

Can Theatre for the Very Young Dare to Talk about Prejudice and Inclusion?

[GILLIAN McNALLY](#)

[AMANDA RUTTER](#)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

ABSTRACT

In 2021, students at the University of Northern Colorado performed a filmed version of the play Blue by Annie Cusack Wood. This Theatre for the Young (TVY) piece asks audiences to look at themes of prejudice and inclusion for children under the age of five. In this first-ever U.S. study on TVY, the authors ask: what impact can a TVY play have on children's understanding of prejudice and inclusion? Through surveys to pre-school teachers, the authors document the social and emotional impact of the play on very young children and analyze the potential of artist-educator collaborations to discuss, reflect, and think deeply about serious social issues with very young children and break silos between different sectors of education with similar educational aspirations.

As the field of Theatre for the Very Young (TVY) expands, artists are challenged with new ways to speak to the intelligence of the audience and balance age-appropriate material for children under the age of five. Lyn Gardner of *The Stage*, says,

While young people are increasingly stepping up on issues including the environment, mental health and social justice—issues on which we adults have failed woefully—too much work made for young people remains timid in content and form....What are we trying so hard to protect our children from? And in protecting them, might we be damaging their ability to face up to the complexities of the world and difficulties they will face as the old certainties melt away? (2019)

While many TVY plays are age appropriate, creative, and entertaining, there are few that delve into challenging themes. In recent history, Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) in the U.S. has dedicated itself to the development of more complicated characters, plots, and themes for children five years and older. Given our current global and local challenges, now is a ripe opportunity to develop scripts that mirror the complexities of our world for TVY. Moreover, ninety percent of physical brain growth to eventual adult size occurs in the first five years of life, along with extensive neural connections, which is why the foundations of social skills such as empathy should be taught, emphasized, and fostered while young (Schiller, 2010).

This paper will explore how TVY in the U.S. can present challenging social content for children under the age of five. Professor Gillian McNally (Theatre Education) and Assistant Professor Dr. Amanda Rutter (Early Childhood Education) at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) worked together to produce and study how children comprehend prejudice and inclusion by attending the play *Blue* by Annie Cusick Wood. *Blue* explores an imaginary world where everything is blue. When a red sock appears, the characters are faced with the decision of if they should include a new color in their world. The character Sparkly Blue believes that the “blue” rule should always be upheld and that all other colors should be disposed of in their world. On the other hand, the character Inky Blue is filled with curiosity. He is delighted with the multiple colors that magically appear in their world.

At the climactic moment of the play, Sparkly Blue demands that Inky Blue leave because he will not obey the “blue” rules. These best friends almost lose their relationship because of the rules of exclusion. At the end of the play, Inky Blue returns with a cape filled with colorful socks and Sparkly Blue also embraces curiosity and acceptance of new colors. The play cleverly explores themes of inclusion, prejudice, and racism through metaphor. Together, this team of researchers will explore the question: *what impact can a TVY play have on children’s understanding of prejudice and inclusion?*

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Every other year, undergraduate theatre students from UNC tour a TYA play to the Denver and Northern Colorado community. In recent years, the increased state mandated testing makes it difficult for elementary schools to host a TYA play in the spring. Therefore, it was decided that the 2020 tour should target pre-school students, who are not subjected to state testing.

During the spring semesters of 2020 and 2021, UNC students enrolled in the *Theatre for Young Audiences Tour* course focused on the production of *Blue*. The play was directed by UNC undergraduate students Jasmine Middleton in 2020 and Rhiannon Parent for the filmed re-mount in 2021. Gillian McNally (researcher and co-author of this paper) served as the producer. Because of COVID-19, the play was professionally filmed and released to Early Childhood Centers, elementary schools, and for one public online performance in April 2021. Each of the seven Early Childhood Education (ECE) schools received a study guide for teachers and an invitation to participate in the study.

