THEATRE TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE ONE-ACT PLAY CONTEST

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The focus of aesthetic education is reflected in an arts curriculum designed for students to learn skills that make it possible for them to experience the world in a satisfying and meaningful manner. Incorporating aesthetics into school curriculum can be approached through the use of coordinated programs. In the state of Texas, over 1100 schools participate annually in the One-Act Play contest (OAP). The contest is governed by the University Interscholastic League (UIL), which has designed and recommended a structure in which students actively participate in the fine art of theatre. This curriculum is the roadmap for instruction that leads students to learn the value of the aesthetic.

This study examines teacher and student perception in the Texas One-Act Play contest and its implications for teaching and learning the aesthetic. The qualitative data were collected through a series of interviews and observations during the spring 2006 with five schools in the north Texas area. Students and teachers at each school were interviewed. Data revealed how the goals of the UIL OAP system are being met based on teachers’ practices, perceptions, and experience. Implications of the study are seen through the teachers’ attitude toward winning as well as how the elements of teaching, rehearsal technique, and external support systems affect the teachers’ contest preparation.
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CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION AND INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Arts educator and theorist, Elliott Eisner, defines aesthetic education as “the practice of developing the students’ ability to see or generate a satisfying and coherent feeling, coming from the process of engagement and perception” (1992, p.39). These experiences most often come from artistic endeavors (Eisner, 1992; Greene, 2001) and need to be embedded into the general curriculum for the benefit of all students (Smith, 2005). Primarily, the focus of aesthetic education is reflected in an arts curriculum designed for students to learn skills that make it possible for them to experience the world in a satisfying and meaningful manner. Eisner (1998) believes that “discovery occurs as students learn through adventures in the arts something of the possibilities of human experience” (p. 85). Critically it follows that through participation in the arts programs while in school, students learn about the aesthetic qualities that exist not only within the art form itself, but also in potentially every aspect of the life experience.

Aesthetic education and aesthetic curriculum (a structure through which aesthetic education can be taught to students) helps create rich and significant life experiences for young people, who are enrolled in arts activities in school arts programs. Incorporating aesthetics into school curriculum can be approached through the use of coordinated programs. For instance, in the state of Texas, high schools offer arts classes in visual art, choir, band, theatre, and sometimes dance. Additionally, and unique to Texas, high school students across the state participate in a rigorous
theatrical competition, the One-Act Play contest (OAP), offering students a valuable opportunity to explore the aesthetic.

This contest, governed by the University Interscholastic League (UIL), has grown since its inception in 1927 to encompass more than 1100 schools statewide. In support of arts education and of the theatre experience specifically, the UIL OAP Handbook (Murray, 2004) extensively delineates the need for and benefits of practicing theatre at the high school level. Murray acknowledges “a major goal of the high school is to provide learning experiences which will encourage and help adolescents during this period of change” (p. 45). As a means to this general purpose, the UIL publishes five goals. The UIL One-Act Play contest goals include:

1. Satisfy the competitive, artistic spirit with friendly rivalry among schools, emphasizing high quality performance in this creative art
2. Foster appreciation of good acting, good directing, and good drama
3. Promote interest in that art form most readily usable in leisure time during adult life
4. Learn to lose and win graciously, accepting in good sportsmanship the judge’s decision and criticism with a view to improve future productions
5. Increase the number of schools which have adopted theatre arts as an academic subject in school curricula (Murray, 2004)

The assumption of the UIL OAP program is that if the goals are met, aesthetic enrichment will ensue, resulting in a lifelong enhancement to students’ perceptions and interpretations of the human experience.

Numerous students and teachers play a part in this contest every year. Although the contest’s governing body, the UIL, outlines the goals teachers and students aim to achieve, this study investigated how teachers actually create experiences in the
rehearsal halls that motivate students to reach their goals. Additionally, this study examined the nature of the theatrical experience for students to determine whether students perceive the aesthetic (a heightened sense of awareness about ordinary life) in any way as a result of their participation in the One-Act Play competition.

Purposes of the Study

One purpose of this study was to determine how the goals of the UIL contest system are met, based on UIL theatre teachers’ practices, perceptions, and experiences as they engage in the UIL One-Act Play contest preparation and presentation. A second purpose of the study was to determine whether students perceive the aesthetic as a result of their experiences in the OAP.

Research Questions

To address the purposes, this study examined each of the following research questions within the context of the five goals of the UIL pertaining to theatrical competition.

1. How does the theatre teacher’s attitude toward winning the contest relate to the accomplishment of UIL goals?

2. How do teaching, rehearsal technique, and external support systems affect the teachers’ contest preparation and the achievement of UIL goals?

3. In what ways do students perceive the aesthetic, as a result of their OAP experience?
Assumptions

The first assumption for this study is that theatre teachers in Texas may or may not have knowledge about the published UIL One-Act Play contest goals. The second assumption is that theatre teachers will possess different levels of education, experience, philosophy, and teaching field certification. Additionally, theatre teachers will have differing access to external support systems, which in this study include the UIL Student Activities Conference, the Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA) State Convention, and the use of a rehearsal clinician.

Rationale

*Why Teach Aesthetics?*

When considering how and when students learn about aesthetics, arts education is the logical place to begin. The arts offer the aesthetic experience, “an enhancement of all we do” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1997). An examination of the work of noted educational philosophers, Maxine Greene and John Dewey, highlights an understanding of the importance of aesthetic education. Aesthetic education leads to more than just being aware of the qualities in a work of art. As these philosophers indicate, understanding the aesthetic in life is a valuable tool for understanding oneself and one’s world.

Maxine Greene, known as the “mother of aesthetic curriculum” (Kay, p. 61, 1995) has spent much of her professional career writing about the need for aesthetic curriculum and has used artistic principles, such as learning how to critique art works or
how to dance, to help teachers become facilitators of the aesthetic in the classroom.

Greene (1978) sees arts education as a means for students to learn about their existence in the world. She discusses the concept of wide-awareness, which she defines as the essence of being alive. Greene (1978) writes:

I am suggesting that, for too many individuals in modern society, there is a feeling of being dominated and that feelings of powerlessness are almost inescapable. I am also suggesting that such feelings can to a large degree be overcome through conscious endeavor on the part of individuals to keep themselves awake, to think about their condition in the world,...to interpret the experiences they are having day by day. (pp. 43-44)

Greene (1978) contends that in order to feel this wide-awareness, people must examine and reflect on situations. Posing questions about one’s life will lead to an ability to study those “feelings of powerlessness” and domination that have led us to become numb in society (p. 44). Through the arts, students learn the skills necessary to question and have a “conscious engagement with the world” (p. 162). Individuals who have the ability to “attend to and absorb themselves in particular works of art are more likely to effect connections in their own experience” (p. 186). To make connections and engage with the world is to be awake and thus to understand the aesthetic, and ultimately break free from the constrictive elements of society.

In Art as Experience (1934), Dewey explores art education and the aesthetic. Dewey found inherent drama in trivial life experiences, and he believed that it was possible to redefine these experiences to emphasize artistic qualities, thus making every experience an aesthetic experience, in a “life is art” view of seeing the world. Dewey said, “Art is a quality that permeates experience” (p. 326). This blending of art and life
creates an awareness of the aesthetic in all things. Individuals need to encounter the aesthetic in order to find meaning in experiences. He wrote:

In a distinctively esthetic experience, characteristics that are subdued in other experiences are dominant; those which are subordinate are controlling—namely, the characteristics in virtue of which the experience is an integrated complete experience on its own account. (p. 55)

The aesthetic experience is defined by its qualities, and for Dewey these occurred naturally in art experiences. Dewey wrote, “The product of art...is not the work of art. The work takes place when a human being cooperates with such a product so that the outcome is an experience that is enjoyed because of its liberating and ordered properties” (p. 214). Smith (1971) explains, the work of interacting with the art itself creates an understanding about the aesthetic and the ability to create knowledge. He states, “The beholder [of the art] is given a free hand with the work of art and is encouraged to manipulate the elements of his experience toward a novel outcome” (p.74). The novel outcome is new knowledge created from the art experience. Dewey (1934) wrote:

Men associate in many ways. But the only form of association that is truly human...is the participation in meanings and goods that is effected by communication. The expressions that constitute art are communication in its pure and undefiled form. (p. 244)

Dewey contends that through experiencing art, individuals discover both new knowledge and the aesthetic, and this is necessary “in a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience” (p. 105).
The Texas Experience

Originally in Texas, the University Interscholastic League hosted athletic contests between high schools in an effort to increase interschool athletic competition. Throughout the years, academic and arts contests became popular and were added to the offerings of the organization. In 1927, the UIL began to host a play contest (Winship, 1953) for any high school within the state that wished to compete.

Currently in Texas, 1145 high schools produce at least one theatrical performance each year, due in part to participation in the One-Act Play contest (see Appendix G for additional information regarding the One-Act Play contest.) Teacher interest in the contest has led to the development of near-professional quality theatre departments at numerous schools across the state of Texas and given rise to a powerful tool for arts educators to include the arts in a dynamic way within the curriculum.

F. Loren Winship, former theatre professor at the University of Texas, documented the development of Texas theatre programs in both high schools and colleges. His work indicates that as the contest became more popular and more schools participated, there was a corresponding increase in the number of colleges that offered curriculum to train teachers not only to teach theatrical skills but also to become more competent directors of the art form (Winship, 1953). According to the Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA) Website (TETA, 2005), “Texas became the first state to provide for secondary school drama teacher certification and accreditation.” Roy Bedichek supports this thesis and describes in his text Educational Competition
the development of the support services offered through the UIL office to help teachers grow professionally. These support services have expanded today. The UIL mini-conferences are held in the fall throughout the state of Texas. The statewide Texas Educational Theatre Association convention is held annually for teachers and students to attain new skills and to network with colleagues. Resulting from UIL sponsorship, strong and expanding theatre programs currently exist in high schools throughout Texas, with innumerable students experiencing the art and discipline of theatre at least once during the school year as they prepare for the UIL contest season.

As teachers became more confident in teaching and directing theatrical plays, due to increases in professional development and college coursework, high schools throughout the state offered more theatre classes during the school day (Bedichek, 1956). Texas, in 1966, was also the first state to create theatre as its own subject in the school program (TETA, 2005). Today, many schools boast an entire theatre department, which may host two or more full-time theatre faculty and have enrollment of several hundred students in theatrical classes, such as technical theatre, children’s theatre, or musical theatre.

Theatrical arts clearly play an important role in the arts education of students in Texas high schools because of the prominence of the one-act play contest held each spring. But, as Eisner (1992) believes, teaching the arts (or having students participate in arts activities) does not necessarily indicate that teachers are teaching the values of aesthetics. He believes the “dominant aims of arts education...tend to focus more on the skills of production and performance and on knowledge about the arts than the
quality of the students’ experience” (p. 41). Learning about art history or the tools to create theatre (blocking, lighting, or vocal expression, for example) does not necessarily equate to understanding the aesthetic within an artwork. Although arts practitioners and teachers have had a tradition for critiquing, judging or appreciating works of art, they struggle to engage students in the perception of artwork that transcends the basics of appreciation. With this dichotomy in mind, the question becomes “where do the goals of the One-Act Play contest coincide with the goals of aesthetic education.”

The One-Act Play Contest as Aesthetic Curriculum

Aesthetic theorists, those who apply aesthetic philosophy to classroom situations, have written about the connection between arts activities and learning about the aesthetic. Greene (2001, 1978) believes that in order to understand the aesthetic, students must experience the arts firsthand. In her lectures at Columbia University, Greene (2001) maintained that in order for students to transfer the knowledge of the aesthetic to non-arts images such as a beautiful landscape, students should participate first in artistic experiences. Greene believes that any artistic endeavor will promote an understanding of initially how to think and see art, and then ultimately how to view the world aesthetically.

Madeleine Grumet, a noted curriculum theorist, not only has specialized in aesthetic curriculum, but also has used theatre as a means to create curriculum. Her work *Toward a Poor Curriculum* (Pinar & Grumet, 1976), outlines her methodology using theatre to encourage beginning educators in various disciplines to become aware
of personal biases as they embark on their new careers. She finds that theatre becomes a “way of knowing, a way of investigating, and performing our understanding of texts” (1987, p. 324). Grumet uses theatrical conventions such as improvisational technique as well as autobiographical narrative to engage teachers in the self-diagnosing work so that they can engage students in a more authentic manner.

Through such instructional methodology, Grumet has come to the conclusion that there is an intersection between everyday happenings and aesthetic experiences (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000). This intersection results in a heightened sense of awareness about ordinary life—for example, seeing the beauty in the colors of a sunrise or listening to the beat of the rain on a tin roof. Students who are exposed to the aesthetic in school can appreciate the artistic nature in the everyday. Grumet (1976) suggests that when individuals recognize that the relationship exists (between the everyday and the aesthetic) that this intersection can be further explored. This is Grumet’s application of Dewey’s *life is art* concept.

According to Grumet and Eisner (1992), students begin to explore elements of the aesthetic through arts experiences, even though they may not be consciously aware of this understanding at the time. In terms of the One-Act Play contest, the students are involved in an everyday experience of play creation. They attend rehearsals, learn lines, memorize blocking, and prepare the technical elements.

Harold Rugg, educational theorist, recommends that students participate in arts activities. He believes a child’s urge to create is innate, and that these tendencies need to be encouraged and celebrated in the school. In his text, *The Child Centered School*
(1928), Rugg outlined the curriculum and instruction he believed necessary to modern schools. Every student should experience the arts and thereby be encouraged to come to learning. Rugg (1928) writes about the student’s dramatic expression:

Through his imaginative projection of himself, he imitates what he sees going on in the world within his reach. It is not vicarious experience for him—this dramatic play—but a means to appreciation, understanding, the formation of concepts, realization. It is putting meaning into new relationships, wringing out new meanings out of familiar situations. (p. 272)

Rugg envisions schools wherein students participate in theatre, particularly in the traditional dramatic festival, and learn about the aesthetic while doing so. He believes that “the pursuit of the intellectual, the verbal, the abstract, the utilitarian, has been the core of educational endeavor” (p. 275), but that the arts have developed these concepts in students all along. Only when schools provide arts opportunities, especially theatrical, is this goal accomplished. Based on this position, it is likely that Rugg would endorse the One-Act Play contest not only for its ability to encourage drama within the school curriculum but also for its festival-like nature.

Redfern (1986), a British aesthetic philosopher, believes that the purpose of learning the arts is to understand aesthetic principles. She posits that certain critical skills (perception, imagination, evaluation) are learned through exposure to and participation within the arts, and that these skills are central to understanding the aesthetic. Similarly, Kaelin (1989) reinforces the importance of arts participation during which students learn aesthetic ideals. Kaelin even extends this viewpoint with a discussion on the social values that emerge from arts participation. Commenting on Kaelin’s theory, Smith (2005) writes:
Because individuals enter into aesthetic situations freely and solely for the sake of the unique advantages they derive from their interactions with artworks, art can lead them to a better appreciation of the value experiences available in an open society. (p. 25)

The participation in the UIL One-Act Play contest in high school provides students with the exposure to and experience of the art form of theatre. By actively engaging in the production of a work of art, the concepts of the aesthetic are being reinforced through the experience. Students learn the skills necessary to perceive and feel that are integral in Eisner's definition of aesthetic education.

UIL has five stated aims of the One-Act Play contest. These goals encompass both school and individual processes. According to the UIL, the goals of a theatre program are not only that students practice theatrical skills, but also, as Lynn Murray, former State Drama Director at UIL adds, that through participation in a theatre program students are better able to “apply to their own lives the ideas, insights, and values gained through interaction with theatre as an art,” echoing the focus of aesthetic education (2004, p. 45).

In the first goal, the students are asked to learn the discipline of theatre, creating quality performances and sharing these productions in a competitive, albeit amicable, atmosphere. Secondly, while learning the discipline of theatre, students are exposed to a variety of acting, directing, and playwriting styles. Through the venue of the contest, multiple schools gather so that students may see and hear other productions and make aesthetic judgments regarding quality. Third, the UIL hopes that participation in theatre during the high school years encourage students to continue to attend and take part in theatre in the future. The fourth goal relates to learning the skill
of accepting constructive criticism, with a positive attitude and a desire to improve one’s own performance. Lastly, the UIL desires to increase the overall number of students who learn theatre during the school day. The goal is simply to increase the number of schools that teach theatre as a curricular subject. These goals, as listed on the University Interscholastic League Website, guide the work of teachers as they prepare students for the contest.

The UIL goals signify that the state of Texas has designed and recommended a structure in which students actively participate in the fine art of theatre. This recommended curriculum affords teachers the road map to provide instruction that leads students to learn the value of the aesthetic. The goals designed for one-act play participation reflect those principles associated with the need to learn about the aesthetic, and thus, the One-Act Play contest is an example of aesthetic curriculum.

