This qualitative research study examined the incorporation of creative
dramatics into a language arts classroom for students with special needs.
Participants were initially eight 8th grade identified special education students,
although the number became seven during the latter portion of the study. Early
assessments indicated these students had difficulty in the areas of reading and
comprehension, while student surveys expressed little to no desire to read for
enjoyment. These students all were identified as learning disabled while a
majority also exhibited emotional and behavioral disabilities. One student was
emotionally disturbed with an additional medical disability. These students were
observed during specially designed instruction given individually, in small
groups, and in full class discussions, and activities. Students took part in drama
activities including journal writing, writing in role, and activities incorporating
movement. Student engagement and participation improved while involved in
these methods. Student writing improved in depth and details and content after
being exposed to these methods. When tested and surveyed again later in the
school year, all students improved in their writing skills while increasing their
outside reading, as well. The presence of these dramatic, instructional strategies
enhanced overall reading and writing performance and helped students gain
confidence in themselves and their abilities to express themselves in verbal and
written form.