In our original plans to accompany the production of *Blue*, UNC Theatre Education students created a pre-and post-performance workshop designed specifically for ECE students. Because of COVID-19, these workshops could not occur. In the pre-performance workshop, a scenario much like the play, was created. ECE students were to be told that blue was the best and only color and then given paper socks to color only in blue. As students hung their blue socks on a laundry line, they were to be praised for their color choice. Next, a red sock appears, and the students have to problem solve whether to accept the new color, much like the characters in the play. In the post-

performance workshop, students had the opportunity to color socks again, but this time they could be any color. This activity would have sparked a larger discussion about race, inclusion, and prejudice as seen in *Blue*. When originally creating this study, we expected a larger impact on students because of the planned pre-and post-performance workshops. In previous TYA tours, the workshops were the place where students could reflect deeply on the performance. In 2021, we were not allowed to do in-person teaching in schools or childcare centers, and we believe this had a strong impact on the depth of understanding the more complex themes of prejudice and inclusion in *Blue*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past decade the importance of fostering strong social-emotional skills at young ages has increased significantly within the U.S. Research has demonstrated that the development of social-emotional competence during the first years of life leads to improved classroom behavior, resulting in decreased discipline referrals, as well as increased academic achievement (Hoffman, 2009). TVY has the opportunity, through engaging and interactive performances, to aid young children in the development of their social-emotional competence.

TVY is a relatively new art form in the TYA community in the U.S. The current literature and research describes productions, how they are made, and the theoretical underpinnings to the development of new work for very young children. There are only two articles about TVY in recent issues of *TYA Today*, the U.S.'s only dedicated publication to Theatre for Young Audiences. Lauren Smith documents the development of the play, *Gimme Please*, a TVY collaboration between the Australian PaperBoats platform and the Alliance Theatre (2019). *TYA Today* also published Lauren Jost's "Making Space for Babies," which examines the complicated process of developing new work for children 6 months to two years (2017).

Youth Theatre Journal, a scholarly refereed publication from the American Alliance for Theatre in Education, offers research in the field of drama and theatre for youth, and has two articles committed to TVY. Professors Adrienne Kapstein and Thalia R. Goldstein (2019) define TVY as, "a relatively new and growing area of performance practice

that focuses on works for children under the age of five” (p. 52). In a joint collaboration between the psychology and theatre departments at George Mason University, the professors first worked to overturn assumptions about children under five. Using David Kennedy’s framework who,

identifies the dominant Western cultural understanding of the child to be a “deficit model,” in which the child is primarily defined as being not-an-adult. By extension, if children are seen as “incapable of actively contributing to societal production and change” (van de Water, 2012), any cultural offerings made explicitly for them are by association devalued and marginalized. Cementing the negative affiliations further, TYA in the U.S. has a long history of being used as a vehicle for moralistic, spiritual, and educational agendas (van de Water, 2012) giving it a reputation for being didactic and patronizing, removing it from the artistic realm and giving it value in only educational or social contexts. (p. 57)

As the teacher of the TYA Tour class, my first mission was to offer TYA scripts and readings that helped to overturn the negative “didactic and patronizing” stereotypes of the field as noted by the authors above.

Also in *Youth Theatre Journal*, Scottish author Ben Fletcher-Watson of the University of Edinburgh, sought to

contribute to the field by proposing an explanatory theory ... as the theory of equality and artistic integrity. The development of the theory from two core categories is explained, and its relevance and theoretical contribution are then considered. The theory may offer a new framework for examining TEY as a set of uniquely sensitive practices. (2018)

The grounded theory practice in this study collected data from Theatre for the Early Years (Scottish term for TVY) practitioners. Fletcher-Watson noted a shifting view of artists in the TVY discipline to a more equal, challenging art form.