The University Interscholastic League has created the One-Act Play contest as the structure. The curriculum reaches the students through the work of individual theatre teachers. Teachers, who understand the goals of the UIL contest, design lesson plans to transfer the knowledge of the aesthetic to students. Greene (2001) encourages teachers to create environments in which students can explore and understand aesthetics. Perhaps Greene did not envision a contest, but nonetheless, the OAP contest is the state of Texas’ answer to providing the means to nurture and expand theatre programs. The UIL goals suggest an extension beyond the initial OAP (UIL Goal 5 for the OAP contest) to selection of arts experiences later in life (UIL Goal 3 for the OAP contest). The strongest evidence of the transfer of the aesthetic is the experience
of participation in the OAP competition. The high quality work, both in school productions and in the work that students view from other schools provides the opportunity for student understanding of the aesthetic. Thus, through the opportunity of participation in a play contest, students engage in learning the aesthetic and apply it to their own human discoveries.

It is precisely as the theatre teachers develop curriculum and engage their students in the pursuit of the high art of theatre that Green offers direction. Greene (2001) counsels teachers to help students look beyond the *dailyness* of life. She writes:

> At a moment when so many forces are working to thrust young people into passivity, the open-mindedness and the sense of exploration fostered by aware aesthetic involvements may well move them to break with the...dailyness...—the plain ordinariness of things....How do we invent the kinds of situations that release people for moments like these? (pp. 22-23)

By encouraging teachers to find artistic and meaningful ways to heighten the experience of students, the aesthetic will become apparent. Toward this end, the OAP embodies a structure that promotes the development of a curriculum that engages students in a growing appreciation of the aesthetic and the possibilities of human experience.

**Research Methods**

I conducted a multiple case study of five theatre teachers to understand more clearly how each teacher implemented UIL goals in preparation for the One-Act Play experience and the impact of the OAP experience on student awareness of the aesthetic. Data were generated through in-depth interviews and observations as well
as student focus group interviews. The sample population of schools was derived from the UIL division categories of secondary schools in the state of Texas. The UIL divides schools into classifications according to the size of the population at each high school, A-AAAAA. Larger schools are designated AAAAA, while the smallest high schools are labeled A. Five theatre teachers, each representing one classification of competition were selected from the north and central areas of Texas. Three ninety-minute interviews were conducted with these teachers before, during, and after the One-Act Play season (February through May, 2006). The first interview took place prior to the first rehearsal, the second interview occurred during the rehearsal period, and the final interview happened after the final contest performance for the school. The first interview focused on the teacher’s personal history of One-Act Play participation and also explored teaching and rehearsal techniques used to help them be successful during the process. The second interview focused on the teacher’s attitude toward winning the contest and a detailed description of their previous contest experiences. The third and final interview explored details of the teacher’s experience and perception about the 2006 contest season.

As the teachers prepared their students for each level of the contest, five rehearsals were observed at each school. At these rehearsals, evidence of the five UIL goals, as implemented by the teachers, was documented in writing in an observation log. Teacher discourse and rehearsal observation of techniques that indicated teacher perceptions were noted and analyzed.
A representative student focus group was selected randomly at each of the five high schools. These students were interviewed to ascertain their understanding of the aesthetic as a result of the One-Act Play contest experience. Students were asked to describe their sensory and emotional experiences as they participated in the One-Act Play Contest. The focus group questions were developed from Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) outcomes of aesthetic experience.

Operational Definitions

- **Aesthetic** – A heightened sense of awareness of daily life
- **Clinician** – Any person brought into a rehearsal for a one-act play that will critique the performance and provide guidance for the director on possible areas of improvement
- **Contest** – Also refers to the One-Act Play Contest
- **Educational theatre** – Programs providing basic knowledge in skills in theatre in public high schools (grade 9-12) in the state of Texas
- **External support systems** – Voluntary use of consultants such as UIL Student Activities Conference, TETA conference, and inviting a clinician to critique the show during rehearsal
- **One-Act Play Contest (OAP)** – Held in the state of Texas between the months of February and May
- **Student Activities Conference** – An event sponsored by UIL, in which students and teachers attend workshops to learn skills in acting, directing, and technical theatre,
held around the state of Texas in the fall

- Theatre teacher/director - A person who teaches theatre for more than 50% of the school day, or a person who directs the OAP
- Texas Educational Theater Association (TETA) - The professional organization for K-12 and higher education teachers in the state of Texas
- University Interscholastic League (UIL) - The interschool organization that governs athletic, fine arts, and academic contests in the state of Texas

Chapter Organization

This chapter outlines the need for a study of theatre teachers who participate in the One-Act Play Contest system in the state of Texas. The second chapter explores related literature to the current topic. Many of the sources are well over twenty years old, emphasizing the need for new research in this area. The third chapter outlines the methodology used for this qualitative case study. Chapters IV and V outline the results from the study and give final recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of the present study was two-fold: (a) determine how the goals of the University Interscholastic League (UIL) One-Act Play (OAP) contest system are met, based on UIL theatre teachers’ practices, perceptions, and experiences as they engage in the contest preparation and presentation and (b) determine whether students perceive the aesthetic as a result of their experiences in the OAP. The volume of related materials on the topic of theatrical competition at the high school level is limited, and many of sources used in this literature review are greater than twenty years old – both of these facts emphasize the need for topical research in the field of educational theatrical competition.

Since its inception in 1927, there have been three dissertations and no scholarly studies related to the topic of Texas OAP competition, nor have there been any studies regarding UIL goals. Therefore, literature related to the purpose of the present study reflect studies on current practice in theatre instruction and teacher efficacy in general.

Current Practice

Theatre teachers manage both classroom activities and rehearsal duties on a daily basis. According to Lazarus (2004), “Most theatre teachers feel overwhelmed with work responsibilities,” (p. 5) and preparing for a contest and providing meaningful curriculum that encompasses the five goals of the UIL add more pressure.
In a 2004 study Darren Dyck examined current practice in theatre instruction in Canada. Dyck compared the philosophical standpoint of John Dewey and its application to the current classroom situation. Dyck’s findings indicate that both teacher education (pre-service instruction) and demands on teacher time limited the quality of the production work in the classroom, despite the dedication of the teachers. Teachers have good intentions and lead what they believe to be quality programs, yet limits in their understanding and knowledge of the aesthetic may restrict true application of the aesthetic in the classroom.

Dyck’s work indicates that a disconnect may exist between a teacher’s desire to and actual ability to apply the spirit of the UIL contest goals into curriculum created in the classroom. Teachers want to create an environment in which students experience the multi-faceted aspects of theatre curriculum, as Lazarus suggests, but, due to a limited knowledge of the aesthetic, combined with a demanding schedule of teaching and directing, the atmosphere may be missing the mark.

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is defined as a teacher’s belief that teaching can have an effect on student learning (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Blasé contended “Self-efficacy increases as teachers acquire self knowledge and believe themselves to be personally competent to affect learning outcomes of students” (cited in Martin, Crossland, & Johnson, 2001, p. 8). Blasé indicated teachers need to have and maintain skills and information in order to be effective in the classroom. The studies on teacher efficacy provided a backdrop for
examining the questions in the present study. Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) identified two types of teacher efficacy: teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy. The first type, teaching efficacy, relates to the teacher’s understanding of the expected accomplishments students will achieve after instruction. The second type, personal teaching efficacy, reflects the teacher’s assessment of his or her own aptitude and capability to achieve a goal through teaching. In the present study, the research questions examined teacher efficacy in a competitive theatrical contest. Theatre teachers are under pressure, as Lazarus (2004) indicated, and observing both classroom instruction and rehearsal direction provided an opportunity to examine teacher efficacy.

In the One-Act Play system, the teacher must help students navigate through either the success or loss at the contest itself. Pettigrew (1968) studied theatre teachers in the state of Texas and reached two major conclusions: no correlation exists between years of training and winning in the One-Act Play contest, nor is there a correlation between directing experience and winning. Pettigrew (1968) also found teachers who believed they were prepared for the contest did not win. These findings suggested theatre teachers who direct the One-Act Play for contest do not have any formula for winning. Yet, theatre teachers in Pettigrew’s study did not hold this against the UIL competition. Instead, theatre teachers took on the responsibility of handling student reaction to contest outcome (Bedichek & Winship, 1941). The teachers believed they must help students understand not only the judge’s critique (UIL Goal 4) but also
place the outcome of the contest in proper context for the students in order to teach them about winning, losing and good sportsmanship.

The literature review for this study found no studies examining teacher efficacy in arts classrooms. As OAP is a competitive system, the closest comparison may be found in high school athletics. Several studies have examined coaching efficacy, defined as “the extent to which coaches believe they can affect the learning and performance of their athletes” (Vargas-Tonsing, Warners & Feltz, 2003). The authors believe coaching efficacy can be broken into four sub-categories: “game strategy efficacy, motivation efficacy, technique efficacy, and character building efficacy” (p. 1). These four categories share similar characteristics with the work of theatre teachers related to the fourth UIL goal for students to learn about winning and losing and good sportsmanship.

Feltz, Chase, Moritz, and Sullivan (1999) outline the definition of coaching efficacy, as it differs from that of teacher efficacy:

Although coaching efficacy is concerned with the learning of one’s athletes, it is also focused on affecting the performance of one’s athletes in competition. Game strategy efficacy is the confidence coaches have in their ability to coach during competition and lead their teams to a successful performance. Motivation efficacy involves the confidence coaches have in their ability to affect the psychological skills and states of their athletes. Technique efficacy is defined as the belief coaches have in their instructional and diagnostic skills. Character building efficacy involves the confidence coaches have in their ability to influence the personal development of and positive attitude toward sport in their athletes. (pp. 3-4)

Further, the authors believe a coach’s “past experience and performance (e.g. coaching experience, coaching preparation, previous won-lost record), the perceived skill or talent of one’s athletes, and perceived social support” (p. 4) influence coaching efficacy. The authors reflect that coaches with higher efficacy ratings employed more effective
coaching practices and won more games. They acknowledge that “winning games should [not] be considered the most important outcome of good coaching...but that winning games is related to effective instruction, good decision making and strategy formulation, and effective motivation and attitude instruction” (p. 7).

In the OAP system, the concept of winning does not exist. Schools do not win; instead, they advance to the next contest level. The current study examines teacher attitude towards winning and how it relates to the UIL goals. The work in the fields of teaching and coaching efficacy can provide significant clues to understanding theatre teachers’ beliefs in their own success in accomplishing the goals as well as winning the OAP contest. As no studies have examined teacher efficacy in the theatre classroom or in particular the competitive theatre environment, this current study will open a new pathway in that direction.

The fourth goal of the UIL is to teach students to win and lose graciously and to accept criticism in good sportsmanship. Certainly, students and teachers feel good when they win. However, because only eight schools in each division participate in the state contest, some researchers have characterized competition in theatre as a harmful or negative experience for students (Pettigrew, 1968; Bedichek, 1956; Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Bourne, 1939; Dupre, 1936; Purdom, 1951). Judging is considered to be subjective, no matter how the rules or marking system has been designed to create equity (Pettigrew, 1968; Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Bourne, 1939; Dupre, 1936; Purdom, 1951). In a competition, only one winner will emerge and this may cause hard feelings (Bourne, 1939).
An important aspect connected to winning and losing is the marking system. The current UIL OAP Handbook (Murray, 2004) judging standards require adjudicators to value acting at 60% and directing and production values (costume, lighting, etc) at 40% (University Interscholastic League, 2005). This guide has changed over time. Dupre (1936) listed the breakdown as 25% play selection, 40% use of pantomime, and 35% play direction.

Although most schools participating in the contest use only one judge, UIL does permit the use of a three-member panel, as utilized in the choir and band competitions. (University Interscholastic League, 2005). However, the panel judging format for theatre does not allow for written or verbal critique, which has become an integral part of the contest. The directors value the critique as part of the improvement process. As stated in the UIL aims, the purpose of the judges’ critique is to improve future performances.

As schools advance to each level of the contest, the number of performance opportunities increases for students. Thus winning means both more opportunities to perform as well as more theatre experiences to witness. Coigney (2002) points out that one benefit to competitive artistic experiences is the increased exposure students have to see and hear arts performances. When teachers provide winning experiences (hence the opportunity to participate in more than one contest), they can increase students’ understanding of good acting, directing, and drama (UIL Goal 2) and allow students to reflect on quality performances (UIL Goal 1).
Participation in competitive arts projects such as the One-Act Play contest may increase student motivation to excel in the art form. Bedichek (1956) contended a winning program provides an impetus for students to strive for better quality performance, both in the contest and in the classroom. As students experience winning, they should increase their overall level of performance (UIL Goal 1). Crocker (2003) found schools that consistently performed at the regional and state levels in the OAP contest offered better overall theatre programs. Winning at those contests motivated both students and teachers to increase the quality of acting and directing so that they could continue to experience success. Ultimately, as these programs increase in size and scope, more students are participating in theatre arts curriculum during the school day (UIL Goal 5).

Teaching and Rehearsal Technique

The teacher as director is faced with a large task—to produce a quality play for performance, and in this case, for contest. Authors Robert Cohen and John Harrop (1984) describe the director as someone who:

should know how to do *everything* in theatre. They should know...scenery construction, costume design, lighting technology, and makeup technique. They should have at their command the world's dramatic literature and the critical skills that open that literature to penetrating analysis and interpretation. They should know how to hang a light, fix a flat, run a rehearsal, and stage a curtain call....They must be able to communicate, delegate, decide, and when necessary dictate in what are often crises. They must be able to bolster, to teach, to protect, to charm, and to inspire...without the overbearing and patronizing attitude....And the director must always work with fresh perspectives toward surprising results. (pp. 10-11)
Though the job of the director is truly large in scope, the instructor, through daily classroom instruction and curriculum design, strives to meet these tasks during the one-act play rehearsal.

The first two UIL One-Act Play goals discuss the need for quality theatre performance. To accomplish this, the teacher must provide instruction in all areas of theatre—acting, script analysis, character development, and technical enhancements, to name a few. Joan Lazarus, a professor of theatre education at the University of Texas at Austin in her text, Signs of Change: New Directions in Secondary Theatre Education (2004), highlighted current practice in the theatre classroom. Lazarus described a three-tiered model for best practice instruction in the theatre classroom that consisted of learner-centered classroom and production work, socially responsible practice, and comprehensive theatre education. She encouraged teachers to provide “instruction [which] is holistic, authentic, and allows students to learn and practice collaboratively” (p. 9). Additionally, Lazarus believes that best practice instruction “intertwines production, history, criticism, and aesthetics” (p. 9). By creating an environment in which they weave all aspects of theatre into an integrated curriculum, teachers can better meet the demands of covering the material as well as meet UIL Goals 1 (quality performance), 2 (good acting, directing, and drama), and 4 (to accept the judge’s criticism).

Ross (1994) researched factors that influenced teacher efficacy. One is a teacher’s “use of teaching techniques which are more challenging and difficult” (p. 2). Lazarus (2004) indicated theatre teachers today are finding innovative ways to meet
the demands of the classroom. Teachers use a variety of tools to meet the UIL goals and increase their own perceived efficacy in the classroom.

The first goal of the UIL One-Act Play contest is to improve the quality of the theatrical performance through the use of competition. Theatrical competition as a societal tool began with the ancient Greeks in the 5th century AD. The festival, known as the City Dionysia (Brockett, 1987) brought together three playwrights who presented plays to be judged by their peers (Purdom, 1951). The contest, a religious festival honoring the god Dionysus, initially professionalized acting, as playwrights began to be sponsored by producers, and notable actors were sought for hire (Brockett, 1987). The dramatic literature we have retained from that time period consists of plays originally seen and heard at those contests. Theatrical scholars who have focused their research on competitive theatre invoke stories of the famed Athenian contests to promote today’s theatrical competition (Bedichek, 1956; Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Bourne, 1939; Purdom, 1951). Today’s competitive theatre events elevate the quality of performance, as did the ancient contests (Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Bedichek, 1956; Bourne, 1939; Eisner, 1976; Lindell, 2004; Pettigrew, 1968; Purdom, 1951).

The second goal of the UIL one-act play contest strives to create “good acting, good directing, and good drama.” Both Bedichek (1956) and Bedichek and Winship (1941) asserted competition in theatre raises quality of performance. The authors identified two topics related to quality of performance—the contest play script and the director’s training. In the early years of the contest, critics argued that many of the plays performed were not of substantial literary value (Bedichek & Winship, 1941).
Value is defined as a play that has literary quality (i.e. a classic) or that requires payment of royalty (Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Hume & Foster, 1932; Motter, 1984; Poisson, 1994). To encourage teachers to select plays of higher quality, the UIL began the Drama Loan Library, which proved successful with directors who could peruse numerous scripts (Bedichek & Winship, 1951).

A theatre teacher’s job is to concentrate on teaching skills and knowledge related to theatre as well as to focus on rehearsal techniques applied to play creation. These are learned in a variety of ways, often beginning in pre-service instruction at the undergraduate level. However, theatre teachers must not only master teaching skills, they must also understand their art form and how to achieve the necessary aesthetic (Larson, 2004). Theatre teachers need to engage in continual professional development (Hoch, 1997; Erickson, 2003; McCaslin, Rhodes, Lind, 2004). In a 2005 study Conway, Hibbard, Albert, and Hourigan found arts teachers need “content based professional development” (p. 3), but that there is a significant lack of research in the field of professional development for arts educators. Though several national programs exist for developing skills for theatre teachers (Larson, 2004; McCaslin, Rhodes, Lind, 2004), this study explores some aspects of the professional development of Texas theatre teachers, through the offerings of the Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA) and the University Interscholastic League.

