investigating interactive methods should evaluate the levels of empathy instead of emotional learning in its entirety to gain clarity of how empathy develops in students (Favor & Alanis, 2012). This is important because certain stages of empathy may foster different results. Using multiple modes of learning is an inclusive means to promoting development (Upright, 2002). Past research has developed a nine-step procedure using moral dilemmas to improve empathy, which included role play activities, modeling behaviour, group work and writing. Overall, these techniques guided students and strengthened their skills post-intervention (Upright, 2002).

Converging evidence demonstrates how children's literature appears to be an effective way to educate children about emotions in the same ways interactive methods can (Baskerville, 2011; Favor & Alanis, 2012). Researchers suggested that future studies should look at dimensions of children's emotional competence on academic development. Research should consider academic skills as an integrated process and examine whether children show an increase in emotional competence alongside their academic development. In turn, curriculum programs on social and emotional development could also strengthen students' academic success in an inclusive classroom. Implementing curriculum-based programs on social and emotional development earlier in the school year encourages a healthy and inclusive classroom environment from the beginning in hopes that it has a lasting effect throughout each school year (Baskerville, 2011).

Thus, Baskerville (2011) used three stories that were delivered over four workshops to promote inclusivity in classrooms. The first story was a story about the author, the second was a story about their teacher, and in the third workshop the students shared stories about themselves. Throughout the first three workshops, students were asked to reflect on the stories they heard in a journal; this was followed by a final reflection workshop. Content of the students' journals were analyzed. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted after the intervention.

Aspects that contributed to the development of effective inclusive classrooms were identified. Factors that were associated included establishing a caring supportive learning environment, encouraging student voice through personal stories, and enhancing connectedness (Baskerville, 2011). These interrelated factors appeared to increase students' ability to take the cultural perspective of others. Through these factors, the research indicated that perspective taking encourages more successful inclusive classrooms. Moreover, themes of empathy, compassion, tolerance, and a respect for difference were fostered through perspective taking as a result of the storytelling workshops (Baskerville, 2011). A multimodal approach to learning appeared to be an effective means to explore these concepts. Therefore, this study supports the use of writing alongside interactive means as an appropriate way to explore empathy in school-age children in future research.

Perhaps incorporating writing as a central instrument in social and emotional development programs will help children build empathy skills. However, teachers need to cater to the learning needs of their students when facilitating social and emotional learning (Baskerville, 2011). Inferences in Baskerville's study (2011) were made on a cultural basis, but inclusion encompasses all differences so future research should look to magnify diverse learning needs. It appears that children's social and emotional learning should be encouraged through interventions that encompass both interactive as well as writing methods to attain more successful development (Upright, 2002).

## 1.5 Summary

Past research has demonstrated that social and emotional development is related to inclusivity. In order to better understand why inclusive education classrooms present positive academic outcomes for students, research must understand the underlying mechanisms of inclusive classrooms. Namely, a common theme in previous research seems to be the presence of empathy. In a practical sense, students who are more empathic may be more willing to help other students who are struggling, subsequently creating a successful inclusive classroom. In summation, the existing literature shows a change in empathic responses based on social and emotional development, especially in literary programs that aim to promote empathy.

## 1.6 Purpose and Hypothesis

Based on the finding of past literature, the present study looks further at the educational curriculum to see if social and emotional changes occur like they do in stand-alone programs. A significant limitation to stand-alone programming is the requirement of additional work by teachers who are expected to implement programs in addition to the academic curriculum. The current study attempts to fill that gap by merging social and emotional development programs with the educational curriculum. The current study's program is similar to stand-alone programs regarding the underlying understanding of empathy, using a multimethod teaching approaches, and aiming to increase prosocial behaviour (Curtis & Norgate, 2007; Hinnant & O'Brien, 2007). In addition to similar foundation and structure to stand alone programs, the present embedded curriculum program is also applied in a naturally occurring classroom setting. Thus, the current study hopes to replicate the positive prosocial outcomes found in stand alone programs (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012).

Students who are able to take the perspective of others demonstrate high levels of empathy (Baskerville, 2011). If there is an increase in the students' empathy through their writing development, the findings will support the idea of implementing literacy programs in the curriculum to encourage students' social and emotional development. Literacy programs that promote prosocial behaviour, such as empathy, allow teachers to improve inclusive classrooms without adding to their academic responsibilities (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). If programs can be implemented through the curriculum, teachers can educate students in social and emotional development alongside academic development without using more time and resources to teach them separately like stand-alone programs require.

Therefore, the purpose of the present research is to explore the effects of writing activities from the interactive *Shakespeare Can Be Fun* program on empathy in inclusive classrooms. The central hypothesis predicts that there will be an increase in empathic tone in students' collective posttest writing samples compared to their pretest samples as a result of the program, which includes a lesson on perspective taking and empathy.



Thus, there will be a progressive improvement of empathy demonstrated through their writing which will hopefully be transferable in enhancing students' prosocial behaviour

## Chapter 2

### 2 Method

#### 2.1 Design

This study's quasi-experimental design explored the literary program *Shakespeare Can Be Fun* and its effect on empathic writing. The classroom was a naturally occurring cluster of students. All students received the same intervention, so no control group was used. Pretest samples from time one were compared to the posttest writing samples from time two.