Other published pieces such as Alex Ates’s “What You, Theatremaker, Can Learn from Theatre for the Very Young” (*HowlRound*, 2019) and Emma Halpern’s “Start ‘em Early: Theatre for

the Very Young Brings in New Audiences” (*American Theatre*, 2017) describe this relatively new artform in theatre in the U.S. These articles attempt to capture the honesty, curiosity, and often joy expressed by very young audiences and how the artists invite these young people in with humor, movement, music, movement, and story. Our study is significant because it is the first attempt in the U.S. to measure the impact of theatre on children under the age of five.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research was grounded in the theoretical lenses of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Gloria Ladson-Billings’ culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), the Pyramid Model of social-emotional development, and Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory. In Paulo Freire’s seminal work, “*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*” (1970), he explores the banking model of education (teachers directly imparting knowledge to students) as well as the relationship between the oppressed and oppressors. More specifically, Freire contends that the teacher’s role is to stimulate learning and students should have opportunities to actively participate in the learning process. Through participatory engagement and critical thinking that incorporates cultures and language, students should learn to think critically about power systems in society.

During the 1990’s, Gloria Ladson-Billings reflected, “[I]nstead of asking what was wrong with African American learners, I dared to ask what was right with these students and what happened in the classrooms of teachers who seemed to experience pedagogical success with them” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 74). She coined the term culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) which is grounded in three domains. CRP highlights the importance of cultural competence beyond a superficial level, helping students celebrate and appreciate their own culture as well gaining knowledge in the cultures of others, and sociopolitical consciousness, applying knowledge beyond classroom walls to engage in solving real-world problems. Most importantly, CRP involves challenging students’ mindsets. Students are not to merely parrot information but to critically analyze their learning and perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

The Pyramid Model supports the development of social-emotional competence in young children through evidence-based tiered interventions. The basis for this model is the importance of positive and supportive relationships between young children and their teachers,

which is key to effective teaching within the early years and beyond. Further, this model argues that the establishment of vital social-emotional skills leads to better self-regulation and academic engagement as children progress through school (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003).

The social cognitive theory purports that learning takes place in social contexts where there is reciprocal interaction between the person, environment, and behavior. Moreover, people can learn behaviors through observation, modeling, and motivation. For example, the bobo doll experiment demonstrated that imitation behaviors can be reinforced or punished through observation and that models are important for the socialization of children (Fryling, Johnston, & Hayes, 2011).

While each theory is unique, all four theories emphasize the importance of shared learning between teachers and students to foster deep and authentic learning experiences which result in the development of vital social and critical thinking skills.

METHODOLOGY

This mixed methods study was conducted in the Denver and Northern Colorado region. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from participants via Qualtrics surveys consisting of a combination of 5-point Likert rating scale and open-ended questions. Both Likert rating scale and open-ended questions were utilized to assist the research team in correlating data findings. The pre-performance survey consisted of 32 questions total, 8 demographic, 11 5-point Likert rating, and 13 open-ended questions that assessed preschool teachers' perspectives of student's current social skills. The post-performance survey consisted of 34 questions total, 8 demographic, 10 5-point Likert rating, and 16 open-ended questions that assessed teachers' perspectives of children's understanding of prejudice and inclusion and their changes in social-emotional classroom behaviors. The pre- and post-performance survey quantitative data were analyzed via two-tailed paired t-tests conducted within SPSS software. Two-tailed t-tests were selected since the researchers left their research question more open-ended seeking to determine what impact TVY may have on children's social-emotional skills and understanding of prejudice and inclusion. Results from the paired t-test are in table 1.0.

The pre- and post-performance qualitative data was analyzed separately through thematic content analysis, or analytic induction, where each researcher coded and analyzed the qualitative data for themes and then discussed the emergent themes to arrive at a consensus. The themes that emerged from the analytic induction are discussed in the results section of the paper.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the performance was filmed in February of 2021 and a Vimeo link was provided to schools during the month of April 2021. Educators invited to participate in this study included four Early Childhood Centers and three elementary schools. Data was collected via surveys prior to and following the filmed performance. In the original design of the study, select teachers would be interviewed to get detailed, nuanced observations of a live theatre performance. Because of an overload on teachers due to COVID-19 stress, this step could not be completed in 2021.