The second aspect of quality performance is the training of the director. Bedichek and Winship (1941) outlined the earlier growth in the demand for teacher training in theatre. Teachers desired to increase skill level in all aspects of theatre,
especially in the field of directing (Winship, 1953). This phenomenon, in turn, caused an increase in the number of colleges in Texas that offered theatre as a major course of study. Additionally, the state of Texas increased the rigor of requirements needed to be a certified theatre teacher (TETA, 2005; Pettigrew, 1968). Teachers expected increases in skill levels would translate to better production values of contest plays (Pettigrew, 1968). Teacher preparation has proven essential for providing leadership and artistic growth for students (Baker, 2001).

As teachers learn more about directing, they also become better acting coaches and are better able to raise the standards of performances, especially in the area of acting. In competitive theatre, good acting is natural and authentic (Motter, 1984; see also Hume & Foster, 1932; Melvill, 1957) as well as performed in a traditional manner (Purdom, 1951). As teachers develop professionally as actors, they are able to transfer the performing skills to students. The relationship of teachers’ professional development on student performance became evident during the early years of the contest, as standards of performance increased (Bedichesk & Winship, 1941).

External Support

Theatre teachers rely on external support systems to provide both professional development and also networks of colleagues who can assist in preparation for the contest. Dreeszen (2001) identified three areas of support necessary for school arts programs to thrive: (a) collaborations with colleges and universities, (b) the state’s public educational system, and (c) local arts organizations. In the state of Texas,
theatre teachers enjoy a combination of the first two areas as an external support network. The University Interscholastic League is managed through the University of Texas at Austin and offers resources necessary to maintain athletic as well as academic competitions (in which OAP is classified). The UIL maintains its independence from the governance body of the state public education system, the Texas Education Agency (TEA); however, the two organizations work interdependently to provide structure for student success in extracurricular activities (Oltersdorf, 1998). The UIL publishes a document entitled, *TEA & UIL Side by Side* (UIL, 2005). The document illustrates how the UIL guidelines are created within the context of state law regarding student attendance, eligibility, and participation. Even though UIL is separate from both the University of Texas and from the Texas Education Agency, the support of these two agencies provides the League with the ability to carry out its mission (Oltersdorf, 1998).

**Student Perception of the Aesthetic**

Greene (1984) describes situations wherein students experience the aesthetic. She writes students “must be empowered, each in a way appropriate to him/her—his/her background, his/her life story—to perceive differently, to hear and to see” (p. 133). Further, students must allow “the energies of perceiving and imagining, and feeling to move out to the works at hand” (p. 133). Greene instructs teachers to allow student discovery to happen naturally, without imposing their own interpretations onto the students.
In a second view of students' perception of aesthetic education, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) suggested that students should experience four outcomes—sensory experience, emotional experience, new thought and a sense of personal growth as a result of an aesthetic learning experience. He stated:

Learning to see, hear, or move in tune with aesthetic forms, we learn to give shape to patterns of sensation, emotion, and thought. And with this ability, we can make better sense of the chaos of existence and can approach, as close as possible, the state of happiness. (p. 36)

In 1996, Csikszentmihalyi evaluated Harvard’s Project Zero’s work on assessment models for understanding the effectiveness of aesthetic education. Project Zero had completed a quantitative study on student responses to participation in an aesthetic learning situation. Researchers matched a group of students who participated in the program to a control group and interviewed both sets of students. The students who had completed the intervention showed an ability to “discuss a dramatic performance at a higher cognitive level, . . . mentioned richer details of the event they had witnessed, [and] articulated a more complex interpretation that went beyond the events of the performance” (p. 33). Though he accepted the Project Zero study as valid, Csikszentmihalyi noted that a quantitative treatment omitted a discussion of intangible qualities perceived by students who were introduced to aesthetic curriculum.

Csikszentmihalyi and Schiefele (1992) also contended students who participated in arts classes reported higher levels of happiness and self-esteem than did students who did not participate. Csikszentmihalyi, (1997) concluded, “aesthetic experiences stand out from the rest of life as being more positive” (p. 36).
Greene’s and Csikszentmihalyi’s definitions describe what aesthetic education looks like from the student perspective. Several studies have examined whether or not students actually understand what they are learning during aesthetic experiences. Although no studies were found in the discipline of theatre, two studies show that visual art students did understand and could articulate the aesthetic, after participating in artistic endeavors (Adler, 2004; Austin, 2005). In a 2003 study of high school music students, results indicated an increase in students’ feelings of empowerment, creativity, and motivation (Cabaniss, 2003). An earlier study in 1979 showed that gifted students who participated in an aesthetic curriculum learned not only about dance but also experienced increased feelings of cooperation and ease with adults (Spitz, 1994).

Aesthetic theorist Michael Parsons described the intellectual nature of adolescents and their ability to identify the aesthetic (1994). He contended adolescents develop a “radical subjectivity,” which is one step in the developmental process that allows them to think philosophically about art. As children mature, they understand artistic skills first, then learn about the aesthetic elements. In the classroom, Parsons argued students need “careful support, structure, and considerable time” (p. 44) to reflect, discuss, and communicate perceptions about art and the aesthetic.

The third and fifth UIL goals relate to students’ participation in theatre during and after school. The third goal requests teachers to instill in students a desire to participate in theatrical activity after they have graduated. Research indicates that this is likely to occur. Three times in the past twenty-five years, the National Endowment for the Arts has prepared and disseminated the *Survey of Public Participation in the*
The survey assesses aspects of arts programming to determine which types of artistic events are most popular and most well-attended. The 1997 survey asked respondents to answer questions pertaining to personal levels of arts education and experiences as youth. The results from that survey indicated that a correlation exists between arts education and arts attendance later in life. Interestingly, the most closely correlated factor is the level of educational achievement a person has attained (National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), 1996; McCarthy & Jinnet, 2001). McCarthy and Jinnet (2001) add that more education in general often produces students who have been exposed to the arts more frequently, which may influence future arts participation choices.

Bergonzi and Smith (1996) produced a study entitled *Effects of Arts Education on Participation in the Arts* in which they also found a strong relationship between arts education and future participation in the arts. In their research, they defined participation as either attending or creating arts performances. Orend and Keegan (1996) examined the same relationship and found arts education was a stronger predictor of future arts participation even when education levels in general (i.e. the amount of education a person has) had been controlled. These earlier studies show support for the results of the 1997 NEA survey and indicate that any experience or education in the arts leads adults to choose to attend arts programming later in life.

The Merits of Artistic Competition

Because few reports on the nature of theatrical competition have been
attempted (and one reason for conducting this study), the study raises questions about
the merits of artistic competition in the areas of educational theatre, music and art.

A common saying in today’s society is “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” If
this statement is true, can one example of artwork be truly judged as superior over
another?  This question lies at the heart of the debate on competition in any arts
program—music, visual art, dance, and theatre included. Further, competition in the
arts has been found to be beneficial in various areas, such as:

- Improving the quality of the artist product (Peithman, 2001, see also Bedicheck,
  1956; Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Bourne, 1939; CEDFA, 2003; Haroutounian,
  2000; Melvill, 1957; Pettigrew, 1968; Purdom, 1951)
- Increasing the number of artists practicing their craft (Bedicheck, 1956;
  Peithman, 2001; Winship, 1953)
- Increasing motivation (CEDFA, 2003; see also Bedichek, 1956; Bedichek &
  Winship, 1941; Blaire, 1995; Bourne, 1939; Purdom, 1951; Zirkes & Penna,
  1984)
- Determining the creativity of students (Karnes & Riley, 1996)
- Increasing the autonomy of students (Karnes & Riley, 1996; Haroutounian, 2000)
- Increasing self-esteem of students (Karnes & Riley, 1996, Murray, 1998;
  Bedicheck, 1956)
- Increasing the number of performance opportunities available to arts students
  (Haroutounian, 2000; see also Coigney, 2002; Purdom, 1951)
- Increasing the opportunities young artists have to see and hear arts
  performances (Bavely, 1950; Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Coigney, 2002)
- Creating venues for professionals and novices to meet and interact (Coigney,
  2002)

On the other hand, several articles contend the use of competition within arts
education poses negative outcomes for student artists. These authors believe any
positive outcomes inherent within competitive performance are simply beliefs that
society creates to justify people's competitive nature (Kohn, 1986; see also Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Miller, 1994). Additionally, some scholars view competitions in education as undemocratic and opposed to the nature of our society (Thorkildsen, 2002; see also Bedichek, 1956; Bedichek & Winship, 1941; Bourne, 1939; Dupre, 1936; Purdom, 1951).

Summary

This review of literature provides an indication of the need for research in the areas of competitive theatre, student perceptions of the aesthetic as understood through participation in theatre activities, and the nature of winning and competition among theatrical directors. Currently, only a handful of studies have even approached the topic. Much of this review examined materials dating from the 1940s to the 1960s. This study will help to fill the gap in current practice in theatre classrooms in the state of Texas as well as begin to shed light on the emerging phenomenon of theatrical competition in high schools nationwide.

The review also has encompassed an exploration of the goals of the One-Act Play contest as described by the University Interscholastic League, placing each goal within a background of competitive theatre and its effect on teacher instruction and student learning. The literature shows theatre teachers possess good intentions and want to teach students the discipline of quality theatre as well as to weave the aesthetic into the learning process (Dyck, 2003; Lazarus, 2004). In this study, five theatre teachers described and demonstrated how they prepare for and participate in the UIL
contest in the state of Texas. The study provided valuable information to further understanding in the area of educational and competitive theatre.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Research Questions

The first purpose of this study was to determine how theatre teachers implement the goals of the University Interscholastic League (UIL) contest. Data consisted of teachers’ practices, perceptions, and experiences as they engaged their students in One-Act Play (OAP) contest preparation. A second purpose of this study was to determine whether students perceive the aesthetic as a result of their experiences in the OAP. This chapter outlines the methodology utilized to answer the three research questions:

1. How does the theatre teacher’s attitude toward winning the contest relate to the accomplishment of UIL goals?
2. How do teaching, rehearsal technique and external support systems affect teachers’ contest preparation and the achievement of UIL goals?
3. In what ways do students perceive the aesthetic, as a result of their OAP experience?

Method

The multi-case study method involved five teachers at five different schools in the north Texas area. Five theatre teachers were interviewed three times, in 90-minute segments and observed during rehearsals and performances. The first two research questions, “How does the theatre teacher’s attitude toward winning the contest relate to the accomplishment of the UIL goals?” and “How do teaching, rehearsal technique and external support systems affect teachers’ contest preparation and the achievement
of the UIL goals?” were examined through a series of interviews and observations during rehearsals and performances for the One-Act Play contest. The data collected through the interviews and observations were analyzed through a coding and pattern analysis process. The third question, “In what ways do students perceive the aesthetic, as a result of their OAP experience?” was addressed through focus-group interviews with student participants of the contest.

Participants and Setting

Prior to the study, access into each of the five schools was secured. In this study, to maintain anonymity, the UIL division categories were used rather than actual school names. The teachers and students participating in the study were given pseudonyms.

Selecting the Participants

School Selection

Each school was selected by purposeful sampling, which is a method of selecting “information-rich” cases (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). The criteria for selection included the following school attributes:

- Classification of school (A-AAAAA)
- Previous participation in One-Act Play contest (as not all schools compete)
- Proximity to researcher’s home (facilitated ease of observation)
- Acceptance of the researcher/observer’s presence during rehearsals
Those boundaries (Miles & Huberman, 1994) defined each case and provided quality subjects. The use of multiple cases enhances the “precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings” without jeopardizing generalizability (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 29). Schools in Texas are divided for UIL competition into one of five divisions, A-AAAAA, based on student enrollment, with AAAAA representing the largest populations (UIL, Constitution, 2005). A multiple case study permitted examination of the complexity of the One-Act Play system across several campuses and facilitated comparison of how the five teachers chose to meet the goals set forth by the UIL.

A list of participating schools in the One-Act Play contest collected from the UIL Website provided a choice of which schools to include in the study. The list was divided into classifications by school size. The list was culled and classified by region. Schools in those regions close in proximity were then charted on a map. This process narrowed the list of schools to two or three possibilities for each classification. Each school was researched via the Internet to identify similar characteristics, based on ethnicity and socio-economic status. To finalize the selection process, each school was contacted for access. All chosen schools consented to the project.

School AAAAA has the largest student enrollment (2600 pupils) and is located in a suburb of Fort Worth, Texas. The ethnicity of the student population during the 2005-2006 academic year consisted of 93% White, 2% each African American, Hispanic, and Asian. The school is labeled as “Recognized” in the accountability ratings for the state of Texas. The theatre teacher for AAAAA has been at the school for 21 years and has
School AAAA has an enrollment of 1,900 students and is also located in a suburb of Fort Worth. The student ethnicity includes 89% White, 4% African American, 5% Hispanic and 2% Asian. This school also has an accountability rating of “Recognized.” School AAAA opened in 1999 and has employed the same theatre teacher since that time. This director also has a history of attending the state contest within the past five years.

School AAA is located in the county adjacent to Fort Worth, Texas. This school has a student population of 850 pupils. Labeled “Academically Acceptable” by the state of Texas, this school student ethnicity includes 75% White, 21% Hispanic, 2% African American, and 1% Asian. The theatre teacher has been employed at AAA for four years and has not taken students to the state contest although the school has a tradition of attending the competition.

School AA is located 30 miles north of Fort Worth, Texas. This school has a student enrollment of 464 students, of which 92% are White, 6% are Hispanic and 1% Asian. The school is considered “Recognized” by the Texas accountability system. This school recently completed construction on a new fine arts wing, including a new theatre. The teacher at this school has been there for two years and has not taken students to the state contest although the school has competed in the past.

School A has a population of 175 students and is located 60 miles north of Fort Worth. The ethnicity of students includes 97% White, 1% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. This
school has been rated “Recognized” by the state of Texas. The teacher has been at this school for 17 years and has attended the state contest seven times, twice within the past five years.

Student Selection

To identify student perception regarding the aesthetic, a randomly selected group of students from each school was interviewed. The UIL mandates that for the OAP each school place limits on the number of student participants. Each school is allowed to have up to fifteen actors, four technical crew, and four alternates. Alternates are students who rehearse and prepare with the theatre company but do not participate in the contest. They assist in the process and are needed only if one of the other students cannot complete his or her assignment (for example, if a student becomes sick or injured, or fails a class and becomes ineligible.) From each category of student personnel associated with the play (including technical, acting, and alternate groups) 25% from each category of contributor were randomly selected to participate in the focus group.

Data Collection

Morse and Richards (2002) describe data collection as “making data” (p. 87). They define this process as “a collaborative, ongoing process in which data are interactively negotiated by the researcher and the participants” (p. 87). In a qualitative study, the researcher records and focuses on those data which are pertinent to the
study. The researcher observes and listens to participants “interpretively, responding from personal beliefs and values and filtering out what he or she sees and records” (p. 88). Moreover, the authors describe the process of making data as a “cognitive” one (p. 89) involving several techniques used to make data. This study utilized observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis.

Because qualitative data collection is often attacked for being subjective, Morse and Richards (2002) suggest using the techniques mentioned above to “record the phenomenon of interest as closely as possible” (p. 100). Of utmost importance is the collection of data that reflect the participants “recall of how they felt or experienced the event at the time” (p. 99). In this study, data were recorded through the use of a data log, researcher memoranda, and transcription of audio taped interviews to ensure the validity of the material.

**Teacher Interviews**

Each teacher consented to three 90-minute interviews. The interviews occurred in the teacher’s classroom, office or rehearsal space during a time convenient to the teacher. The interviews were audio taped and later transcribed for analysis. To protect the confidentiality of the teacher, their identities were masked through the use of pseudonyms for both teacher and school.

The first interview took place prior to the beginning of the rehearsal process. Because the date of the first contest was in March, 2006, the first interview occurred between January and February, 2006. The interview was broad and focused on
exploring the participant’s history with the One-Act Play contest, addressing Research Questions 1 and 2 (see Appendix A). The interview used a semi-structured questionnaire style (Morse & Richards, 2002), wherein a series of open-ended questions began broadly and moved, throughout the sessions, to more specific questions about teacher experience and perceptions of the One-Act Play contest. The interview included questions regarding life situations that influenced the teacher to become a theatre director in the OAP system. The interview focused on how each teacher approached education and directing within the context of his or her own experiences.

This interview strategy addressed Research Questions 1 and 2 because it provided background information about a teacher’s experience with the One-Act Play contest. Teachers explained their personal history of OAP participation and explored teaching and rehearsal techniques they have used to help them be successful during the process. The interview highlighted teacher attendance at convention, clinics, and UIL conferences to determine the connection these events have had in the teacher’s preparation and perception of OAP.