#### 2.2 Participants

As a part of a larger study, the recruitment of teachers was completed via email and a snowball sampling method was employed to attain teacher interest in the research. Clusters of classrooms were used from Ontario, Canada. All teachers and their students participated on a voluntary basis. Teachers who implemented the unit on perspective taking from the *Shakespeare Can be Fun* program were invited to participate in the current study.

Nineteen Grade 5 students from a local classroom participated in this study. All participants were actively enrolled in a public elementary school and are a student in an inclusive classroom setting.

#### 2.3 Materials

***Shakespeare Can Be Fun Program.*** The program is based on Lois Burdett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* children's book. The overall goal of the larger program is to develop literacy skills. Teachers had access to the program via an online portal. The program consisted of 22 chapters and supplementary activity schedules and printable handouts for both the teachers and the students to complete. The subsection on perspective taking (Chapter 3, Lesson 3) was the only unit of interest for this study. In this section, students were introduced to a conflict occurring in the plot where the character Hermia wants to marry a man named Lysander, of whom her father does not

approve. Hermia wishes that her father could see her point of view. Subsequently, students engaged in writing activities about this conflict after learning what empathy is and how to write a narrative paragraph.

**Writing Samples.** Two writing excerpts were collected from each participant. The two questions from the writing tasks were identical. In an activity called *See But With My Eyes*, students were asked to write about a time where they wished someone had seen their perspective (see Appendix A for a reproduction based on the original activity). Each sample was approximately one half page of text.

## 2.4 Procedure

Teachers were invited via an online recruiting system to participate in the program *Shakespeare Can Be Fun*. Interested teachers signed consent forms and returned them to the Primary Investigators. Once consent was collected, the teachers then had access to the program outline through a portal with a given user name and password. Research assistants gave teachers consent forms to be sent home with students (see Appendix B). Their parents/guardians had to sign the consent form in order for the student to participate in the program. Research assistants gathered all signed consent forms. Teachers implemented the program into their language arts curriculum at their convenience in the 2016-2017 academic year. Students who opted out of the program or who withdrew during the program completed alternate language arts work assigned by their teachers.

A research assistant observed the program implementation periodically and acted as a resource if teachers had any questions or comments about the program. The duration of the entire program took approximately three months to complete. The subsection on perspective taking and empathy occurred within that time frame. The first part of the perspective taking section asked students to complete the *See But With My Eyes* question. The next day, teachers gave a full lesson on perspective taking as outlined in the program. In overview, the lesson consisted of emphasizing that sometimes we wish others can see our perspective, but it is imperative that we see things from others' perspectives too. The lesson taught students the definition of empathy and described how perspective taking produces the emotional state of empathy. Afterward, students were asked to repeat the same *See But With My Eyes* activity. Throughout the intervention,

researchers continuously collected data as it was completed. Electronic information is stored on a password-protected computer and physical data is filed in a locked room.

Upon program completion, a feedback evaluation was available to teachers. As well, e-mails of teachers and parents/guardians who were interested in the results of the program were collected and securely stored. Teachers, students, and parents/guardians were thanked for their interest and participation in the research.

During the procedure, the initial goal was to attain a matched pair design. However, the data was gathered collectively as pretest samples and as posttest samples rather than keeping individual pretest and posttest samples together for each student. It was not possible to accurately match the samples prior to analysis.

## 2.5 Data Analysis

A coding system was created based on Rumbold, Specht, and Klein's (2007) coding system for assessing writing samples in children with ADHD. The coding system consisted of 18 items arranged under four subcategories (see Appendix C). The categories included organization, creativity, voice and affect, and grammar.

Items were rated by researchers on a numerical scale from 1-5, one indicating a low score and five indicating a high score for each item. Inter-rater reliability was established. Each researcher coded five practice samples from another subset. Discrepant rating scores greater than a 1-point difference were discussed until researchers came to an agreement. Inter-rater scores were in concordance on greater than 80% of the items. Researchers proceeded to code the research samples in an unsystematic order. Emotionally descriptive word choice related to empathy was highlighted during the coding process. Content of the perspective taking situation was also recorded.

Independent t-tests were conducted comparing collective pretest scores to the posttest scores. It was expected that subscale scores would increase post intervention. Particularly, the Voice and Affect subscale would increase since the program lesson is based on empathy. Also, qualitative themes for word choice and content were examined and compared pre-post. It was expected that stronger empathic tone, which would be expressed through more intricate word choice and descriptive content, would be present in the posttest samples compared to the pretest.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Results

Independent t-tests of the four subscales showed no significant results. First, pretest scores for Organization ( $M=24.42$ ,  $SD=5.59$ ) were compared to the posttest ( $M=23.26$ ,  $SD=5.47$ ),  $t(36)=0.65$ ,  $p=.523$ . Second, the subscale of Creativity was compared pre- ( $M=12.36$ ,  $SD=1.89$ ) and post-intervention ( $M=11.89$ ,  $SD=2.28$ ),  $t(36)=0.62$ ,  $p=.539$ . Third, pretest Grammar scores ( $M=13.89$ ,  $SD=3.18$ ) were compared posttest ( $M=14.16$ ,  $SD=4.17$ ),  $t(36)=-0.22$ ,  $p=.828$ . However, the pre-test score ( $M=12.18$ ,  $SD=4.44$ ) for the subscale of Voice and Affect compared to the posttest score ( $M=14.95$ ,  $SD=5.33$ ) was approaching significance,  $t(36)=-1.75$ ,  $p=0.088$ .