RESULTS

A total of 10 participants completed some or all of the pre-performance survey, while 6 participants completed some or all of the post-performance survey. All teachers identified as female. 90% identified racially as white and 10% identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native. Nine teachers earned a BA degree and one earned a master's degree. Two participants were from Denver Public Schools (Place Bridge Academy and Montclair Elementary) that have large African immigrant and refugee populations. Montclair Elementary has a population of 42.8% African American, 28.8% Hispanic, and 19% white. Place Bridge Academy is 35.4% Hispanic, 30.3% African American, 20.7% Asian. The other teachers were from Gilcrest Elementary School in rural Northern Colorado. 69.1% of these students identify as Hispanic (Schooldigger.com). No teachers from Greeley, Colorado, the home of UNC, responded.

In order to add additional context to the quantitative data, the qualitative survey data will be explored first.

Pre-survey

The researchers first obtained an understanding of what the social and emotional regulation and behaviors were like in the classroom

environment prior to the observation of the *Blue* performance. Four overarching themes emerged from the qualitative pre-performance survey data. These themes included: developmentally appropriate student behavior; peace-keeping and social-emotional learning; children are aware of differences; and day-to-day and specialized classroom activities.

In regards to developmentally appropriate student behavior, teachers indicated that students: regulate their emotions decently; share well; have occasional conflicts, yet resolve conflicts poorly needing teacher intervention often; are generally not aggressive, yet still touch each other inappropriately (pushing was most cited, along with kicking and hitting), occasionally say mean or negative comments towards each other; only somewhat understand the feelings of their classmates; and somewhat understand concepts like prejudice and inclusion.

On a typical day, teachers indicated that they redirect behavior an average a dozen times per day (ranges were 3-20 times per day). Behaviors that were redirected included: talking (including loudly, blurts), being off task, and unkind exchanges. Sharing was reported as the most typical conflict observed by teachers. To foster peace-keeping and social-emotional learning, teachers encouraged students to solve conflicts through utilizing “peacekeeper” language (ie: When you _____, I feel _____). When students demonstrated aggression, teachers provided a calm down space and offered breathing techniques. Teachers indicated that children are aware of differences. More specifically students do notice similarities and differences in gender, skin color, and language. Yet, most class conflict comments did not pertain to gender, race, or ethnicity, but occasionally this behavior occurred. Two responders reported comments such as “boys don’t wear headbands” and “all ‘Hispanic’ people are dumb.”

Teachers' day-to-day and specialized classroom activities related to prejudice and inclusion involved diverse songs and literature, and the wrinkled heart activity. In the wrinkled heart activity, a paper heart is passed around the room and folded after each person describes a time they have been hurt. Then, when the students describe healing behaviors, the heart is unfolded. Almost all of the teachers reported doing work on topics about race only during Black History Month and MLK Day. Two teachers shared that these discussions on race focus on the similar theme that “everyone is equal or the same.”

Post Survey

Within a two-week period following the *Blue* performance was observed, participants reflected on the changes in social and emotional regulation and behaviors in the classroom environment. Three themes emerged from the qualitative post-performance survey data. These themes included: active engagement; empathy and peacekeeping; and discussion and dramatization. In relation to active engagement, teachers revealed that students were interested and engaged in the video performance of *Blue*. Within the open-ended responses, teachers shared that they observed strong gaze, inquisitive faces that changed as the tone of scenes changed, smiling, laughing, giggling, and had focused attention throughout the performance.

In terms of the impact on behavior in classrooms and empathy and peacekeeping, instances of redirecting students' behavior was noted to still be roughly the same after seeing *Blue*. However, teachers observed that students were sharing better, and demonstrating more empathy with their words and expression of feelings. Responders also detected fewer instances of aggression (gentler hands) and the ability to quickly ask for help from the teacher. One teacher remarked that touching increased in their classroom after seeing the production.