The second interview occurred during the rehearsal process, but prior to the first contest (February to March, 2006). The purpose of this interview was to narrow the field of experiences and examine elements of the Research Questions 1 and 2 pertaining to feelings about winning. Questions during this interview focused on the contest experience for the director, who was asked to describe a contest experience in detail. The rich descriptions provided information that built teacher opinion (Seidman, 1998) and provided understanding of the experiences. This interview was an
opportunity for teachers to explore in-depth feelings they have experienced before, during, and after previous contests. Data collected during this interview answered Research Question 1 as teachers described their perceptions and attitudes about winning and its relationship to both contest goals and student learning.

The third interview occurred after the school had participated in its final contest. Because each school had the opportunity to participate in up to five contests, (zone, district, area, region, and state), the final contest for schools was the state competition, held during the first week in May, 2006. However, the third interview did occur for one school as soon as zone competition ended in March, as it was the final performance for the school. The third interview was an opportunity to “reflect on the meaning” (Seidman, 1998, p. 12) of the teacher’s direction and instruction. Throughout the course of the interviews, more specific questions fine-tuned the details of teacher experience, practice, and perception.

The final interview provided an opportunity for teachers to examine any issues that had not been covered during the previous discussions or the observations. The participants had a chance to express personal feelings about the contest as well. By investigating teacher opinion and perception, the data collected in the third interview augmented and deepened understandings and themes developed during the first two interviews. Morse and Richards (2002) encourage the creation of a setting in which the participant and interviewer create a safe and trusting environment so that important information can be shared. The third interview, with its focus on reflection, was an opportunity to extend information collected for Research Questions 1 and 2. The third
interview coalesced teacher viewpoint and enabled teachers to express meaningful thoughts and feelings.

In addition to exploring teacher perception and examining teacher practice in the classroom, the interviews offered a time to assess teacher understanding of the UIL goals. Theatre teachers who participate in the One-Act Play in Texas are given a copy of the contest handbook, which contains the rules and guidelines for participation. However, teachers may or may not peruse the entire book, which delineates the contest goals. The interviews addressed this issue and determined whether teachers understood contest goals or applied them during curriculum creation.

Student Focus Group Interviews

Students from each school were interviewed in a single focus group at that site. The interview was 60 minutes in length. Each group was selected randomly, based on 25% of the total number in each participant group (actors, technicians, and alternates). The students were asked to consent and required to obtain parental consent (see Appendix D). The interviews occurred in the classroom and/or rehearsal space. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. Interview questions were based on Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) four stated outcomes—sensory experience, emotional experience, new thought and a sense of personal growth that students should experience as a result of participating in an activity designed to teach the aesthetic.
The students were asked six open-ended questions (see Appendix B), designed to generate qualitative responses. The structure follows Patton’s (1987) informal conversational interview protocol, wherein general questions are asked first, with follow-up questions asked as necessary. This process enables the participants to “give their definition of a situation, thereby facilitating a greater understanding of the subject’s point of view” (Clarke, 1999). In this study, the student responses were used to determine the extent to which the aesthetic was experienced as a result of their participation in OAP competition. As students commented upon sensory and emotional experiences and discussed and described feelings of new ideas and learning, they demonstrated an understanding of the aesthetic and created a context through which they could share insight and awareness. These student perceptions became the data used to answer Research Question 3, the ways in which students perceive the aesthetic as a result of One-Act participation.

*Observation Instrumentation*

I used a data log to record teacher discourse, actions and student interaction with the teacher and other students. The information in the data log was transcribed for use during analysis. The data log consisted of five divisions, one for each school. Each section contained pertinent school information and contact numbers. The pages in each section were divided into four sections. In the first column I recorded the time events take place, in the second column the teacher actions as well as discourse (what the teacher actually says). I used a third column to record student interactions with the
director and other actors as they rehearsed. The fourth column includes my ideas and reactions to the events that occurred during observations. This column guided my coding procedure early during the data analysis process. After each observation, I included analytic memoranda to describe any other ideas or thoughts that occurred post-observation and that might have been pertinent to the analysis. The data log also included written responses from each interview, although each interview was audio recorded and transcribed as well. Below is a table showing the data log columns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Teacher Action</th>
<th>Student Action</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A multiple case study will generate volumes of data. To manage the information and help sort it for analysis, the data log's format maintained case independence. The log also contained pockets between each section to hold any ancillary documents such as the contest program. Additionally, the log included index cards used in a variety of ways during data collection and analysis. The log contained a list for indexing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The index list emerged as themes and codes became apparent during the field research. Comments listed in the fourth column of the data page eventually became the ideas that generated the themes and ultimately the codes.

Data Analysis

Once data are made, the process of abstraction begins (Morse & Richards, 2002). Abstraction involves “categorizing and conceptualizing”...[and] researchers aim to
create categories that are more general, drawing together the complex immediate messages of data in more abstract topics or groups, and most aim to move from this sorting to more theoretical concepts” (p. 131, italics in original). The purpose of abstraction is to “explain and account for a social and cultural situation” (p. 135). In this study, abstraction occurred during the analysis of the data in terms of identifiable patterns of teacher behavior and understanding. I identified patterns through a process of coding that involved comparing and contrasting data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The coding process “alerts the researcher to certain patterns and surprises him or her with new meanings” (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 115). Once patterns were defined, I moved from the process of coding or labeling to interpretation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 46). The interpretation stage allows the researcher to create themes, which according to Morse and Richards (2002) “usually mean[s] something more pervasive than a topic or category...[and] runs right through the data” (p. 121). As the data were collected through the observation and interviews, detailed memos and reflection enabled me to develop codes, define patterns of behavior and understanding, and connect them to interpret themes that describe the complexities of teacher action and meaning from the perspective of the participants.

To assist with the analysis of the data, the NUD*IST™ computer software program (QSR International Pty Ltd, http://www.qsrinternational.com), Version N6 was utilized. Once the data logs and interviews were transcribed and loaded in the software, I used the computer program to explore the text for differences and similarities. NUD*IST allows for comparison and contrast of statements made during interviews
and/or observations. With the new data strands, the researcher can draw upon a variety of themes and conclusions. The topics emerged into themes and primary concepts were identified. A second sorting of the data involved further coding of specific characteristics and attributes. The delineation of these more detailed dimensions helped create enlightened understandings of the relationship between teacher perception and practice of the One-Act Play goals and between student experience and aesthetic knowing. The student and teacher data provided a rich context to explore the associations between what is practiced in the classroom or rehearsal hall and what has been designated by the UIL as a goal.

Timeline

This project began in January 2006. The initial interviews were completed by mid-February 2006. Observations began at each school in late February, depending on each school’s rehearsal schedule. Between February and April, I conducted at least five observation periods at each school and completed the second teacher interview, as well as the student focus group at each school. Between late March and May of 2006, I completed the third interview with each teacher. Beginning in March, early analysis of the data began. Initially I labeled topics within the data and wrote analytic memos.

Summary

To adequately determine teacher perception, practice, and experience of the goals of the OAP, a qualitative, naturalistic inquiry method was used. The multiple case
study method chosen for this study incorporated five teachers at five different schools in the north Texas area. Four of the five teachers were interviewed three times, in 90-minute segments and observed during rehearsals and performances. The first two research questions, “How does the theatre teacher’s attitude toward winning the contest relate to the accomplishment of the UIL goals?” and “How do teaching, rehearsal technique and external support systems affect teachers’ contest preparation and the achievement of the UIL goals?” were examined through a series of semi-structured interviews (Morse and Richards, 2002), as well as by observations during rehearsals and performances for the One-Act Play contest. The data collected through the interviews and observations were analyzed through a pattern coding and analysis process. The third research question, “In what ways do students perceive the aesthetic, as a result of their OAP experience?” was addressed through focus-group interviews with student participants of the contest. The data collected through the student interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. The resulting interpretations led to a deeper understanding of the questions posed in the study. The naturalistic, inquiry method enabled me to show the “why” (Clarke, 1999) behind the “how,” as I concentrated on understanding the perceptions of the people involved in the process. Miles & Huberman, (1994) posit, “The findings from qualitative studies have a quality of undeniability. Words, especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader...than pages of summarized numbers” (p.1, italics in original). This study focused on teacher perceptions, practices, and experiences. The teachers’ words and stories provided the
rich background needed to explore and understand the complexities required when preparing students for the One-Act Play contest in the state of Texas. The students’ descriptions of OAP participation determined how they interpret the work of teachers and whether they experienced the aesthetic in their own lives.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS
Rationale for Analysis

This case study employed observation and interviews to investigate the process of teacher and student preparation for and participation in the University Interscholastic League (UIL) One-Act Play (OAP) competition in Texas. The interviews included both in-depth, structured and focus group formats. The observations occurred over a four-month period during rehearsals and performances for the Texas high school state One-Act Play contest. The analyzed data created enlightened understandings of the relationship between teacher perceptions and practice of the One-Act Play goals and between student theatre experience and aesthetic knowing in daily life. The UIL One-Act Play goals encompass five statements, which are organized around the nature of competitive theatre at the high school level. In support of arts education and of the theatre experience specifically, the UIL OAP Handbook (Murray, 2004) extensively delineates the need for and benefits of practicing theatre at the high school level. As a means to this general purpose, the UIL published five goals. The UIL One-Act Play contest goals include:

1. Satisfy the competitive, artistic spirit with friendly rivalry among schools, emphasizing high quality performance in this creative art
2. Foster appreciation of good acting, good directing, and good drama
3. Promote interest in that art form most readily usable in leisure time during adult life
4. Learn to lose and win graciously, accepting in good sportsmanship the judge’s decision and criticism with a view to improve future productions
5. Increase the number of schools which have adopted theatre arts as an academic subject in school curricula (Murray, 2004)
The assumption of the UIL OAP program is that if the goals are met, aesthetic enrichment will ensue, resulting in a lifelong enhancement to students’ perceptions and interpretations of the human experience. The student and teacher data collected in this study provided a rich context to explore the associations between what is practiced in the classroom or rehearsal hall and what has been designated by the UIL goals.

Research Questions

The first purpose of this study was to determine how theatre teachers implement the goals of the University Interscholastic League (UIL) contest. A second purpose of this study was to determine whether students perceive the aesthetic as a result of their experiences in the OAP. The three research questions used in the present study were:

1. How does the theatre teacher’s attitude toward winning relate to the accomplishment of UIL goals?
2. How do teaching, rehearsal technique, and external support systems affect teachers’ contest preparation and the achievement of UIL goals?
3. In what ways do students perceive the aesthetic in their daily life as a result of their OAP experience?

The results from this study are organized according to each research question. Under each question, the results from the observations are presented first. Observation data are followed by a listing of the interview protocol questions. The responses to protocol questions are presented. Each section ends with a summary. The results of this study represent patterns of teaching and rehearsal behavior across the five teachers, rather than a detailed description of each school.
Research Question 1: How does the theatre teacher’s attitude toward winning relate to the accomplishment of UIL goals?

Teacher attitude toward winning the contest is crucial to understanding the relationship between teacher action and discourse and the accomplishment of the goals. The One-Act Play contest is a competitive activity. With most competitions, the outcome results in a “winner.” Yet, unlike traditional sporting events, the OAP is an artistic competition and winning equates to advancing to the next level (district, area, region, and state) of the competition, with the state contest as the final level of advancement. In essence, students compete, by presenting their play to a judge, after which the judge selects two plays to move (advance) to the next round of competition.

For this study, winning is defined as advancing. The first research question assesses the actions teachers take to prepare students for advancement in the contest. Pettigrew (1968) studied theatre teachers in the state of Texas and determined that no correlation exists between either the years of training or directing experience and winning in the One-Act Play contest. Pettigrew also found that teachers who believed they were prepared for the contest did not win. Pettigrew’s study suggests that teachers recognize the arbitrary nature of advancing.

Thus a dichotomy exists for teachers. Teachers want to advance in the contest, but both personal experience and Pettigrew’s study indicate that they can do very little to predict or ensure an outcome of the contest. When asked about winning, teachers in this study did not characterize winning as advancing. Instead, they delineated aspects of the contest experience that were more within their realm of control, such as creating a quality performance or providing an enriching event for students. Within the
classroom and rehearsal hall, teachers reinforced these ideas to students. However, the teachers also did things they thought would directly help them advance in the contest. Thus, teachers face a dichotomy of preparing a quality performance they hope will advance, while also trying to downplay the importance of advancement with students, so that student feelings will be spared should the play not advance. The teacher definition of winning differs from that assigned in the study and has been one area of exploration by the researcher.

Data for this question were gathered through observations and interviews with four high school theatre teachers in Texas. Results from each set of analyzed data are represented independently, and then compared.

Observations

From the observations, several themes emerged after identifying codes within the data (see Appendix F). Defining these codes proved critical to understanding the dichotomy of teacher attitude toward winning. The code, Process, which indicates a director is focusing on the elements of the playmaking unique to the UIL process, includes a sub-code of Clinics and Adherence to Rules. The code, Repetition, belongs as a sub-code to Rehearsal. Every director in this study concentrated on preparing a high quality performance, one that they believed would be worthy to advance within the contest system.

The OAP contest is a process in which a teacher chooses an appropriate script, auditions students, blocks and rehearses the play and brings it to a contest venue for
performance. In traditional productions, students follow this same procedure until the
day of the contest. Normally, high school productions do not have an adjudication
process, nor do they hear a critique from any outside individuals. The process of
adjudication is unique to the OAP competition for most Texas high school theatre
students. Additionally, the OAP can be an opportunity for students to travel around the
state and perform in a variety of venues. All teacher participants were sensitive to these
demands and implemented strategies during teaching and rehearsal to prepare
students for understanding the differences inherent in One-Act participation.

During the observation of rehearsals and performances, teachers continually
reinforced the aspects of the unique One-Act Play process with students. Teachers also
worked hard to prepare a show within the confines of the OAP process. Under the
theme of Process, several sub-codes can be examined to identify teacher attitude
toward winning.

First, the teachers adhered to the rules of the OAP process. Though this may
seem to be a given, each teacher explained the complex rules to the students and
discussed how they would work through the given obstacle. For example, early during
the rehearsal process for Teacher Z, the decision was made to augment the number of
people in the “jury” by adding sticks with material draped on them to resemble the
actors (clothed in robes). Each actor would carry one or two sticks, thus making it
appear that the jury was many more than the three actors. The teacher participant
called the UIL office for clarification on the rules regarding props and fabric. After a
discussion with the UIL State Drama Director, the sticks covered in fabric were ruled to
be “puppets” and as the director had not requested permission to add these in time, they were not allowed. Now, two weeks prior to the zone contest, the director had to explain this to the students and change the puppets to something acceptable. The teacher participant maintained the integrity of the rules, but also demonstrated the attitude toward winning through phoning for clarification, rather than risk a disqualification on the day of the contest. The director in this case wanted to ensure that the play would have the opportunity to advance (hence, win) at the first contest. Had the director continued with the original plan to include the puppets, the contest manager would have enforced the rules regarding props and fabric and disregarded the performance, resulting in disqualification. The director's choice to verify and follow the rules, for the sake of advancing, indicates a clear attitude toward winning.

A second example of adhering to the rules involved the set up and strike for the contest as well as adjusting the size of the stage for the next contest venue. The OAP rules indicate a specific time of seven minutes to set up and to strike props and set before and after the performance. Every teacher participating in this study rehearsed set up and strike, to ensure the company acted within the given time limits. Teaching the students the proper procedures demonstrates a desire to advance. As with the puppet example, any rule infraction may result in disqualification. Anything a director can do to prevent students from breaking the rules was rehearsed and discussed during the rehearsal. As one teacher stated, “Winning is about the things you can control—conduct, sportsmanship, and doing your best show. Winning/advancing is not something you can control.” A director who adheres to the rules is modeling the fourth
UIL goal regarding winning and losing graciously and good sportsmanship. As with all competitive activities, students learn that rules provide context for the event. When directors take time to teach about rules and disqualification, students learn about the nature of good sportsmanship.

Participant teachers all demonstrated an attitude toward winning through their behavior and discourse in relationship to the second UIL goal regarding fostering an appreciation for good acting, directing, and drama. All teacher participants chose to attend clinics. Clinics are an opportunity for a second director, one who is usually a veteran of the OAP system, to watch and critique several shows early during the rehearsal process. The clinic allows teachers to have a “second set of eyes” examine the show and make recommendations for improvement. In support of the second UIL goal, students are often afforded the opportunity to watch other schools perform. Viewing other performances exposes students to more scripts, acting styles, and directing choices. This exposure enriches a student’s experience in theatre and provides opportunities for critique. As student athletes watch tapes of other team’s performances, student actors watch other performances in order to learn more effective methods. Often, at the conclusion of the clinic, directors will help students process not only their own performance, but they will discuss and evaluate the other schools’ productions. These critical thinking opportunities enable students to define examples of good acting and directing.