Since the current research was a pilot study and looked specifically at items concerning empathy, further analyses were conducted into Voice and Affect. Independent t-tests conducted on the items within Voice and Affect found that the pre-test score ( $M=2.26$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ) for the item *Evidence of Empathy* compared to the post-test score ( $M=3.05$ ,  $SD=1.18$ ) was significant,  $t(36)=-2.24$ ,  $p=0.032$ . Results indicate that students were more apt to take multiple perspectives with emotional consideration of each character in their writing after the perspective taking lesson, suggesting an increase in empathic tone.

Qualitative analysis showed a difference in the quantity and degree of difficulty in the samples' emotional word use after the intervention. There was a decrease in number of emotional descriptors related to empathy in the post-intervention samples. The pretest writing samples contained 47 words collectively and only 37 words were identified post-intervention. However, the degree of difficulty in the students' word choice increased. Prior to the perspective taking lesson, students were using an increased amount of basic emotional words such as "happy", "angry", "sad" and "not fair" to convey empathy. A theme emerged in the pretest samples where the majority of the emotional words were reflective of themselves rather than describing the emotional perspective of other characters involved, yielding lower empathic tone.

Students used less emotional words in the post-intervention samples, yet the quality of the word choice was more intricate. Students opted for words such as

“depressed”, “disappointed” and “excited” in their narrative. Thematic analysis showed students beginning to demonstrate increased empathy by emotionally describing other characters’ points of view as well as their own. Qualitative results demonstrated that fewer, more difficult emotional descriptive words were more effective in displaying empathy compared to an increased amount of basic words.

Content analysis found that all samples, pre- and post-intervention, had the potential to demonstrate empathy. Most students appeared to draw from personal experience and all narrative stories included other characters. Differences emerged between high empathic and low empathic samples when students were able to describe the story with emotional detail from multiple points of view. For example, a pre-test sample said, “I wish he would be more nice to me because he always bugs me and he bull[ies] me all [of] the time and he’s not nice around my friends. I wish he could see things my way...”. In comparison, a posttest sample revealed, “I finally reali[z]ed you don’t always get what you want. I’m looking in my dads point [of view]. I’m finally wearing my Dad’s shoes. I realized life isn’t what you [are] shopping for it’s actually spending time with family”. Qualitative results indicated that posttest samples seemed to contain more emotional insight and description compared to pretest samples, subsequently contributing to higher empathic scores.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Discussion

This research embodies the initiation of the effectiveness of social and emotional development programs taught within the academic curriculum. This is an alternative to additional stand-alone programming outside of the formal curriculum. The current study showed support for empathy development through narrative writing in inclusive classrooms. The *Shakespeare Can Be Fun* lesson on perspective taking sought to encourage social and emotional development, specifically fostering empathy alongside academic development. The intervention lesson on perspective taking and empathy had the potential to increase social and emotional development through children's writing. Themes also emerged that provided support for an increased understanding of empathy in children through the writer's tone, content, and word choice. The current study successfully corroborates the idea that embedded programming in the academic curriculum may encourage empathic development in children.

#### 4.1 Relation to Stand-Alone Programs

The present outcomes attempted to expand research in the area of social and emotional development in inclusive education. Findings on empathy development in the current study were comparable to those found in stand-alone programming. For instance, the Roots of Empathy program identified a promising effect on the enhancement of empathy (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). After the intervention, social and emotional development rates were predicted to increase. This present outcomes replicated the positive effect hypothesized in stand-alone programs (Curtis & Norgate, 2007; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). Under similar real world conditions, the current research's findings were only approaching significance for Voice and Affect. The lack of significant support may have been a result of limited time between writing activities. There were two days between the pretest and posttest writing activities. Considering the coding system used in this research, changes in Voice and Affect in this short timeframe were notable. If differences in empathy were noticeable in such a short period, it would be worthwhile to explore

social and emotional development over a longer length of time. Regarding the subsections of Organization, Creativity and Grammar, it was foreseeable that non-significant differences would emerge. The intervention lesson did not teach these elements nor was there adequate time to increase these skills between the pre- and posttests through other academic lessons and courses. Extending the length of this pilot study to include the entire *Shakespeare Can Be Fun* program may reveal significant results across all subsections.

It is also economical to encourage embedded programming as a favourable influence on children's social and emotional development in contrast to stand alone programs. Literacy programs such as the *Shakespeare Can Be Fun* program allows teachers to enhance inclusive classrooms efficiently. Embedded programming addresses social and emotional development as well as academic development without overwhelming teachers with further responsibilities (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). When programs are applied through the academic curriculum, teachers can educate students in social, emotional, and academic domains without using an abundance of unnecessary resources. For example, embedded programs alleviate extraneous efforts such as the recruitment of staff to teach the program, recruitment of students to participate, and locating a facility to present the program. All of which would be time-consuming and would inflate costs. This notable concern with stand-alone programs was addressed in this research by amalgamating social and emotional learning with the academic curriculum. Since both means, embedded and stand alone, yielded similar promising results for empathy development, the reasonable choice for program implementation in inclusive classrooms would be to use the embedded method.