In relation to discussions and dramatization, after the performance, students incorporated *Blue* into the classroom through discussions and the "sock monster" game from the play into dramatic play. Montclair Elementary School was able to invite the director and the actors to a Zoom class session to reflect on the play. Rhiannon Parent, the director, shared that the students had many questions for the artistic team in this meeting. Unfortunately, qualitative data from this meeting was not collected as a part of the research study. One teacher specifically related *Blue* back to Martin Luther King Jr., and other teachers envisioned concepts from *Blue* to pair with Black History Month activities.

Comparing Pre-Survey and Post-Survey Quantitative Results:

Eight Likert scale questions between the pre- and post-performance surveys were paired. Most of the results did not show statistical significance, however, three points of data did show statistical significance. The results from the paired t-tests are in table 1 below.

Qualtrics Survey Pre- and Post-survey Paired Questions	<i>p</i> value
How well do the children in your class regulate their social-emotional skills? /Following the performance...	0.024
How well do the children in your classroom work/play and share with their classmates? /Following the performance...	0.591
How often do conflicts arise between children in your classroom? /Following the performance...	0.104
How well do the children in your classroom resolve conflicts with their classmates? /Following the performance...	0.025
How often do conflicts within the classroom require teacher intervention? /Following the performance...	0.081
How often do the children in your classroom resolve problems with their peers without becoming aggressive? /Following the performance...	0.193
How often do children in your class touch classmates in a manner that is inappropriate? /Following the performance...	0.096
How often do children in your classroom say mean or negative comments towards each other? /Following the performance...	0.726
How well do the children in your classroom understand the concepts of prejudice and inclusion? /Following the performance...	0.045

Table 1: Pre- and Post-survey *p* Values

According to statistical analysis, after observing the *Blue* performance, children were reported to significantly regulate their social-emotional skills better, resolve conflicts with classmates better, and better understand the concepts of prejudice and inclusion. When analyzing the *p*-values and means of the survey data and accounting for open-ended responses, fewer conflicts between children were reported, independent conflict resolution between children increased

and the need for teacher intervention decreased, and aggressive behaviors including mean comments between children decreased. However, interestingly, teachers did report children having an increase in the struggle to share materials, and that inappropriate touching, such as pushing, did increase. The researchers were not able to delve further into exploring why these two areas increased, however, they hypothesize that children's interactive dramatic play behaviors increased in a time in which social distancing was in high effect in child care centers and schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the performance was delivered in an online video rather than live performance at the participating schools. Normally, UNC Theatre Education students visit each school to facilitate a pre- and post-performance workshop to provide more context, analysis, and understanding of the production. Visitors were not allowed in schools during the time of the study and the essential in-person contact hours with artists and teachers could not occur. Additionally, in the recording, the performers wore masks and socially distanced due to COVID-19 restrictions. All of these factors impacted the social-interaction aspect of the performance. We hypothesize that the lack of face-to-face presence and social interaction with the audience members had an impact on the overall survey results. Additionally, the population size for the study was small due to teachers being increasingly overwhelmed while teaching during COVID-19. Due to the small response rate, the survey results were through the lens of mostly white female teachers. We have plans to replicate this study in the Spring of 2023. Our hopes are that more in-person contact hours with pre-service teachers and artists will create a more meaningful, rich experience for the students.

While this study consisted of a small sample size and there were only a few statistically significant results that indicated that the *Blue* performance impacted the children's social-emotional skills, the results and positive remarks from teachers about the video performance should not be disregarded. The researchers strongly encourage future collaborations between TVY artists/scholars and ECE educators/scholars to build thoughtful artistic work and inquisitive research.