Attending the clinic demonstrates the desire on the part of the director not only to improve the quality of the performance (UIL Goal 4) but also to learn strategies to
advance to the next level of contest, which is critical to understanding the teacher attitude toward winning. Two of the participating teachers attended two or more clinics during the rehearsal process. These directors clearly wanted to learn as much as they could from experienced OAP directors (or judges) about what elements contribute to a winning play, with a desire to improve the current play as well as their own directing skills. Even though directors do not want to admit that winning means advancement, their actions indicated they were willing to continue to learn more and have an outside director critique and improve their productions so that they might advance in the contest. The directors’ attitude indicates that they do care about advancing, even if they do not stress this with the students.

The purpose of the first UIL OAP goal is to teach students about the competitive and artistic nature of the contest structure with a particular emphasis on high quality productions. All teacher participants showed examples of demonstrating this goal while they taught. The data collected that related to this theme were coded High Quality Performance. Although the majority of data collected for this code fell under Research Question 2, the action of creating a high quality show is integral to understanding teacher attitude toward winning. Directors understand that only shows of the highest quality will reach the state level contest. Four of the five directors in this study set up a consistent, rigorous rehearsal schedule.

However, the fifth director in this study (who eventually dropped from the study) did not adhere to this principle. Teacher W set up two rehearsal times and an interview time for the researcher to observe, but they were cancelled without communication.
Student rehearsals were cancelled, causing a decrease in the time allotted to prepare a high quality performance. Perhaps this contributed to this school's failure to advance out of the first contest level. For the other directors in this study, creating and maintaining a rigorous and consistent rehearsal schedule was the first element in ensuring a high quality performance. These directors wanted their show to win and provided the means through which students would have the time necessary to develop a quality performance. This attitude toward winning, apparent in the state level advancement observed in three of the four remaining schools, suggests that the drive to win, expressed in consistent rehearsal schedules, relates directly to UIL Goal 1, developing a quality performance.

Teachers demonstrated a desire to produce a high quality performance and shared this with students in a variety of ways. Teacher participant X consistently reinforced the message with the students. Prior to the state contest, he said, “You’re in the top 8 in the state. We don’t care how you do there-you’re there.” Even though he tells the students that the outcome of the contest does not matter, he reinforces the notion that the students must maintain their already created high quality performance. He says his belief is that placing in the top three at state is not a priority for him, but he also tells his students “This [the state contest] is the time to deliver your best show.”

This director is expressing the dichotomy of wanting to win while claiming winning isn’t everything to his students. He tells them that the outcome does not matter, but that they need to continue the techniques that have helped them advance this far in the contest already. This desire to win, evident in the rigorous rehearsal
schedule contributes to the accomplishment of UIL Goal 1, to create an excellent performance. The contrast between the first director who cancelled interviews and rehearsals and the second, who maintained a rigorous schedule, suggests that the latter's attitude toward winning influenced a quality performance, in deference to the former, who did not advance in the contest, as a result of a negligent rehearsal schedule. Consequently, the combination of an attitude toward winning and a desire for a high quality performance, resulted in advancement and accolades.

The environment of the OAP rehearsal is filled with pressure and stress. One rehearsal technique employed by all of the directors is the use of repetition. Student actors are given the instruction, whether it is blocking or line reading, and then they repeat that movement or phrase within the context of the scene, which aids in memorization. Teacher Y chided students one day, saying, “If we work something, you had better remember it.” The director’s stern comment demonstrates that he does not want to re-teach or re-direct playmaking elements the students have already learned. Teacher V spent the first forty minutes of one rehearsal repeating the opening one-minute sequence of cues. Teacher Z dedicated three entire rehearsals to the Furies (a group of actresses acting as one entity, known in ancient theatre as the chorus), to rehearse their vocal performance only. The Furies needed to move and sound as one person. Rehearsal time spent repeating seemingly small moments of the show translate into precise, well-directed and well-acted moments of theatre (UIL Goal 1).

In addition to using repetition to create a quality performance, directors enforce high expectations. Director X said to his students, “I do expect a lot of you. I want you
to present your show in the time and manner we have rehearsed.” Clearly, the expectation is for the students to reproduce the show exactly as it was directed, thus reinforcing for the students the examples of good acting, directing, and drama (UIL Goal 2). In an OAP rehearsal, the director needs for students to assimilate changes to blocking and script quickly. Often, OAP companies only have five to seven days between contest performances, which means the company has only two or three rehearsals. Directors have little time to waste trying to re-direct new material and the standard in the rehearsal is that the students will have the discipline to remember changes and new material without prompting from the director.

These examples show each director demonstrating an attitude that winning (advancing) in the contest is important and that the primary way to accomplish advancing is to prepare and perform a high quality show. When the director thinks that the scenes are prepared in the manner of a high quality performance, he or she strives to enforce student memorization to ensure a consistent level of performance at each contest. The director practices repetition and maintains high expectations to aid student memorization of the script, blocking, and technical elements. Students must prepare the play to meet with the director’s vision of excellence, and then they must reproduce that performance exactly at each contest. The director, within the limited time of the OAP rehearsal schedule, works toward creating a high quality performance that will advance to the state contest.
Summary of Observations on Teacher Attitude

Teachers want to advance in the contest. This is evident in the observed manner in which they painstakingly rehearse and prepare for the One-Act Play contest. The directors know the rules and share these with the students to avoid rule infraction. They attend clinics to learn more techniques for creating a quality show. They remind students of the need to be consistent with each moment of the play to ensure a good performance. They strive to reach the goals of good acting and directing and learning about competition. However, the directors do not want to appear to have the goal of advancement as the top priority. They downplay the aspect of advancement as being paramount to the students. They tell students that the show is more important than the outcome of the contest. Teacher attitude toward winning is characterized by this dichotomy of desires. They desire to advance (all the way to the state contest), as it allows the students to be revered among the peers and the director to have future professional opportunities. Nevertheless directors understand that the contest outcome is subjective and unpredictable, so they downplay advancement in the hopes of producing a good show and a good experience for the students. They believe the combination of a quality show and positive student experience potentially leads to advancement and winning.

The teachers involved in this study showed examples of reaching toward three of the five UIL goals. The teachers demonstrated this tendency primarily in the comments they made to their students or in their actions associated with the OAP performance. None of the teacher participants appeared to support goal three (to promote theater in
adult leisure time) during the observed times although it might be argued that the students are already interested in theatre in the present so the teacher assumes they will remain interested later in life. Likewise, little evidence suggests that teachers actively attempt to pursue Goal 5, which is increasing the number of schools with theatre programs. One school in this study works to strengthen the existing program, but did not actually work towards initiating new programs within the district.

Teacher Interview Results

Teachers were interviewed using a protocol of questions. This section addresses the responses in the protocol interview questions that relate to Research Question 1 regarding teacher attitude toward winning and the effect on the accomplishment of the UIL goals.

Protocol Question #1: What role does OAP have in your season?

Participants each described how the One-Act Play fits into the regular school season. Each teacher in this study directs at least one other show during the school year. Thus, the teacher designs a season each school year and considers what types of plays would be appropriate for the students and the community. The purpose of this research question was to ascertain the differences that the directors feel about the One-Act play in general and to solicit their feelings about the types of scripts, the types of students, and the nature of the rehearsal and how these differ from the other shows produced during the year.
The main similarity in answering this question was the notion of group bonding that occurs with the company, which differs from other productions. One teacher called the One-Act season “intense.” The amount of rehearsal time with a small group gave these directors an opportunity to get to know all of their students well. The travel added to the experience of building relationships. Another teacher participant described the One-Act show as one that was “artistically strengthened” by the nature of working so closely with a small group. Teacher V, who only teaches one theatre class per school day, commented, “Several students have been in the OAP every year of high school, they see the process over years.” Their continuous participation gives him a chance to work with them for an extended period.

Directors strive to generate an intensity of emotion as well as strong relationships between actors and director during the rehearsal period. The created dynamic meets UIL Goal 1 in several ways. One aspect of UIL Goal 1 is “to satisfy the competitive, artistic spirit with friendly rivalry among schools.” By providing an environment rich in opportunities where students learn to care about others, the teachers in this study build the bonds necessary for students to have the sense of school pride and spirit needed to experience the rivalry among schools.

All of the teachers described the process through which they chose the play and why the OAP is treated differently from the other shows of the school year. Teacher X explained he usually tries to have a “diverse season, based on classical training…the OAP fits into that diversity.” Two of the programs require students to audition in the fall and become part of a class that creates the OAP. Both teachers described not only
the bonding of the class experience, but the ability to choose the most talented students to be a part of the experience. Teacher V stated a desire for students to have “exposure to shows and an exposure to work ethic,” and his shows tend to require less acting skill and rely more on ensemble. Teacher Y says, “You learn to look at the OAP as artistically different from other shows.” Ironically, he chooses shows that “have central figures and stories [rather than] an ensemble piece.”

Regardless of the recipe for the perfect show, directors have their own formula, and all of them begin with the most talented, dedicated students and work diligently to create a strong team of players who will rise to the challenge of the One-Act Play season. By taking time to consider the script so carefully, the directors in this study model UIL Goal 2, fostering the appreciation of good drama. As students work with their teacher over several years, they are often exposed to the process of play selection. Teacher Z said that during the fall semester, she would ask seniors to read several scripts to aid in her decision-making.

Teacher V appeared to have the most challenging job. He described the OAP as the “highlight of the season, the one production that is polished…it is often the only theatre experience for many kids.” The student population at his school is small and most students participate in multiple extracurricular activities. In order to find time to develop and rehearse the show, Teacher V hosts a six-week audition process. He invites any and all interested students who work with the chosen material for one hour per week starting in late November. Through this extended process, the director not only gets to know the students, but also learns which ones will have the talent, discipline
and commitment needed to attend the regular rehearsal sessions in the spring. As an additional challenge, the teacher is also the campus UIL coordinator and is the only teacher in the study to spend any part of the day teaching courses other than theatre (in fact he only teaches one theatre class per day). These responsibilities require him to encourage students to participate in all UIL activities, not just theatre arts. Throughout the school year, however, he makes theatre a priority and he has brought students to the state contest to perform seven times.

These teachers describe the care and effort they take to select an appropriate script and select students to participate. Directors choose the most talented students to act in the most suitable script for the OAP. This dedication shows the teachers’ desire to advance during the contest season because they consider what elements will make a superb performance even before they have the first rehearsal. The director typically works with students over the course of several years, learning about their talents and personalities. When the time comes to direct the OAP, these directors consider which students will work well within the structure of the contest play—the length of time it takes to rehearse and the dedication required to painstakingly develop each moment. By focusing on these elements, each director demonstrated an attitude that winning is important. They simultaneously, while unconsciously, work by their focus toward UIL Goals 1 and 2.

Protocol Question #4: What do you enjoy most about the OAP Contest? Least?

The participants’ responses to this question varied. As with the first question,
directors V and Z reiterated the idea of working with a group, “to make something important.” Teacher Y appreciated the ability to work with a “smaller cast and give individual attention” to each company member. Both Teachers Y and Z discussed one difference of the OAP is the aspect of traveling with the show. “Traveling requires different treatment,” commented the director Y. Teacher Z added that she enjoyed being able to perform in “different theatres and different spaces.” Director X also said that the students who participate in OAP have the opportunity to “see and think creatively...see the light bulb.” He added that the contest did enable his smaller school to have not only a theatre program, but also hire two teachers to work with students. The directors clearly desire to create a solid performance (UIL Goal 1) and foster appreciation of the complexities of theatrical performance (UIL Goal 2). By working with a smaller group and exposing them to different venues, students gain knowledge and experience in a new context, one unlike other extra curricular activities on campus.

Regarding the least enjoyable aspect of the OAP, the responses focused on a discussion of what the director felt when the students were not successful. Director Z said she feels “frustration...when the kids feel like they failed.” Each director commented on the times when students do not advance to the next contest as being a source of difficulty. To compensate for time when students may feel these feelings, each teacher works to put together a quality show, but also spends a portion of rehearsal time focusing on UIL Goal 4—how to win and lose graciously. Director Y tells the students to concentrate on the performance, saying, “make this show meet your expectations, don’t put your self value in the hands of one other person....This is a life
lesson, don’t let others control you.” Teacher Z believes she does not emphasize “winning” with the students. She described a particularly tough year when her cast was mostly male students. They did not advance from one contest to another and she watched most of them cry on the way home from the contest. The experience of seeing the pressure that an emphasis on winning places on students taught her to work with her students on creating a quality performance, and she tells them, “never settle for mediocrity.” To help his students deal with any disappointment, director V says he will “never use the word, ‘win’.” His emphasis is not only in creating a quality performance, but also on designing an experience that the students will treasure for the rest of their lives. One of his most defining OAP experiences was the group he worked with in 1994. He called the season, “magical” and described the sadness that students felt when the contest season ended. He recognized the power of working so closely with a group and strives to recreate that every year. He describes the perfect One-Act season as one in which “the group comes together—the sum is bigger than the individuals.” This comment indicates that the students will take the One-Act experience into adulthood (UIL Goal 3).

During rehearsals, teachers work towards the accomplishment of UIL Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4. Yet, these teacher responses also provide a background on why the “winning” dichotomy exists. Teachers want their students to be successful, but seeing them in situations where they are disappointed is frustrating for the teachers. By sharing these stories, the teachers explain why they no longer want to put the emphasis on advancement, as losing is such a painful time for students. However, the
teachers’ actions indicate that creating a quality performance (that will advance) is very important as well.

A second commonality of least favorable aspects was rules. The rules are considered “stifling” and “dumb” or that it feels as though the UIL “is watching every move.” Both Directors V and Y also described the process at the contests. As Teacher Z indicated, the contest manager now hires people to time the number of minutes of music during the show as well as read the script during the performance to see if there are word changes. Director V’s concern was about people who want to see other shows disqualified and how these people are hyper-vigilant to rule violations. Additionally, Teacher Y stated that while the rules enabled the contest to be consistent, he had seen some directors work hard to bend the rules. When probed to give more details, the director declined and said he did not feel comfortable discussing specific instances.

The rules are inherent in the One-Act process, yet these teacher comments express some dissatisfaction with the rules and perhaps the adjudication process in general. The main difference between directing the OAP and other shows during the school year is the adjudication process. With these comments, the teachers share that the inability to control certain aspects of the contest (e.g., the judge or the contest manager, who enforces the rules) deters from possible enjoyment of participation. Even when the directors express dissatisfaction about the rules, they still rehearse and explain rule compliance with the students. By explaining the rules to the students, teachers help students learn good sportsmanship about the judges’ ruling (UIL Goal 4). By explaining the rules, the likelihood increases that the students will gain an
understanding about what qualities the judge is assessing. Consequent to this, they may more readily accept the decision, even if it does not favor their performance.

*Protocol Question #12: Have you ever been to the state contest?*

This protocol question requested directors to share previous experiences within the OAP contest structure related to the state level of the competition. The question further attempts to elicit any comments about the concept of winning as related to reaching the state level contest. There were two possible interpretations of this question. The director could have responded with the times that he or she has attended the event as an audience member or the response could be about the number of times the director brought students to perform at the state contest. All participating teachers interpreted the question in the second manner, responding with the number of times they had advanced to the state level of the contest. By interpreting this question in this manner, the responses demonstrate that these teachers are thinking about the state contest in terms of winning—the highest level of achievement one could attain as a director. As this question was asked prior to the state contest, the answers are: Teacher Z: four times in twenty years of teaching; Teacher Y: one time in eleven years of teaching; Teacher X: zero times in four years of teaching; Teacher V: seven times in twenty years of teaching. By responding as they did, these directors indicate they do believe that winning is advancing to the state contest. As such, each director works toward accomplishing Goals 1 and 2 particularly so that their performance may be deemed worthy by the judge and advance through the contest system.
Protocol Question #14: Tell me what happens on the bus after a contest.

Contest day procedures were both observed and rehearsed by each school involved in the study. Understanding how a teacher prepares students for the contest is important in assessing teacher attitude toward winning. As teachers near the contest day, the process of OAP becomes intensified, with travel to and from the contest site, the rehearsal at the contest site, the time between rehearsal and contest, and the management of costumes, props, and set pieces, the performance, and the awards ceremony and critique. The more time and emphasis a director places on these process elements signifies a dedication to winning. Directors want to eliminate the stress of the process for students and reinforce the need to adhere to the rules and prevent disqualification. Here, directors are attending to both elements of the dichotomy—they are doing everything they can to create the quality show that will advance to the next level, but they are also teaching important organizational skills and helping students learn to be calm under stressful conditions.

Teacher participant Z described the experience with the most detail. Both on the way to the contest site and on the return home, students are to remain silent for the first 15 minutes. The director believes that the students need to spend this time thinking about the experience. She has learned the value of this time more than once. The goal of this time, says the teacher is, “to think about the contest, the performance, and to reflect. However, more than once, the bus has pulled away from the school parking lot and a student has exclaimed, ‘I forgot my costume or my prop!’ It shows that when you are well-meaning it can also be practical.”
A common theme among directors’ comments to this question was that the temperament of the students on the bus ride home was dependent on the outcome of the contest. In general, when students had a successful contest outcome of advancement, they were jovial and high-spirited on the bus home. If the contest ended the troupe’s season, the bus ride was generally quiet and many students cried. As stated before, a director is most frustrated when the students have hurt feelings when they do not advance. Most teachers in this study rely on what they can teach students during the process to help at these times.