## 4.2 Increased Empathy

Higher empathy levels found post-intervention provides concurrent support that students who are able to take the perspective of others demonstrate higher empathy (Baskerville, 2011). Marginal quantitative scores in conjunction with thematic analyses revealed that students understood the concept of empathy as identified by increased respect of others' points of view. Empathic writing tone and content increased when students were able to take multiple perspectives with emotional consideration.



If students were able to describe the state of characters, besides themselves, they were adequately demonstrating empathy (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). However, students were not fully exhibiting the developmental stage of *empathy for others* until they were able to incorporate emotional consideration (Hoffman, 2000). Those who articulated feelings within their perspective taking ideas received the highest scores for the item *Evidence of Empathy*. When evaluating students' subsequent word choice, they tended to use more intricate words post-intervention to illustrate their emotional consideration. The overall trend of students who demonstrated higher empathy levels emerged from post-intervention samples. It appears that the teaching lesson explaining the relationship between perspective taking and empathy is associated with students who write more empathically.

As previously discussed, this relationship was anticipated since empathy was the focus of the intervention lesson despite the short timeframe of this pilot study. However, *Evidence for Empathy* was the only item that generated a significant difference post-intervention under the Voice and Affect subsection. The other items such as *Positive Evaluation* and *Emotional Descriptions of Other Characters* merely describe foundational aspects necessary for empathy. These items did not entirely encompass this research's definition of empathy, which could explain why those results were more conservative compared to the item targeting empathy as a whole. A suggestion for future research would be to create a detailed empathy lesson. Including underlying aspects of empathy in the lesson may further help students understand the overall construct of empathy. Subsequently, students may be able to apply more empathy in their writing, or at least parts of empathy, thereby increasing higher scores for Voice and Affect post-intervention. Continued exploration into properties related to empathy would help expand this area of research.

### 4.3 Influence of Writing on Empathy

The perspective taking lesson within the *Shakespeare Can Be Fun* curriculum appeared to be an effective means to promote empathy development. Convergent with existing literature, writing seemed to facilitate emotional perspective taking in the students' narratives (Deen et al., 2010). Perhaps using a multiple methods approach would further

increase children's understanding of empathy. The *Shakespeare Can Be Fun* program is already comprised of multiple methods of teaching throughout the curriculum such as role play, reading, modeling, and writing. However, writing was the only technique used in the *See But With My Eyes* activity to evaluate empathy in this study. Future research may want to look at the program entirely to investigate the impact of a multimodal approach to social and emotional learning on empathy development.

As the review of literature alludes, it would be expected that students would exhibit more empathy from learning and practicing empathic skills through several means (Baskerville, 2011; Favor & Alanis, 2012; Riquelme & Montero, 2013). Engaging with empathy through a variety of opportunities is an inclusive way of attending to diverse learning styles. Using a multimethod approach by including activities like role-play and modeling along with writing could enhance social and emotional development (Curtis & Norgate, 2007). Although writing seemed to produce constructive outcomes, alternative methods and combinations of activities within social and emotional programming should be explored for optimal empathy development.

#### 4.4 Translation Into Behaviour

It is hopeful that higher empathy levels will transfer into prosocial behaviour. The idea of subsequent behaviour change from empathy development is an important research area; if students' social and emotional competencies help facilitate a successful inclusive classroom, students should be able to extend those skills to create an inclusive community. Upright (2002) believes that empathy is a learned process, so earlier intervention may foster greater potential for prosocial behaviour. With empathy being encouraged through the educational curriculum, children will be more exposed to, able to practice, and dedicate more time to social and emotional learning. Promoting moral values such as empathy in the classroom should be taught as well as modeled (Upright, 2002). Teachers should always reinforce the empathic feelings, especially after teaching children about empathy. Heightened social and emotional development complements moral development, which contributes to the likelihood of students becoming moral citizens (Upright, 2002). However, there is a lack of definitive research showing the translation from social and emotional learning to increased prosocial behaviour (Shapiro

et al., 2006). In particular, minimal research exists demonstrating the translation of empathy to prosocial behaviour in children.

## 4.5 Practical Implications for School-Based Counselling

School psychologists, psychotherapists and social workers that offer counselling to students have a unique opportunity to model empathy outside of the classroom, use counsellor empathy as a means to help with their individual problems, and build prosocial skills with clients who are experiencing particular social and emotional difficulties. The objective for counsellors should be to increase prosocial skills, such as empathy, in hopes that students use these skills around the school environment and extend these skills into the community. As previously reviewed, the ability to empathize is the beginnings of becoming a moral citizen (Upright, 2002). Since schools are typically where children spend a significant amount of time, it is reasonable that social and emotional learning should also be taught alongside academia to reach the overarching goal of being a well-rounded citizen. However, inclusive classrooms are not the only resource in the education system where students may undergo empathy development. It is important that all services in the education system are aware, appreciate, and promote the same values.

Counselling and empathy have had a long-lasting relationship. According to Rogers (1957), the role of empathy in psychotherapy is one of the "necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change". Improving students' empathy levels would increase their social competence. Two studies were conducted by Batson and colleagues (1995) in which participants in a social dilemma situation had the opportunity to allocate resources to themselves, to any of the other participants or to the group as a whole. The first study looked to manipulate empathy in a controlled setting and the second study looked at participants' naturally occurring empathy. It was assumed that empathy would introduce an altruistic motive to enhance the welfare of the individual for whom empathy is felt.