An additional issue that emerged when exploring the qualitative

data of this study was the recognition that far too often, sectors related to the field of education are siloed. Yet, goals within educational entities, for example in this case preschool and TVY, are in fact similar. In preschool, social and emotional skills and teacher-child interactions are the backbone to the development of the whole child across milestones and developmental domains (physical, cognitive, language and literacy, social and emotional). These social and emotional skills built in the forming years lay the foundation for successful school participation and further development, particularly cognitive development and critical thinking skills. In TVY, creating an immersive, engaging experience that is beyond that of mere entertainment, taps into emotions and fosters critical thinking skills. It is easy to see how these fields could and should collaborate towards the common goal of building social and emotional and critical thinking skills. As a team of researchers, we have been pleasantly surprised to see how our goals as artists and educators intersect.

To foster social, emotional, and critical thinking skills about topics like prejudice and inclusion for young children, teachers need a variety of resources beyond children's literature and brief discussions on Martin Luther King Jr. Day or Black History Month. To disrupt what Freire calls, the "banking model," where teachers deposit information into students and their job is to simply regurgitate the information back, ECE teachers need to engage in complex discussions about the issue of race and prejudice. TVY can be such a resource. In relation to the Social Cognitive Theory, TVY can provide an imitative model for children to explore tough topics in their own dramatic play with classmates and be a resource that leads teachers in discussions and connects to other resources within the classroom. TVY can be an extension of culturally relevant pedagogy and a catapult for deep conversations and activities about complex social issue topics. This goal aligns with Ladson-Billings' goal of harnessing knowledge from the classroom to apply to real world problem solving (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Moreover, early childhood educators should receive regular professional development in culturally relevant pedagogy, justice, diversity, and inclusion pedagogical methods to encourage an equitable classroom. In our small sample study, most teachers identified as white females and seemed to silo conversations about race in the classroom to Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Black History

month. When asked how educators teach topics like prejudice and inclusion, responses included, “we always talk about how we are all the same ” and “we are all important and one person is not better than another.” Given the worldwide response to the killing of George Floyd in 2020, educators working with all age students, *including* ECE children, need to be equipped to include curriculum content and pedagogical methods that courageously explore topics that challenge our communities and country. One of Ladson-Billings’ main pillars of CRP is, “facilitating the development of critical consciousness among P–3 students” (Boutte, 2018). The collaboration between artists and ECE teachers is a perfect place to build this critical consciousness that transfers to social-emotional skills. TVY a unique power to stimulate and inspire these difficult, yet necessary conversations. While we do not believe that a 45-minute TVY play will end racism in the U.S., we do believe that with longer, more in-person, interactive performances and workshops we can begin to do Ladson-Billings’ call for “facilitating the development of critical consciousness.”

Looking forward, how can TYA artists and Early Childhood Educators collaborate to create a new paradigm where we bravely explore the urgent socially relevant themes of our time together and connect this to critical social-emotional development in the early years? How do we hold one another accountable and inspire one another to push the envelope on what very young children are able to learn, discuss, and explore?

Artist-scholars Megan Alrutz and Lynn Hoare (2020) describe why they are dedicated to doing artist work that intersects theatre and social justice:

[w]e do this work because we believe that young people are essential partners in building a more just world. We are confident in the potential of young people to develop their own critical consciousness and to build and enact their capacities to make change. We do this work because it is absolutely necessary. (p. 9)

Their call to action inspires artists, educators, and scholars to bravely challenge our young audiences to build, critique, celebrate, and imagine a better world for themselves through the arts.

SUGGESTED CITATION

McNally, G., & Rutter, A. (2021). Can theatre for the very young dare to talk about prejudice and inclusion? *ArtsPraxis*, 8 (2), 1-17.