Teacher management of contest day is integral to helping students manage stress. Students will encounter numerous challenges on contest day. Being in unfamiliar surroundings, using different technical equipment, working with unknown people can put students to the test. The teachers in this study helped alleviate student fears by practicing contest day procedures and learning about rules violations. In addition to reducing student stress, these teachers created an environment in which students might learn about the UIL goals. As students felt more comfortable on the day of the contest, they could attend to watching other schools’ performances, learning more about drama, acting, and directing techniques (UIL Goal 2). They could also observe other schools’ behavior, learning more about friendly rivalry (UIL Goal 1) and good sportsmanship (UIL Goal 4). Creating buffer zones for students reduces contest day anxiety and may also provide a context for students to explore feelings of loss should they not advance to the next contest level.
Protocol Question #15: How do your students feel about winning and losing?

The main theme for every teacher’s response to this question was to emphasize the idea that “winning isn’t everything” and most thought their students held this belief. Teacher participant Y described the OAP rehearsal process as one in which students “try to achieve at the state level from day one—prepare, rehearse, perform—set state as the goal. It doesn’t mean that if you don’t reach it you fail, it means that ‘somebody beat us today’.” Teacher Z said her students do have an expectation that at the end of the contest, they will hear, “[Our school] and who will advance” and that “[the students] did a good show and are proud.” Teacher V described his students as under a lot of pressure to win. Their school has not only performed at state for the past three years, but also many of the students participating this year have been a part of that tradition, or had siblings who participated. Teacher V explained, “They have an expectation to win and want to live up to it.” Again, the dichotomy of wanting to win but trying to teach students that “winning isn’t everything” was noted throughout this study. This question required the teacher to speak on behalf of the students as to what he or she believed they felt about winning. The teachers indicate they know that the students believe that winning equals advancing and that the ultimate goal is to reach the state contest, especially for school whose students had attained that in recent years. The dichotomy often forces teachers to have dual goals—reaching the state contest versus attaining the UIL goals, which do not emphasize advancement. The teachers, knowing that the students want to advance, can only try to work toward the achievement of Goals 1 and 2, and provide an environment to create a high quality performance and
teach students about good acting, directing, and drama. Teachers who consistently attempt to create the best performance at times find success in the form of advancement.

Protocol Question #21: What does winning look like?

This question was added during the first or second interview, depending on time available with the director. The nature of understanding how a teacher felt toward winning required an understanding of what the teacher believed “winning” to be. Teacher Z offered, “Winning is when the kids do a great show, advancing is just a bonus.” Teacher Y stated, “I want to…hope to have success, I don’t want the kids to fail.” Teacher X described winning as “something tangible, a payoff…it furthers student belief in what they do.” Teacher V said that “winning is good, but it doesn’t solve problems.” He remembers the first four years of teaching he never made it beyond the zone contest. Out of that experience he attended more trainings so that he could increase his directing skills, potentially increasing his chances of winning. But now he realizes that there are “more important things than winning, I want to make the kids better people for having been a part of the OAP.”

The goal of the directors, as seen in this question, seems to be to create a meaningful experience for students, one from which they will learn life lessons rather than concentrate on winning or advancing. These responses parallel the UIL goals 2 and 3, wherein students learn not only to appreciate the art form of theatre, but also bring these experiences with them into adulthood. Directors hope to provide a
meaningful experience for students—not only to create a quality performance, but also to provide a context in which students can develop healthy social relationships. Teacher V talked about students who had participated in OAP during his early years of teaching. These former students are still friends and they often visit him at school. These lasting relationships appear to be a side effect of preparing a quality performance and participating in the OAP system.

**Summary of Interview Data**

The interview data on teacher attitudes indicate that the teachers in this study are student centered and focused on creating a meaningful experience for students. Connected to this theme is the dichotomy of wanting to win, but teaching students that winning isn’t everything. Teachers desire to reach the UIL goals, particularly Goals 1 (competitive spirit and high quality performance), 2 (foster good acting), and 4 (winning and losing graciously), but they also place an emphasis on advancement. They value the process of the OAP, as demonstrated by their comments about wanting to perform in a variety of venues and provide opportunities for students to see shows at different contests. However, part of this process is adhering to the rules, which are the heart of competition. Though teachers recognize the rules are necessary, they deem them to be unfair. Their desire to win and provide a quality experience for the student actors overshadows their disdain for the rules. This position of wanting to win, while providing a quality performance and acting/directing experience, supports the first, second and fourth UIL goals. Teachers know the expectation of the UIL, which is to
create quality theatre and teach students valuable life skills, but they are confronted with personal desires to advance in a difficult system.

The directors stress creating a high quality performance with students (Goals 1 & 2) and teach them proper procedures for the contest site, including bus and awards ceremony etiquette. Directors want to do everything within their control to create a quality show; attention to detail is key. They will take the time and effort needed to select the right script and the right mix of students in an effort to find the talent necessary to prepare a show of excellence, one that will continue to advance through the contests.

At the same time however, when asked to describe winning, none of the participants responded that winning meant advancement. To these teachers, winning is teaching the students about life, creating a good show, and having an experience they will remember. The elements that can be controlled, such as blocking, line readings, and costuming are attended to in such a way as to create a worthy performance, yet the director also works toward providing a memorable, meaningful experience for the students.

Summary of Observation and Interview Data: Teacher Attitude

In the study, the teachers often said one thing in the interview and did another in the observed rehearsal. This is the dichotomy of wanting to win but saying that winning isn’t everything. In the interviews, teachers described winning the OAP contest as delivering a quality show or creating an experience that the students would
remember as positive. However, during the rehearsals, the directors chided students who did not memorize lines or blocking quickly. The directors discussed the judge’s viewpoint openly with students, reinforcing that the purpose of the performance was to please one person in the room. During the interviews, however, the directors each talked of previous experiences when students did not advance in the contest. These stories highlighted students’ feelings of frustration or crying at the outcome. For every director, these experiences reinforced the notion that advancing creates positive feelings and that they would do everything they could to direct a show that would advance, to avoid student frustration and disappointment. The drive to win for the purpose of avoiding student disappoint goes against UIL Goal 4, which teaches students how to win and lose graciously. Teachers intentionally avoided the opportunity to address this goal, possibly due to the painful nature of dealing with student disappointment, when in fact, dealing with disappointment constitutes a growth opportunity for students and teachers.

At the same time, directors would also tell students that the experience of producing a quality show is more important than advancing. Directors did describe the frustration of not knowing what the formula for advancement looked like, as each contest outcome is determined by the judge’s reaction on a given day. This frustration demonstrates the drive to win. Given this conundrum, directors do their best to create a quality show, reinforce the idea that “advancing does not mean winning” and then try to provide a context for students to express disappointment and frustration when they did not advance. This drive to win fosters quality performance and supports UIL Goal
1. In addition, the buffers the teachers provided when winning did not happen supported UIL Goal 4, which encourages students to deal with loss.

The first research question examines teachers’ attitudes toward winning and the relationship of that attitude toward the accomplishment of the UIL goals. The major theme emerging from the data collected for the first research question is that teachers verbally express reticence toward admission of an attitude toward winning, but when observed in rehearsals, push students toward higher levels of performance, for the sake of advancement. The directors do this, in great part, due to their desire to see students succeed, and not feel consequently, disappointed. Their concern for the students’ growth and development, as noted in their intense involvement with them and care for them as performers was evident in both interviews and rehearsal behaviors and communication. Every teacher participating in this study devoted time to creating relationships with students. They accomplished this through rapport development with individual students, as well as by creating ensemble among the group members.

The teachers’ goal of providing a meaningful experience for students was noted in both observations and interviews as teachers not only set high expectations for the performance, but also reiterated that contest outcome is not a determining factor in the true success of their program. Teachers want to win/advance, but they are careful to downplay this desire with students as several of them have seen the detrimental effects on students when winning is the primary goal. As several teachers in the study related stories of students crying after contests, the teachers now try to focus only on creating a quality performance and allowing advancement to happen at the will of the judge.
Research Question 2: How do teaching, rehearsal technique, and external support systems affect teachers’ contest preparation and the achievement of UIL goals?

The findings from the investigation of this question are addressed in the order posed, with each component, teaching, rehearsal, and external support considered separately, as noted in observations and interviews.

Teaching Techniques

Observations

Throughout the observations three common teaching techniques were observed across all teachers: (a) use of metaphor, (b) development of rapport, and (c) use of humor and praise. These were labeled as teaching techniques, as they were additional to the requirements of actually producing a play (which in this study are called rehearsal techniques). The teaching techniques have been identified as unique to OAP preparation as they appear to support one common goal: development of ensemble within the OAP company. In order for the students to attain a high quality performance (UIL Goal 1), as well as meet the demands of the stressful OAP season, a director relies on these teaching techniques to build strong relationships, not only between the director and the students, but also among students. A strong ensemble is necessary for the company to continue to participate at a high level of engagement for the numerous weeks of rehearsal and contest performance.

Use of metaphor. Metaphors employed frequently during rehearsals helped students gain understanding of a moment or idea in the play. Teacher Z was
particularly adept at this skill and said, “You’re the Dr. Phil of ancient Greece;” “It’s like a bug zapper;” “like the Narnia thing;” and “Think of it as a hillbilly bed.” Other teacher examples include, “This is not ‘The Children’s Hour’;” “He is Elvis and Kurt Cobain all rolled into one;” “It’s like the kids in a car;” and “She is like your girlfriend, how do you feel if you think it’s over?” Providing metaphors for student actors helps them to relate the onstage action to what they know in real life, affected the contest preparation, by engaging the students in meaningful connections that fostered investment in their character, scene, or action in the play. With an increased understanding of character and motivation, the student actor can appreciate the complexities of acting (UIL Goal 2) as well as enhance their performance overall (UIL Goal 1).

*Development of rapport.* Teachers spent time developing individual and group rapport. Teacher Z used a variety of techniques to build rapport. She regularly relied on her assistant director (a student) to lead warm-ups and prepare the company for the rehearsal. During the rehearsal students who were not acting on stage would sit on the apron of the stage and watch. The director would ask these students for their opinions and include their suggestions in the direction of the play. In this manner, all of the students in the company were given the opportunity to voice their opinion and participate in the actual creation of the play. Likewise, when the director knew she had to change the concept of the jury members, which had been ruled puppets by the UIL State Drama Director, she led a discussion with the students to strategize ways to make the puppets acceptable according to the rules. During this discussion, director Z explained the rules to the student so they could be a part of the process to rework the
scene. The teaching technique of incorporating student opinions into the play direction unified the cast for the purpose of creating “their show.” Goal two states that students will learn to appreciate good acting, directing, and drama. Evidence of the director fostering goal two is shown in the practice of building rapport, particularly through shared decision making between the director and students.

Teacher Z also built rapport in other ways. On another afternoon, a student asked to speak to Teacher Z privately. The student was concerned about the commitment she had made to the production, as it was taking away from the time she needed to study for her other rigorous courses. Teacher Z used this time to listen to the student’s concerns and reflect back pertinent questions about the student’s goals and desires. After some discussion, the student agreed to stay committed to the production and work on a schedule for completing the other assignments. The encounter ended with a hug, and the student saying, “Thanks, Mom.”

Providing a safe environment for students to express personal concerns helped directors build rapport between themselves and their students. Creating a supportive situation provided a context for students to learn the difficult lessons associated with winning and losing (UIL Goal 4). By developing rapport, founded in trust, with the students, teachers taught students to listen and accept tough criticism. Students learned that the teacher’s care extends beyond the development of a good show. For the teachers, developing rapport was an important element in contest preparation, not only because it represents good teaching, but also because it provides the foundation
for helping students learn that the experience is more important than winning at a contest.

Teacher X’s style of relating to students and developing rapport included his display of personal feelings and experiences. He commented to students, “I have to run through my blocking to remember it;” “I know I sound intense, well I am;” and “Today I had an event happen in my classroom and I had to send the student to the hospital...but regardless of everything, we have to keep going. You can make excuses or you can be ‘let’s move on.’” These phrases of encouragement and an attitude of understanding helped this group to create the necessary bond to keep rehearsing. As with Teacher Z, this director also created an atmosphere based on trust. Teacher X allowed students to see his human side. On difficult days, students had learned to rely on the teachers’ caring attitude. Both Teacher X and Z modeled an attitude of graciousness, an example of what they wanted their students to develop for UIL Goal 4.

Director X chose a traditional script, a realistic drama, but one with several difficult acting and technical elements. All of the characters speak with a dialect, which is a challenge for young actors. At the first rehearsal, the director insisted the entire company must speak with the accent at all times, even the director. The process of learning how to speak a dialect correctly reinforced the creation of a quality show (UIL Goal 1), but also worked to bond the actors together as they learned to surmount a difficult element together. During the rehearsals, the students corrected one another’s accent. By the day of the first contest, each student had learned the dialect correctly.
and the experience of overcoming a difficult task provided a common experience for the students.

As stated earlier, Director V appears to have the most challenges as a teacher and OAP director. He only teaches one entry-level theatre class per day and his students are involved in so many activities that he must work very hard to organize time to work with students and teach them the skills necessary to produce theatre. He compensates for this limitation by starting the OAP process very early and hosting a six-week audition. Beginning in January, he holds only one or two evening rehearsals per week. One of his methods to build rapport (and the resulting ensemble) with his group is to take them to as many clinics as possible. By attending a clinic, the director can work with his students for several hours at a time and have time to talk with them on the bus to and from the venue. Likewise, the students spend time getting to know each other during these field trips. This season, director V and his students attended four clinics, some during the school day, others after school or on the weekend. These found moments became precious not only in the development of the play (UIL Goal 1), but also in the development of rapport. Director V had very little time with his students and spent the majority of rehearsal working the mechanics of the play. The clinic became extra rehearsal time, an opportunity for the students and director to strategize specific moments in the play. The clinic also becomes a focus point for the students, who use it as a deadline to memorize lines and blocking (these events signaling a commitment to UIL Goal 1 and UIL Goal 2). By using a sanctioned UIL activity to his advantage,
director V helps to create a strong show by not only getting an outside opinion, but also carving out time to bond with his students.

At another school, director Y developed company rapport over several years. The One-Act company was a class composed of students who had auditioned to be in the play. During the observation time, it became clear that these students had worked together as a group over several years. Most students were seniors or juniors, and only three were sophomores. There were no freshmen in the group. These students took the One-Act Play contest very seriously. In his interview, director Y described this phenomenon, “These kids wanted...understood the building process...they saw how it [the One-Act Play] comes together. Other students I have worked with in the past did not understand the intellectual discipline of going to state.” These students were characterized by this unique drive and this group attribute was reinforced in the student focus group interview. Because these students appeared to possess this strength, as well as group cohesiveness prior to the start of the OAP season, the director focused on the mechanics of building a play. Such a focus signified the teacher’s commitment to achieving Goals 1 and 2. I noted that this director had a long term approach to the One-Act play: work with students for several years and success (advancement) in OAP should follow.

*Use of humor and praise.* Director Z used humor and praise as teaching techniques. In the play, a group of female students became the entity known as The Furies. In her direction to them, director Z said, “creepy things, be creepy.” This comment caused giggles among the students and provided a bonding moment for
them. During and after each rehearsal, the director praised both individual students and the group. She often pointed out when a student had incorporated a particular action or line reading. Working individually with students, using humor and praise helped the director build a strong ensemble and a quality performance (UIL Goal 1). Further, directors used humor to teach about good sportsmanship (UIL Goal 4). Learning to accept criticism in an appropriate manner is a valuable life skill for all students and humor is one way to help students acknowledge mistakes.

During rehearsals, director Y did use humor and praise as well. Prior to an early run-through of several scenes, the director commented, “This is going to be disastrous,” prompting giggles, but also allowing the students the freedom to fail, as early rehearsals can be difficult when students try to remember the lines, the blocking, the entrances, and where the furniture is placed. The director was also well skilled with the use of praise, often describing students’ actions in glowing terms. “Did you see how well [Student] made that entrance?” or “Excellent, let’s keep that,” were common expressions. Working with students over time and encouraging their talent and desire to succeed in the OAP system were keys to the success of director Y and created an environment to teach the goals of quality performance (UIL Goal 1) and good directing (UIL Goal 2).

At director X’s school, the rehearsal occurred after the school day. Most of these students did have class with the director and learned the mechanics of play creation during the school day. However, director X did have to work with the OAP students to build ensemble, so he incorporated praise and humor. One afternoon, the students
were trying to figure out what time they were supposed to leave school the following
day to attend a contest. Teacher X said they needed to come to school on time, have all
their belongings ready, and the bus would depart at 10:00 a.m. However, the number
of interruptions from the students while the director was trying to relay this information
caused everyone to end up in laughter. The students would ask the same questions
over and over, “What time does the bus leave?” or “What time should I be at school?”
or “Can I go to my statistics class?” Instead of becoming angry at the continuous
interruptions, Teacher X joined into the confusion by stating false information. At the
end, the teacher finally conveyed the information, and the entire company was in good
spirits. Laughter provided a few moments of release from the stress of OAP and created
a common bonding experience for students.