Results found support for their hypothesis. Participants who experienced high empathy allocated more resources to the target of the empathy, not to themselves or to the collective good (Batson et al., 1995). It is possible that empathy activated a moral principle of responsiveness to need that participants wanted to uphold. Empathy and

other prosocial feelings such as sympathy and compassion have been named as sources of altruistic motivation by Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, Adam Smith, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, William McDougall and in contemporary psychology by Hoffman (Batson et al., 1995). Such altruistic behaviour through empathy may benefit inclusive education, as it seems to influence social competence. A means of discussing, practicing and learning such behaviour outside of the classroom may be possible in the counselling setting.

Another way social competence is impacted by empathy is by a reduction in narcissism. Research has found that vulnerable narcissism is significantly related to self-reported dysfunction in empathy (Luchner & Tantleff-Dunn, 2016). These findings have clinical implications highlighting the importance of assessing for empathy dysfunction in clients because vulnerable narcissism was a strong predictor of emotional distress (Luchner & Tantleff-Dunn, 2016). Assessing empathy is an essential piece of the puzzle on how to best address treatment options for social and emotional difficulties.

Increasing students' empathy levels through counselling may also reduce bullying. Research questioned whether teaching empathy development is even useful if the students do not care about the feelings of others (Munoz, Qualter & Padgett, 2011). In a study of 201 school-age children, research showed that students with high callous-unemotional traits are low in affective empathy and high in direct bullying. Results further recognize that students can sometimes "talk the talk" of emotions but they do not genuinely care about the feelings of others (Munoz et al., 2011). Subsequently, uncaring behaviours uniquely predict bullying behaviours. These behaviours may further lead to delinquent behaviours. Thus, if school services are able to increase empathy development earlier, it may act as a preventative measure against delinquent behaviour. Knowing about others' emotions might inhibit direct forms of bullying (Munoz et al., 2011). Educative interventions that focus on victim suffering will not be worthwhile for those who do not care about others. Research shows that counselling interventions that target the student's self interest in combination with a traditional behavioural intervention that uses rewards may be most helpful. Although, giving rewards for prosocial behaviour should be done under strict supervision. When bullying is the issue, it is not uncommon for additional school services to intervene.

In addition to bullying, school-based counselling services may encounter other social and emotional issues such as aggression. A study looking at 52 school-aged boys were compared for levels of aggression and for cognitive and affective empathy. This literature presents empathy as composed of cognition and affect, the difference between these two abilities has hardly been investigated and may be valuable to explore in future research since results showed that aggressive boys showed a lower level of affective empathy, although the groups did not differ in cognitive empathy (Shechtman, 2003). A moderate correlation between cognitive and affective empathy suggests that these two types of empathy are connected, yet distinct components. For aggressive boys, the deficit appears to lie in the affective domain. This study bares important implications for counselling children with aggression (Shechtman, 2003). If empathy can be separated into different types, perhaps there are certain counselling interventions that work best for students who need improvement in a particular division of empathy.

Hence, the final query for practical implications of empathy in counselling is exploring how best to promote prosocial behaviour in the therapeutic setting with students. Empathy is a dynamic process that opens up possibilities for intervention in counseling psychology (Coutinho, Silva & Decety, 2014). Current and past research demonstrates that writing and multimodal approach to empathy encourages greater development (Curtis & Norgate, 2007). Therapeutic activities using these means would further encourage skill building. Interventions that aim to increase student's attention to social cues, explore ambiguous situations, enhance decision-making skills may improve children's perspective-taking skills (Shechtman, 2003). Researchers suggest that children can be foster empathy through a several stages. The process involves helping clients go from having a lack of awareness and motivation, to taking action, and finally maintenance of any development (Shechtman, 2003). Ideas within this process, for example, include practicing techniques that help connect children to their own and others' emotions as well as exploring risks and benefits of one's behaviour. However, the question remains if it will further enhance their empathy and transfer into prosocial behaviour.

It is unknown whether therapeutic aspects such as transference and countertransference are differentiated from empathy. Empathy may be mutually exclusive

of these other therapeutic phenomena or a component of these phenomena (Shechtman, 2003). Being cautious of transference and countertransference, modeling empathic behaviour is another way that counsellors may assist students with their own social and emotional development. Research indicates that in order to respond empathically to clients, counsellors should be open to “feel” the emotional experience of their clients to serve as a mirror of the clients’ affect (Coutinho et al., 2014). This modeling behaviour in session may help students appreciate empathy. When students are on the receiving end of empathy and are able to see the behaviour successfully executed, perhaps they would be more likely to explore such prosocial behaviour with others.

Empathic processes are far from being automatic processes (Coutinho et al., 2014). Research has found a sensory-based route of empathy in the brain that involves the activation of networks by which the affective state observed in others is simulated in ourselves (Coutinho et al., 2014). This allows people to “feel” another person’s emotion. Knowledge about the neural networks involved in the different dimensions of empathy is still developing, but is crucial for counsellors to understand. Developments in neuroscience may provide clinicians with important information about the neuronal systems that are impaired and lead to their client’s social problems (Coutinho et al., 2014). Continued research on neural systems involved with empathy will have practical implications for the development of effective interventions of empathy promotion.