REFERENCES

- Ates, A. (2019, July 29). [What You, Theatremaker, Can Learn from Theatre for the Very Young](#). *HowlRound*. Retrieved November 5, 2021.
- Alrutz, M., & Hoare, L. (2020). *Devising critically engaged theatre with youth: The Performing Justice Project*. Routledge.
- Boutte, G. S. (2018). Taking culturally relevant teaching to the big house: Implications for early childhood teacher educators. *The New Educator*, 14 (2), 171–184.
- Durden, T. R., Escalante, E., & Blitch, K. (2014). [Start with us! Culturally relevant pedagogy in the preschool classroom](#). *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 43 (3).
- Fletcher-Watson, B. (2018). [Toward a grounded dramaturgy, part 2: Equality and artistic integrity in theatre for early years](#). *Youth Theatre Journal*, 32 (1), 3–15.
- Fox, L., Dunlap, G., Hemmeter, M. L., Joseph, G. E., & Strain, P. S. (2003). The teaching pyramid. *Young Children*, 58, 48-52.
- Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1970, 2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition* (4th ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gardner, L. (2019). [Are we brave enough to stage work that challenges young people?](#) *The Stage*.
- Halpern, E. (2017, January 6). [Start 'em early: Theatre for the very young brings in new audiences](#). *American Theatre*.
- Harrell, M. C., & Bradley, M. A. (2009). [Data collection methods: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups](#). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Hemmeter, M. L., Snyder, P. A., Fox, L., & Algina, J. (2016). [Evaluating the implementation of the pyramid model for the promotion of social-emotional competence in early childhood classrooms](#). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 36 (3), 133-146.
- Hoffman, D. M. (2009). [Reflecting on social emotional learning: A](#)

- [critical perspective on trends in the United States](#). *American Education Research Association*, 79 (2), 533-556.
- Hooven, J., Runkle, K., Strouse, L., Woods, M., & Frankenberg, E. (2017). [Never too early to learn: Antibias education for young children](#). *Kappan*, 99 (5), 61-66.
- Jost, L. (2017). [Making space for babies](#). *TYA Today*.
- Kapstein, A., & Goldstein, T. (2019). [Developing wonder: Teaching theatre for the very young through collaboration with developmental psychology](#). *Youth Theatre Journal*, 33 (1), 52–69.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: A.k.a the remix. *Harvard Education Review*, 84:1, 74-85.
- Pelo, A. (2008). *Rethinking early childhood education*. Rethinking Schools, Ed. Milwaukee, WI.
- Ramsey, P. G. (2015). *Teaching and learning in a diverse world*. Teachers College Press. New York: NY.
- Rollins, J. A. (2017). The depth of racism in the U.S.: What it means for children. *Pediatric Nursing*, 43 (5), 213-214.
- Schiller, P. (2010). Early brain development research review and update. *Exchange*, 26-30.
- Schooldigger. (2021). [Gilcrest Elementary School, Montclair Montclair School Of Academics And Enrichment, & Place Bridge Academy Elementary Schools](#).
- Schubert Center for Child Studies. (2014). [Play, implicit bias and discrimination in early childhood: implications for child development](#).
- Smith, L. (2019). [Collaboration across continents: Productions from The PaperBoats model](#). *TYA Today*.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Gillian McNally is a Professor of Theatre Education at the University of Northern Colorado, where she trains undergraduate and graduate theatre educators and produces the yearly TYA production. McNally has presented at several ITYARN conferences throughout the world since 2008, served on the TYA/USA board for 10 years, lead the 2014 American Alliance for Theatre in Education Conference, and published in *TYA Today*, *Youth Theatre Journal*, and *Incite/Insight*. In Colorado, McNally was awarded the *Higher Education Teacher of the Year*

Award by the Alliance for Colorado Theatre. She holds an MFA in Drama and Theatre for Youth at the University of Texas at Austin.

Amanda Rutter is an Assistant Professor in Early Childhood Education at the University of Northern Colorado and the current Program Coordinator. Along with teaching pre-service teachers at UNC, she has taught pre-service teachers overseas in China. She has presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the American Education Research Association, and the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood conferences. Currently she serves as the co-chair for the Colorado Early Childhood Education Partnership. Her current research interests are exploring the support for and recruitment of men within the field of early childhood education, as well as pre-service teacher preparation in the wake of societal changes. She completed her doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education from the University of Houston.