Summary of Observation: Teaching Techniques

The teachers in this study practiced three teaching techniques—use of metaphor,
use of humor and praise, and development of rapport. Teachers used these techniques
as part of OAP contest preparation to create group ensemble. Ensemble is necessary in
the OAP process because of the increased stress of a prolonged season. These directors
created a positive environment in which to rehearse a show. Taking the time to build
relationships and develop rapport allowed teachers the opportunity to learn about
students’ lives and personalities. Apart from the UIL goals, directors understand the
need to maintain group cohesiveness during the OAP season. However, on a practical
side, the directors also developed this rapport to help students learn about the process
of the OAP, which is related to UIL Goal 4 (winning and losing graciously). Designing an encouraging environment allows students a place to feel comfortable to express feelings of joy and disappointment throughout rehearsals and performances.

**Interview Results**

Only two questions during the interview process related to the aspect of teaching that addressed the accomplishment of the UIL goals. These questions expanded the experiences of the theatre teachers by questioning them about their choice to become a theatre teacher and what goals each teacher has for his or her students. The data collected from these questions provide a background for understanding how teachers achieve the UIL goals during the preparation for the contest.

*Protocol Question #6: Why did you become a theatre teacher?* Each teacher participant explained his or her personal history and the decision to become a teacher and choose theatre as the field. Teacher Z said she always knew she wanted to be a teacher, from the time she was a little girl and “played school.” In high school, she participated in band, until her senior year when she participated in the musical. “The theatre bug bit me,” she says, “and I knew I did not want to ‘just get married’ so I decided to teach theatre.”

Teacher participant Y described his personal history as an actor in both high school and college. He knew that he wanted to teach theatre, so he pursued it. However, he says that during his educational training he felt that UIL OAP competition, “was not that important.” After he started his first teaching placement, he could see
that “there was a sense of legacy—to work toward the goal of state [contest].” He believes now that “discipline and competition bring out the good in kids...kids love school because they are in theatre, it provides them ownership and responsibility.”

Director X started acting in high school and went to college to get his degree in theatre. After college, he searched for acting roles and took up substitute teaching to supplement his income. Three years after graduation, he completed the courses necessary to become a teacher. He says he is from “a family of teachers” and that the decision to teach came naturally to him.

Teacher V also “got the bug when I was a junior in high school.” He attended the state meet in Austin and watched “four legendary directors—the shows were *Macbeth*, *Trojan Women*, and *Tom Jones*—to see something so good woke up something in me, I couldn’t get away from it.” He attended college with the goal of pursuing theatre education. Director V described his early years of contests and how he did not “get out of zone” for the first four years. These disappointments encouraged him to take more coursework and improve his directing skills.

All of these directors were educated within the state of Texas and each had participated in UIL events while in high school. Upon embarking on a career in education theatre, these directors were aware of the OAP contest and its role in high school theatre in Texas. Understanding the background of the contest afforded these teachers a perspective from which to begin contest preparations. These prior experiences provided the teachers in this study with a sense of UIL expectations, particularly with an understanding of the goals. Having attended the OAP state contest
as a student participant or audience member gave these teachers a point of reference for their own work as a director. These directors knew about the process and expectation of the system and had seen the quality necessary for a show to be advanced to the state level.

They took care during their early careers to receive the proper training that would help them become successful OAP directors. Armed with this knowledge, these directors could prepare their own students for a high quality performance (UIL Goal 1). Additionally, the directors knew about the system in general—the judging, the travel, the value of a clinic, etc. This intangible wisdom also provided a context from which to prepare for the contest. The directors could (and did) concentrate on teaching students skills, not only in acting and directing (UIL Goal 2) but also in accepting criticism (UIL Goal 4) and fostering a sense of pride in one’s work (UIL Goal 1).

Protocol Question #7: What goals do you have for your students this season?
The responses to this question emphasized a lack of conscious consideration of the UIL goals on the part of the teacher. In response to these questions, none of the directors mentioned the UIL goals at all. Instead they focused on their desire to create an experience for the students, one that will, “make them better people;” “one that they will remember in ten years;” “creating a good show that they will be proud of;” and “so students will know what it feels like to be a part of a larger society—that they will learn about relationships.” These comments affirm the address of Goal 3, to foster life-long appreciation for drama and participation in dramatic production. Although the accomplishment of the goal is unrealized at this point, the teachers’ actions suggest
their attention is set on the intent of the third UIL goal. Although the teachers did not mention the UIL goals by name, their description of student outcomes reflects the purpose of Goal 3. Without recognizing it consciously, these directors tacitly perceive and strive toward the accomplishment of Goal 3.

Summary of interview data. For the participants in this study, teaching is about preparing students for contests through the venue of relationships with and meaningful experiences for students. The observations during this study demonstrate the care and devotion that teachers have for students. Every teacher in this study took time to share individual moments with students and create an enjoyable atmosphere through humor and praise. Teacher Z counseled a student in need and Teacher Y allowed students the freedom to fail and masked it through the use of humor.

When asked to identify what goals they had for their students, teachers did not cite the UIL goals, but instead talked about establishing circumstances through which students learn about more than theatre (fostering Goals 1 and 2). Though none of the teachers mentioned the UIL goals specifically, many of their actions did support teaching an appreciation for the creation of theatre. As students were given opportunity to participate in the development of the play (especially with Teachers Y and Z), they were learning to appreciate the subtleties of acting and directing (UIL Goal 2). Additionally, teachers taught by modeling caring relationships the important lessons about winning and losing graciously (UIL Goal 4). Students saw and heard from the teacher that the process of creating a quality play was more important than winning or
advancing. The students learned to feel comfortable with the director and with each other and that those relationships were more significant than any trophy.

Rehearsal Technique

*Observations*

Observation time was devoted to noting how directors block and rehearse plays. Three commonalities that became apparent from these observations included: (a) attention to quality of performance, (b) naturalism in acting, and (c) the use of trial and error. During rehearsals, the participating directors focused on UIL Goals 1 and 2, creating a quality performance and providing opportunities for students to appreciate good acting, directing, and drama. In order to accomplish these goals, the directors utilized these standard rehearsal techniques to improve student performance and teach the elements of acting and directing.

*Attention to quality of performance.* All directors spent time working on the general elements of playmaking: building character, motivation, pacing, creating moments, blocking, line reading, physical and vocal warm-ups, and technical elements. The clear pattern was that directors spent the majority of time creating a quality performance employing all of the elements. Every director began rehearsals with physical and vocal warm-ups; every director began the process by reading through the play for understanding, moving into blocking and line memorization, and then using the remaining rehearsal time to explore context, characterization, motivation, pacing, and technical elements.
All of the teacher participants in this study also paid attention to each small detail of the show, spending time creating moments of action and stage pictures. Common phrases heard during rehearsal include, “You’re all on the same plane, find someplace else to stand;” “You’re in a line, we can’t have that;” “Soon you’re going to have to kiss;” “Keep your projection up;” “Too fast, much too fast;” “You’re in a straight line, can you break that up for me? Find something interesting;” “Look at your area, love your area, you will have to take it down and put it back exactly the same;” and “Don’t turn it like that, you just ruined our special effect.” In a traditional show, the director works with the actors until opening night and rehearsal is over. In the OAP system, as long as the show advances, rehearsals continue. The company usually has a maximum of five to seven days of rehearsal between each contest to incorporate any suggestions given by the previous contest’s judge. The directors spent these rehearsals working on the smallest details, as the students already had a sense of the blocking and line readings and other major events of the play.

In particular during the later rehearsals of the season, the directors focused on pacing and moments. Often associated with discussions of pacing were comments regarding the time of the show. Each OAP contest play is limited to 40 minutes. If student actors are slow with entrances or miss lines, the entire play may be in jeopardy. Any play lasting more than 40 minutes results in immediate disqualification. The directors seem to be aware of the fine line of attempting to take time for looks, pauses, touches, or other movements while making sure the entire play finishes under time. The rehearsal is the opportunity for directors to use the repetition to help students
memorize exactly how long to take for a given moment to keep the pace flowing. Typical director comments were, “We picked up a minute!” “This is not a full run-through, we are only doing moments;” “Too fast;” “Add a pause just prior to that departure;” “Pacing was too fast—the first four scenes happened in seven minutes;” and “No slow walking allowed any more.” Whatever the direction, speed up or slow down, directors attempted to balance internal timing and playing time.

Part of creating a quality performance is the attention to the rules and process of the contest. While the directors spent the majority of rehearsal time creating a quality show, some time was afforded for the mechanics of the contest. Every director took time to rehearse the set up and strike, as each school is given seven minutes to complete these tasks. Each school that advanced in the contest also rehearsed in both larger and smaller spaces to adjust for the differences in contest venues. Teacher Y rehearsed in the district coliseum, a space larger than their home stage where they could spread the set out and work on their volume and projection. Teacher V moved his company from the cafeteria they usually rehearsed in to the gymnasium floor, to simulate the size of the larger theatres they would perform in for region and state contests. Teacher X moved the company between the stage on which they normally worked to the floor of the multipurpose room to adjust for the different sizes of stage. Each change in venue enabled the students to increase the quality of performance, as they practiced entrances and blocking movements on the larger or smaller stages. Paying attention to these small details signaled the teachers’ adherence to UIL Goal 1, creating a quality performance.
Every director also took time to clarify his or her expectations for the contest day directly. The rehearsal of procedures helped create a quality performance and enabled students to be familiar with the process of the OAP contest. Teacher Z even held a meeting with parents to describe the contest experience and share expectations and acceptable behaviors for them as well. The students in Teacher Z’s company were instructed to give a standing ovation for every cast or crewmember who received an individual award. The students were also asked not to scream or yell out; clapping is the only appropriate response during the contest. All of the directors required the students to dress up for the awards ceremony and all directors gave instructions for the students to refrain from talking about any performances, schools, or actors until they were on the bus headed home. The directors also spent time talking to students about the judge and the critique process, explaining appropriate responses to the judge. Taking the time to teach these expectations is one difference between a traditional show and the OAP and implies the teacher’s concern with UIL Goal 4, emphasizing good sportsmanship.

Naturalism in acting. Every director utilized a natural style of acting and reinforced this approach with student actors. They each encouraged their students to “Be more real;” “Be more believable;” “Tell us a story;” “Show me real pain, real sorrow, don’t be an actor;” and “You’re acting like you already know he’s going to die and it’s only the first scene.” These directorial comments are used to help the students understand character and build motivation. Often directors would ask the students questions, “Why are you entering the room now?” “Why are you running over there?”
Show me that you’re running to get away;” “Have a purpose for why you are moving someplace;” “If it is a temple that is off limits, why are you here?” or “Where did you come from?” to help the students think through blocking choices and line readings.

Building character takes time and theatre, as director Z said, “It is a creative art and it evolves from humans—interpretations, that kind of thing.” Often directors would encourage the student to work out the acting problem. The directors would say, “I’m not going to give you a line reading, I want you to think about it on your own;” “There was no internalization with your acting today, it was very two-dimensional;” or “Play the subtext.” Allowing actors to work through the material is integral to creating theatre (UIL Goal 2).

Each director utilized repetition as a means to reinforce new learning in an effort to increase the level of naturalism. Director V once repeated the opening sound cues four times to make sure the sequencing was correct. Director Y would repeat sections of a scene and build on a few more lines, then repeat the scene to that point again and build on a few more lines, continuing until the entire scene had been completed. A challenge for director V was the nature of the group character, The Furies. During the rehearsal process, the students playing this role would have to rehearse moment to moment with the script, practicing the choral style reading of the material. Each student would need to pick up her section of the line in perfect timing to make everyone sound as if they were one actor. Repetition aided memorization of the performance, allowing students the comfort of familiarity when performing under unknown or stressful circumstances.
Trial and error. Another theme common to all directors was the use of trial and error during the rehearsal process. Every director would try blocking, line readings, or technical elements that were later changed or removed. Director V changed a significant technical element late in the rehearsal process. The script called for a real watermelon to break open and items inside to fall out. During the early rehearsals, the actors worked with the real fruit, juice and all, numerous times to perfect the scene. Just prior to the contest however, the director not only removed the fruit from the stage, he reworked the script cutting and changed the final few minutes of the play. The students were able to assimilate this change and remember the new lines and blocking.

Teacher V also made substantial revisions among the cast members. Between the area and the regional contests, he switched parts between the lead actresses. Within a seven-day period, with only one rehearsal scheduled, he met individually with the students to explain the switch and asked them to learn the new role. The cast was also able to make the mental leap and when the rehearsals resumed the exchange appeared seamless. Rehearsal is a time for trial and error. In this situation, the director decided that these two actresses would better serve the production in opposite roles. The entire company openly accepted the change and incorporated the switch with apparent ease. The director taught the students about the nature of theatre and the understanding that the entire group creates the play, not just one or two talented lead actors. Further, the director reinforced the UIL Goals 1 and 2, wherein students learn to appreciate directing and acting, as well as desire to create a quality performance. By
accepting the change with grace and ease, these students demonstrated their theatrical skills as well as their adaptability, which they described as an important benefit to OAP participation.

Summary of observation data. The above description of the rehearsal processes demonstrates the teachers’ desire to prepare a quality show and teach the principles of theatre (UIL Goals 1 and 2). Rehearsal is the time for directors to prepare the show in a disciplined and organized manner. At the same time, the director must be sensitive to the differences between the OAP and other shows they direct within the season. The directors must adhere to quality playmaking during this time, which includes an emphasis on acting, characterization, pacing, blocking, and so forth. Yet directors must also allot rehearsal time to prepare for those elements related to contest, such as travel, the awards ceremony, and contest rules and procedures. By first creating a valuable show and then placing it within contest structure, the director must attend to dual purposes. The rehearsal techniques allow the director to create a quality performance and teach students about acting, directing, and the nature of theatre, all of which address the UIL Goals 1 and 2.

Interview Results

The third interview provided data related to the rehearsal process in this study. At this time during the study, the teacher participants had a chance to reflect on the season. These data emphasize the relationship between the procedure of the rehearsal and the attainment of the UIL goals.
Protocol Question #16: How did the students do at the last contest? How did you feel about the outcome? Of the four schools participating in this study, three of them reached the state contest. The directors of those schools were all pleased with the student performance and the final result, but several had interesting comments. One said, “We did a good show. But I’ve done shows in the past that I thought were better that never made it to state.” Another commented, “What are the odds?” “Getting to state is a crap shoot. In some ways, all the weight is lifted off my shoulders. It makes you feel like you know what you’re doing.” Another said, “Remembering how to win still makes you a regular guy.” These comments display the sense of accomplishment that the directors have with the success of the outcome, but they are still aware of the difficulties it takes to advance to the state contest. Teacher Z said, “It’s difficult to have a consistent program in such a strong area of the state. Everyone has great programs—some phenomenal programs never get out of district.” These comments indicate that a bit of mystery surrounds any school’s chances of getting to the state contest. Even if a director works really hard to create a good show and a piece of quality theatre, this does not mean that the show will advance to the final rounds. The directors indicate in their responses to this question that all of the techniques demonstrated during the rehearsal period may have little to do with the outcome of the contest.

Protocol Question #17: Could you or the students have done anything differently to change the outcome? As three schools made it to the state contest, the directors had little to comment on this question. The director who did not make it to the state contest described her frustration at not advancing out of the zone contest. She
related, “This is my first time to be out at zone.” She spoke of the bus ride home, “Kids were angry, kids were crying...while we were still at the contest site, I told them to stay positive, wait until they were off site to cry.” She followed her own teaching and the students remained quiet for the first fifteen minutes of the bus ride. Upon returning back to the school they all went out to eat.

She also described her personal feelings, “I cried, it’s hurtful. It’s hard to have one person say ‘you’re not good enough.’” She was proud that her kids had done a good show. She said the hardest part was the critique: “I could see the pain they felt during the critique. Who will listen during critique time? It is very hard to hear what is being said.” As she had said in the first interview, the toughest thing was to see the students’ disappointment. She reported, “These seniors really wanted to go to state. They did when they were sophomores. I think they felt like they let me down, there will be no ‘banner’ to put up in the hallway....The kids do take this personally.”

These questions were asked at the end of the contest season. Director responses indicate that not only did rehearsal techniques not predict the outcome (protocol question 16), but also that upon completion of the final contest performance, little consideration is given to rehearsal techniques. This director is much more concerned with her students’ feelings and her own reaction to the contest. She expresses her belief that she and her students did everything they could during the rehearsal process and still could not affect the outcome of the contest. This experience has left her feeling angry and hurt on a personal level, even though in earlier interviews she described the contest process with confidence. She had brought students to the state contest several
times before and she was shocked that her preparation this year did not garner advancement out of the zone contest (level 1). The responses to this question indicate that during rehearsals, directors attempt to attend to every detail, so that they do not have to look back and identify areas of weakness that may have contributed to a loss.