Overall, an understanding of how empathy operates in counselling and psychotherapy is necessary (Duan & Hill, 1996). Further exploration into the practical effects of empathy in counselling would be sensible. Most research on empathy in counselling tends to look at the influence of counsellor empathy levels rather than client empathy levels or the impact of empathy within the therapeutic alliance (Duan & Hill, 1996). Given that students who are seeking counselling are more diverse, it is helpful to understand whether the client experience elicits varying amounts of empathy depending on the counsellor or the influence of the therapeutic alliance. Overall, there remains a lack of coherence between the theoretical importance of empathy from multiple orientations and empirical evidence of empathy within the area of school-based counselling and psychotherapy (Duan & Hill, 1996).

## 4.6 Limitations

The nature of conducting research in education is challenging. Not only is the academic curriculum comprised of a vast range of multidisciplinary knowledge and skills, the expectations of learning that information further varies among teachers and students. When we try to encourage social and emotion development through the curriculum, the same breadth of expectations exist. Moreover, the value of empathy skill development, for example, compared to academic learning may be problematic. Social and emotional skills tend to be undervalued. Even if they are valued, standardized measurement of a more abstract concept like empathy is the next challenge. It remains that some limitations are inherently systemic in educational research.

Pertaining to this individual research study, researchers offered ideas for the intervention, yet the execution of the empathy lesson was at the discretion of the teacher. Only one classroom was used so all participants received the same intervention. If multiple classrooms were to be used in future research, a standardized lesson plan should be provided to teachers. With more teachers facilitating the curriculum using a standardized manual, researchers will be able to determine whether the current outcomes were produced as a result of this specific classroom or if the results were derived from the program's content. Alternatively, the teacher could have been the primary influence instead of the lesson so more classes would add validity to the findings.

Standardizing lesson facilitation would help control for confounding variables such as teaching style, which may effect students' engagement or interest in the curriculum. Teachers who express more enthusiasm toward the lesson topic or who incorporate anecdotes may better engage their students compared to teachers who remain factual and blunt about the topic of empathy. Offering teachers a guide to follow which includes all necessary information about empathy along with examples to give the students may be a way to control for confounds concerning the administration of the lesson.

Being involved in a larger project limited this study's control over variables and procedure. Variables were determined after the project was in progress. As indicated in the method, the original design of the study was intended to be a matched-pair design. However, during the procedure the samples were obtained collectively rather than by

individual student. Students wrote about any situation or topic in both samples, so ability to match was indeterminate. Therefore, an alternative pre-post design was used.

## 4.7 Recommendations

Future research should strive to strengthen and replicate positive support for the influence of empathy development attributed by embedded social and emotional programming in the educational curriculum. Controlling for confounds in future research ensures that the outcomes derive from the lesson and not from the administration. Studies using a larger sample would increase validity. Planning to employ more rigorous designs such as a matched-pair design or incorporating a control group would also enhance research in the area of empathy in inclusive education. Denying intervention in order to form a control group may hinder social, emotional, and academic development, so a design would need to be created where the same intervention program is offered to students after the study is completed. Healthy development of school-age children across all domains is of best interest.



## References


- Baskerville, D. (2011). Developing cohesion and building positive relationships through storytelling in a culturally diverse New Zealand classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 107–115.
- Batson, D., Batson, J. G., Todd, M. R., Brummett, B. H., Shaw, L. L., & Aldeguar, C. M. R. (1995). Empathy and the collective good: Caring for one of the others in a social dilemma. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*, 619-631.
- Brill, F. (2004). Thinking outside the box: Imagination and empathy beyond story writing. *Literacy, 38*, 83-89.
- Coutinho, J. F., Silva, P. O., & Decety, J. (2014). Neurosciences, empathy, and healthy interpersonal relationships: Findings and implications for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 61*, 541-548.
- Curtis, C., & Norgate, R. (2007). An evaluation of the promoting alternative thinking strategies curriculum at key stage 1, *Educational Psychology in Practice, 23*, 33–44.
- Deen, S. R., Mangurian, C., & Cabaniss, D. L. (2010). Points of contact: Using first-person narratives to help foster empathy in psychiatric residents. *Academic Psychiatry, 34*, 438-441.
- Duan, C., & Hill, C. E. (1996). The current state of empathy research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43*, 261-274.
- Edyburn, D.L. (2005). Universal design for learning. *Special Education Technology Practice, 7*, 16-22.
- Eisenberg, N., & Miller, P. A. (1987). The relation of empathy to prosocial and related behaviors. *Psychological Bulletin, 101*, 91-119.
- Farrant, B. M., Devine, T. A. J., & Maybery, M. T. (2012). Empathy, perspective taking and prosocial behaviour: The importance of parenting practices. *Infant and Child Development, 21*, 175–188.

- Faver, C. A., & Alanis, E. (2012). Children and youth services review fostering empathy through stories: A pilot program for special needs adoptive families. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*, 660–665.
- Gül, S. O. & Vuran, S. (2015). Children with special needs' opinions and problems about inclusive practices. *Education and Science, 40*, 169–195.
- Hinnant, B. J., & O'Brien, M. (2007). Cognitive and emotional control and perspective taking and their relations to empathy in 5-year-old children. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 168*, 301–322.
- Hoffman, M. L. (2000). Introduction and Overview. In *Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice* (Chapter 1). Retrieved from <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam032/99029669.pdf>
- Jennings, P. A., Greenberg, M. T. (2013). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research, 79*, 491–525.
- Katz, J. (2012a). *Teaching to diversity: The three block model of universal design for learning*. Winnipeg, MB: Portage & Main Press.
- Katz, J. (2012b). The three block model of universal design for learning (UDL): Engaging students in inclusive education. *Canadian Journal of Education, 36*, 153–194.
- Luchner, A. F., & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (2016). Dysfunctional empathy in vulnerable narcissism. *North American Journal of Psychology, 18*, 597-610.
- Maine, F. (2013). How children talk together to make meaning from texts: A dialogic perspective on reading comprehension strategies, *Literacy, 47*, 150–156.
- Munoz, L. C., Qualter, P., & Padgett, G. (2011). Empathy and bullying: Exploring the influence of callous-unemotional traits. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 42*, 183-196.
- Riquelme, E., & Montero, I. (2013). Improving emotional competence through mediated reading: Short term effects of a children's literature program. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 20*, 226-239.
- Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 21*, 95-103. [SEP]

- Rumbold, R., Specht, J., & Klein, P. (2007, April). *Writing workshop for students with ADHD*. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Schaffer, H. R. (1996). *Social development*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Smith, V., Zaidman-Zait, A., & Hertzman, C. (2012). Promoting children's prosocial behaviors in school: Impact of the "roots of empathy" program on the social and emotional competence of school-aged children. *School Mental Health, 4*, 1–21.
- Shapiro, J., Rucker, L., Boker, J., & Lie, D. (2006). Point-of-view writing: A method for increasing medical students' empathy, identification and expression of emotion, and insight. *Educational Health, 19*, 96-105.
- Shechtman, A. (2003). Cognitive and affective empathy in aggressive boys: Implications for counselling. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 24*, 211-222.
- Specht, J. A. (2013). Mental health in schools: Lessons learned from exclusion. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 28*, 43-55.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2006). Understandings of Literacy. In *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (chapter 6). Retrieved from [http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/chapt6\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/chapt6_eng.pdf)
- Upright, R. L. (2002). To tell a tale: The use of moral dilemmas to increase empathy in the elementary school child. *Early Child Education Journal, 30*, 15-20.



## Appendix B: Ethics Certification, Letter of Information & Consent Form

	<b>Western Research</b>	<b>Research Ethics</b>
<b>Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board NMREB Annual Continuing Ethics Approval Notice</b>		
<b>Date:</b> July 29, 2016		
<b>Principal Investigator:</b> Dr. Kathryn Hibbert		
<b>Department &amp; Institution:</b> Education\Faculty of Education, Western University		
<b>NMREB File Number:</b> 105658		
<b>Study Title:</b> Researching Multiliteracies Educational Assessments Through Digital Technologies		
<b>NMREB Renewal Due Date &amp; NMREB Expiry Date:</b>		
Renewal Due -2017/08/31		
Expiry Date -2017/09/26		
<p>The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed the Continuing Ethics Review (CER) form and is re-issuing approval for the above noted study.</p>		
<p>The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), Part 4 of the Natural Health Product Regulations, the Ontario Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA, 1990), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.</p>		
<p>Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.</p>		
<p>The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health &amp; Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.</p>		



**Revised:** January 22, 2016

**Project Title:** Researching ~~Multiliteracies~~ Educational Assessments Through Digital Technologies

**Principal Investigator:** Kathryn Hibbert, PhD, Faculty of Education, Western University

## Letter of Information

### 1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in the research and development of a 'cloud curriculum' based on Lois Burdett's internationally acclaimed print series, *Shakespeare Can Be Fun*. This study is interested in learning from a range of stakeholders (students, parents, educators, and academics) how the affordances of digital technologies allow us to document and represent learning in ways that go beyond the limitations of traditional print-based assessment practices. You have been invited to participate because you fit one of the demographic areas we are interested in, have specific expertise in the area, or were suggested by another participant as someone who would be interested.

### 2. Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

### 3. Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this project is to better understand the ways in which technology can help educators document and capture both the process and the products of learning in ways that will serve the needs and goals of a range of stakeholders that include students, parents, educators, administrators and governance bodies.

### 4. Inclusion Criteria

Individuals who represent one (or more) of the targeted stakeholder groups (e.g., students, parents, educators, academics) and are interested in participating in the study are welcome.



#### **5. Exclusion Criteria**

Individuals who lack the most basic computer skills will be ineligible to participate in the study.

#### **6. Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief survey that asks for some demographic information and how you would like us to contact you. You may then be invited to interact with the digital materials either through a link that will be provided, or in person at an agreed upon location (such as the Faculty of Education, Western University). Your interaction will be tracked electronically (if you access the link) or it will be videotaped and/or audiotaped if you choose to participate in person. (You can participate without video/audio recording). It is anticipated that the entire task will take about an hour. Only one session is requested but you are welcome to attend additional sessions as your time and interest permit. We anticipate involving approximately 50 participants in total in this pilot study.

#### **7. Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

#### **8. Possible Benefits**

Participants will be part of the design of a 'cloud curriculum' and will have an opportunity to show researchers and developers what they are able to do with learning materials, and how the interaction contributes to their learning. They will be active participants in knowledge generation rather than passive receivers of what someone else has deemed to be important to them. The expectation is that the design will reflect increased diversity in flexibility in terms of how we evaluate and assess learning. This will benefit those who are marginalized by current narrow, print-based assessment practices that do not account for the expanded communication practices we engage with today.

#### **9. Compensation**

There is no compensation for participation in this research.



#### **10. Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future.

#### **11. Confidentiality**

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. Data collected will be stored a secure university network behind institutional firewalls and password protected. In all subsequent publication and dissemination of results, a pseudonym will be used in place of your name to protect your identity. If you choose to withdraw from this study at any time, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. While we will do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your initials and your date of birth may allow someone to link the data and identify you. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

#### **12. Contacts for Further Information**

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact the Principle Investigator: Dr. Kathryn ~~Hibbert~~.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics.

#### **13. Publication**

We expect to create a virtual forum within the sandbox area where participants can choose to engage in ongoing discussion or monitor the progress of the development. If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used.

#### **14. Consent**

Informed consent will be indicated by signing the consent form that accompanies this letter.

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference.*





**Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Researching Multiliteracies Educational Assessments Through Digital Technologies

**Study Investigator's Name:** Dr. Kathryn Hibbert

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Empathy Coding System

ORGANIZATION		Scores					1	2	3	4	5	total
Sequencing	Does not appear to be sequenced	Some attempt at sequencing	Sequencing is there but wanders	Sequencing is good but has minor discretions.	Sequencing is logical and effective							
Purposefulness	Purpose is unrecognizable	Some hints at a purpose	Purpose is identifiable but reader needs to fill in some details	Purpose is clear, with minor distractions.	Clear indication of purpose that is well supported.							
Information	Little information not enough to understand story	Some information but not complete	Adequate information so that story can be understood	Good amount of information that supports story	Interesting and clear information that supports and embellishes story.							
Wholistic Score	No organization	Little organization	Some organization	Good organization	Excellent organization							
Transitions	Ideas do not connect with one another	There is some attempt at transitions.	Transitions are there but awkward.	Good transitions but not completely smooth	Transitions are smooth, one idea flows neatly into the next							
Readability	Difficult to read	Parts are difficult to read	Mainly readable	Readable	A pleasure to read							
<b>CREATIVITY</b>					<b>Total for Presentation</b>							
Story is	dull	A little bit interesting	Semi-interesting	Fairly interesting	Very interesting							
Word use	No attempt to adapt vocabulary to the story	There is some effort to pick words that go with the story	Word use is adequate to convey meaning	Word use is appropriate to story.	Words are used in an interesting way to embellish the story, demonstrates a degree of sophistication							
Descriptions	No descriptions	Little description	Some descriptions	Descriptions are used consistently	Descriptions embellish the story							
					<b>Total for Creativity</b>							
<b>VOICE AND AFFECT</b>		<b>Scores</b>					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>total</b>
Emotional description of self	No feelings described	Feelings are hinted at	There is an attempt to describe feelings	Feelings are described and fit with the story	Feelings are described well, and embellish the story							
Emotional descriptions of other characters	No feelings described	Feelings are hinted at	There is an attempt to describe feelings	Feelings are described and fit with the story	Feelings are described well, and embellish the story							
Overall story affect	Writer seems emotionless	Writer hints at emotion	Writer communicates some emotional tie to the story	Writing communicates earnestness and story is written in a pleasing manner	Writing is from the heart, honest, appealing							
Evidence of Empathy	Only takes point of view of self	Point of view of self with emotional consideration	Mentions multiple points of view, but no emotional consideration	Multiple points of view with some emotional consideration of each character	Fully takes multiple perspectives with strong emotional understanding of each character							
Positive Evaluation	No positive assessment of self, another individual, situation, or relationship	One positive assessment of either the self, another individual, situation, or relationship	Some positive assessments of self, another individual, situation, or relationship	Many positive assessments of self, another individual, situation, or relationship	Many positive assessments of self, another individual, situation, or relationship despite negativity (i.e. seeing the good in a bad situation)							
<b>STORY GRAMMAR</b>					<b>Voice and Affect Total</b>							
Characters	Not described	Hinted descriptions	Some description	Described	Well described							
Problem	No problem evident	There but not described well	Some description of the problem	Problem is described	Problem is well described							
Actions to fix the problem	Actions are not connected to the problem	Actions are there but confusing	Actions are connected to the problem but not described well	Actions are described and fit with the problem	Actions are described well, are clearly orientated to deal with the problem							
Resolution	No resolution	Resolution is hinted at	Resolution is described but incomplete	Resolution is described and adequately addresses problem	Resolution is clearly described and resolves problem with added insight							
					<b>Total for Story Grammar</b>							

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Erica Partridge

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2012-2016 B.A.

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2016-2018 M.A.

**Honors and Awards:** Centre for Inclusive Education Award  
2017

Jessica Jean Campbell Coulson Award  
2017

**Related Work Experience**

Graduate Student Intern  
Thames Valley District School Board  
2018

Graduate Student Intern  
St. Joseph's Hospice  
2017 - 2018

Graduate Student Intern  
Wellspring  
2017

Research Assistant  
The University of Western Ontario  
2017