Protocol Question # 19: Any thoughts about next year? This question provides insight into teacher consideration for future OAP experiences. The question assesses a director’s frame of mind about future rehearsals and attempts to ascertain whether he or she might do anything differently in later rehearsals that might alter the outcome of the contest, particularly if the school did not win. Teacher Z had already been thinking about the show for next year, “I thought about it Monday (two days after the contest)....I am thinking modern, but also looking at the classics.” As she is the only director in this study who did not advance to the state level, her responses indicate that she has already been plotting strategies for success in next year’s contest.

Teacher Y had already announced that he was leaving educational theatre to pursue other interests. Two teacher participants had not given next year’s contest any thought at this point. Teacher Y also added, “I do like to wait until the fall to meet my kids and see what their strengths are before I consider choosing the next show.” These comments indicate that upon advancing to state, there may be a time for relaxation and reflection, and simply enjoying the success of winning the contest.

The interview data suggest that rehearsal process is not necessarily an indicator for contest success. The teachers are clearly concerned with play selection and spend time considering next year’s show. However, for all of the hard work these teachers
dedicate to creating the quality performance (UIL Goal 1) they admit many obstacles still stand in the way of advancing to the state contest. The teachers demonstrated a nonchalant attitude toward the end of the process. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that three of the five teachers in this study did attain the goal of reaching the state contest.

**Summary of Observation and Interview Data**

The clear indication from the teachers participating in this study is a desire to create high quality theatre (reflected in UIL goals 1 and 2). The teachers used the skills and knowledge gained from their education and experience to create a production that met the highest standards in acting, directing, and technical elements, while staying within the guidelines of the One-Act Play system. The teachers balanced each moment-to-moment of the show while making sure that the students remained under time and used the appropriate scenic elements. Teachers used rehearsal time to teach traditional playmaking skills as well as the OAP process. As well, teachers allocated some time to focus on aspects such as contest day etiquette and procedures (UIL Goal 4). The duality of purposes for OAP rehearsals demonstrates the unique differences between them and traditional play rehearsals.

The directors in this study carefully considered student actors, their levels of experience and talent, and then provided a disciplined approach to play creation. By focusing on each moment of the play and enhancing student understanding of character and motivation, these directors worked to produce a quality show, one that
would not only advance, but also support the contest goals. And while directors did not mention the contest goals during rehearsal, their actions demonstrated their application. Teachers’ attention to contest preparation and attainment of the UIL goals can be contrasted to the responses from the interview questions in this section. While the directors are focused on creating a quality performance with every action they take during the rehearsal, they still admit that reaching the state contest seems to be based on luck, rather than skill. Even the most prepared directors, who thought they had a show worthy of state performance, did not attain that level in the past. A disparity exists for directors: they want to believe that rehearsal technique will make a difference in contest outcome, but they acknowledge that advancing to the state contest can be arbitrary and capricious.

External Support Systems

The external support systems defined in this study include attendance at TETA (the state convention for theatre teachers), attendance at UIL Superconferences (also called Student Activities Conferences), and attendance at OAP clinics. As the convention occurs in January and the Superconferences are held around the state during the fall, these activities could not be observed during the time period of this study. Data for this question were requested during the teacher participant interviews and findings are discussed below.

All of the schools participating in this study did attend at least one clinic, which help to achieve three of the UIL goals. First, a clinic is an opportunity for directors to
increase the quality of the performance (UIL Goal 1), by having another experienced OAP director view the show and make recommendations for improvement. The clinician can suggest improvements for both directing and acting so the entire company listens to the critique and takes notes. Second, the activity meets UIL Goal 2, as students often have the opportunity to watch other shows and increase their own appreciation for theatre. By watching other performances, students utilize higher level thinking skills needed to critique and evaluate acting and directing. They then compare these experiences with their own training.

Clinics also help teachers work toward UIL Goal 4. Students perform their play and then listen to the critique of another director. This critique is similar to how the judge will critique the show after the contest. By attending a clinic, the students learn about the process of the critique and what they might expect to hear on contest day. The students basically experience a trial run of the contest critique. They learn that the judge, as is the clinician, is there to help improve the production (the essence of UIL Goal 4). Using the clinician’s critique, the teacher has the opportunity to teach students to listen openly to what the actual contest judge has to say.

Interview Data

Interview questions inquired about teacher participation in the professional organization and their attendance at other UIL events. The teachers responded to five interview questions and their responses provide awareness into how they prepare for the UIL contest and accomplish the UIL goals.
Protocol Question # 3: Where is your OAP Handbook? How often do you consult it? As a support system, the UIL Handbook is the link between the teacher and the contest rules and procedures. Because the external support systems are sanctioned (and often organized) by UIL, the Handbook is one source for the teacher to learn about these systems. Every director in this study could identify the place or places he or she kept the OAP Handbook. “I have one copy behind my desk, one copy at home, and the on-line version is bookmarked in my computer;” “I use the on-line version—it is marked as a favorite;” “I keep it on my desk.”

The OAP Handbook is the guide for all of the rules and procedures to be used for the contest. Each director does consult the book often, as Teacher Y says, “Especially in the beginning of the season when I am trying to figure out props and furniture.” As in the case of Teacher Z, sometimes consulting the book is not enough. She had to call the UIL drama office in Austin for clarification regarding the puppet jury members. Because rules violations will cause a school to be disqualified, directors are “not willing to chance anything, so they verify everything.” The UIL does allow for puppets or other out of the ordinary requests. The director only needs to submit the request with supporting documentation before December to UIL officials. When students at Teacher X’s school asked to add a prop, the director responded with, “No, that is an unusual prop thing and it’s way late to get permission for that.” Whether the director looks in the book, researches on line, or calls the office, it appears to be common for the director to be certain of the rule rather than take a chance at the contest.
The teacher participants could identify the location of their handbook and related stories about its usefulness to them when preparing for the contest. By demonstrating knowledge about the handbook, these directors indicate a predisposition to knowing about the external support systems offered by UIL. For example, the handbook discusses the rules associated with clinics. A director who is familiar with the handbook would also have a familiarity with the concept of a clinic and may choose to participate in one during the contest season.

The book enables directors to accomplish the UIL goals because it is the resource for understanding the process (rules and procedures) of the contest. Further, the book gives detailed information regarding the purpose and background of the OAP contest. The text provides the impetus for accomplishing all of the goals, whether the teacher desires to create a quality performance (UIL Goal 1) or contemplate ways to increase the number of schools offering theatre programs of study (UIL Goal 5).

Protocol Question #8: Are you a TETA Member? Why or why not? If yes, do you attend convention? All of the directors in this study are TETA members. Teacher Z attends the convention for the purposes “rejuvenation and reinforcing knowledge.” She is a life member and often goes to watch the annual adjudicators’ conference to learn more about how the judges see the performance and how they critique. This activity enables the director to prepare more fully for the contest as she observes how the judges learn to evaluate performances. With this information, Teacher Z can more thoroughly prepare students as actors and technicians (UIL Goal 1). Teacher Z also brings students to the convention. While some of the workshops target student
participation, the major activity for students is the scholarship opportunities. Many colleges hold auditions during the convention. By bringing students to audition, director Z is supporting UIL Goal 3, promoting interest in theatre in adult life. Some students garner full and partial college scholarships to study theatre.

Two directors are members, but do not regularly attend the TETA conferences. Teacher Y does not regularly attend convention, but he is a TETA member. He says that many years he cannot attend because he is directing the musical during convention week. Teacher X is not only a TETA member, but is also on the board. In this capacity, he helps to plan the convention and other activities of the organization. A close association with the board assists Teacher X by providing networking opportunities that influence the work he does in the classroom and rehearsal hall. Teacher X associates with veteran OAP teachers, who can offer a support system. These new contacts often supply information and assistance or act as clinicians. Through these contacts, Teacher X has strengthened his ability to create a quality theatrical performance (UIL Goal 1).

Teacher V is a TETA member and does attend convention regularly. He says he “enjoys the networking” and has “started to give back by serving on committees and presenting workshops.” The common theme from these responses is that the convention is a social time, when teachers can network and share with others in the profession. Also, it is an opportunity to learn more about directing and current events. Continuing education supports teachers as they strive to attain UIL goals 1 and 2, by increasing knowledge they can share with students. While the convention does provide some skill enhancement, it grants support for teachers on a personal and professional
level as well, by providing networking opportunities and resources. As directors prepare for the contest, these contacts can assist by answering questions about contest procedures, recommending clinicians, or suggesting resources. Valuable contacts such as those found at the TETA convention aid teachers in acquisition of knowledge that contributes to the attainment of UIL goals 1 and 2, regarding quality performance and appreciation of theatre.

Protocol Question #9: Have you heard about the UIL Superconferences? Have you attended any? When? Did you bring students? If yes, what was the quality of their experience? The UIL sponsors the Superconference, an event where students attend workshops to improve skills in acting, directing or technical theatre. Several Superconferences are held around the state during the fall semester. College professors and area teachers offer seminars for students aimed at developing theatrical skills. High school teachers bring students to the event to attend these workshops and learn from other directors. Students also have the opportunity to meet and interact socially with their peers.

The teacher responses to this question rated the Superconference visit in a range from “great” to “terrible.” All of the directors had not only heard about the Superconferences, but had also brought students to them, indicating the knowledge directors had about this support system. Teacher Z related conflicting feelings about the conference. She reported that even though her “students never really got anything from attending,” she still offers to bring them every year. Instead of attending the workshops, she has suggested that the students teach the workshops, which provides
them with leadership opportunities. Instead of participating in an experience that might hold little value for students, Teacher Z now finds usefulness in the activity. The students benefit not only from the leadership opportunities, but also from an increased sense of school spirit (UIL Goal 1). The students can display their own knowledge and demonstrate skills to other schools.

Teacher Y described his experience at the Superconference as, “It was one of the biggest waste of times [sic] I have ever experienced.” He never attended again. Teacher X believes that the best part about attending the Superconference is that the students “have the opportunity to learn from other quality directors.” Not only does Teacher X attend the workshops with his students, he has presented at them himself. Teacher V also had positive remarks about the event. Every year he brings many students, as the Superconference offers assistance with all UIL events, not just theatre. His students have opportunities to learn about every academic event at the Superconference.

The engagement of these directors in this external support system show varied success of the program. Regardless of the student outcome, the Superconference does reinforce the UIL goals. Students are offered instruction in acting and directing techniques (UIL Goal 2), even though the quality may vary according to the director. As the Superconference is a gathering of students from across the region, students meet and interact with other theatre students, and observe the talents of their peers. By studying the performance of others, students apply critical evaluation to assess the acting and directing techniques. Through this procedure, students learn new skills and
improve their own work (UIL goals 2 and 4). The social benefits of student leadership and participation also reflect a desire for students recall these experiences in adulthood (UIL Goal 3).

Protocol Question #10: Do you ever hire a clinician? If yes, explain those experiences. As stated before, every director in this study works with one or more clinicians during the rehearsal process. The directors have the opportunity to have someone else view the show and help the students understand the process of adjudication. The students also have the opportunity to watch other shows and learn more about the art of theatre. Teacher Y explained the style of one clinic in particular. Each school hired a clinician to observe and critique the performances. As each school performed their show, the other students watched. At the end of the performance time, each judge critiqued each show, so instead of hearing from one judge, the students could listen to three. Teacher Y said, “That was a good system...it taught me and the kids about how three smart, theatrical people could sit in a room, watch the same show, and have completely different ideas about how to improve it. It helped us to understand how it works at the contest—some judges like your work, some don’t.”

Teacher Z discussed how clinics used to be in the past. “The UIL has made changes in the past few years. It used to be that the clinician could get up on stage and actually work with the kids. But I guess some people thought that was like hiring a director to come in and direct. So now the clinician can only watch and give notes.” Teacher Z indicated that in the past, some teachers would rely on the talents of the clinician to create a quality performance. Today, the clinician can only make verbal
suggestions after viewing a performance. This procedure ensures that the final performance reflects the work of a director, not another professional hired to improve the play.

The act of attending a clinic helped to accomplish three UIL goals. First, the teacher and students raised their expectations of doing well at the contest, by being coached by an outside director. This action worked to satisfy the competitive, artistic spirit of the contest, while helping to ensure a high quality performance (UIL Goal 1). Secondly, attending a clinic helped students increase their overall appreciation for acting, directing and drama. At clinics, students not only work with another director, they often get to watch other schools performances, broadening their knowledge and understanding of theatre (UIL Goal 2). A third coding for this activity is through UIL Goal 4, “accepting in good sportsmanship the judge’s decision and criticism with a view to improve future productions.” At a clinic, another director is hired to watch and critique the show as it is in process. Following the run-through, the director gives the cast and crew notes on how to improve and raise the quality of performance. This not only helps the company increase the level of their own performance, but it also teaches them the process of adjudication at the contest, where the judge will do a similar critique after performance.

*Summary of Observation and Interview Data*

Teachers in this study are both familiar with and use the external support systems available to them as they prepare for the One-Act Play contest. Attending the
TETA convention provides two types of support for teacher. First, the convention is an opportunity to meet and socialize with other theatre teachers. Teachers have the opportunity to network and make professional contacts as well as make friends who understand the contest. At least two of the teachers in this study reported feeling isolated and believe that attendance at the convention helps to relieve that feeling. The convention also supports skill acquisition and provides opportunities for teachers to learn about how to prepare for the contest and how the judges prepare as well. Attendance at the convention support UIL Goals 1, 2, and 4 by helping teachers learn more about creating quality productions, increase skills in directing and acting, and how to improve their own work.

The second external support that provides assistance to all of the teachers in this study is attendance at clinics. As stated before, a clinic helps both teachers and students improve the quality of the performance (UIL Goal 1), help students appreciate acting, directing and drama, through increased exposure to productions (UIL Goal 2), and helps teachers and students become familiar with the adjudication process (UIL Goal 4). The data indicate that teachers do take advantage of the external support systems associated with the One-Act play contest system.

**Research Question 3:** In what ways do students perceive the aesthetic, as a result of their OAP experience?

Focus group questions used to interview students were based on Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) four stated outcomes—sensory experience, emotional experience, new thought and a sense of personal growth that students should
experience as a result of participating in an activity designed to teach the aesthetic (see Appendix A for interview questions). In this study, the student responses determined the extent to which the aesthetic was experienced as a result of participation in OAP competition. As students commented upon sensory and emotional experiences and discussed and described feelings of new ideas and learning, they demonstrated an understanding of the aesthetic and created a context through which they could share insight and awareness.

Protocol Question #1: What does it mean to be part of the One-Act Play Company? Is it different from other shows you have done?

Every student group agreed that the OAP experience was different from other shows they participate in throughout the year. They also described involvement in the company as elevated—they recognized that the OAP was a more difficult theatrical piece to create and it was an honor to play a part. Within the responses, common themes appeared across the schools. The most prevalent themes were Family and Hard Work, which echo Csikszentmihalyi’s element of emotional experience. Each group described One-Act Play participation as containing the element of “family,” “teamwork,” “group of people united,” or “tight company.” Students also described these relationships as “You work for each other;” “It requires more trust;” and “People in the group rely on you.” The students did not associate the family element with participation in other shows. The students also expressed that in other plays, students maintain individual focus. In the OAP, the emphasis is on the team and “not just one person stealing focus.” Students connected participating in the OAP to the concept of
family, which demonstrates an emotional association, one element of the aesthetic experience.

For students, a second major difference between the OAP and other shows is the dedication the show requires. The students described this as “hard work,” “serious,” or “We have to work harder in this show.” One student said, “I goof off in other shows, I feel that there is plenty of time, but in OAP there is no time. It is all work, down to the wire.” The students described their efforts as “more focused” and “This is a controlled and focused atmosphere, no goofing off backstage. You know the goal and you get there. The show is only 40 minutes, you spend time on each minute.” Associated with the hard work was the theme of stress, and students related feelings that the OAP is “difficult” and there is “pressure” and “responsibility.” One student said, “This show is very different, very stressful, and disciplined. If you mess up, the public sees it, people see it. That is a lot of pressure.” Another student commented, “When you do One-Act you are taking on responsibility, you choose to do this and it differs from [other shows].” Again, students describe the OAP experience in terms of emotion and emotional response, one of the indicators Csikszentmihalyi uses to ascertain an aesthetic experience.

The one main difference between OAP and other shows that students at all of the schools highlighted was the aspect of competition. One student shared, “We block [the show] differently, we focus on where the judge is sitting because we are competing with it.” A student at another school said, “Competition is the spice of life. We wanna be the best and want others to know we are the best.” “This show is
difficult,” said another student, “There are rules and regs to follow. I mean, how can you judge art?” One student said, “At our school there is a tradition to do well. You feel obligated to do well.” A second student followed up, “There is peer pressure....You don't want to be labeled as the class that let others down. The last three years we won state. It drives us to want to get to state....Everyone wants to be a part because we win.” At this school, the competition is a community affair. One student commented, “I was in the store and some lady came up to me and told me what a great job I did at the contest. I didn’t know her. But I know so many people in town come out to see the show.” In addition to describing competition in an emotional way, these students are also expressing new learning, by participating in a new situation of competition.

One-Act Play participation teaches students about pressure, hard work and competition as well as relying on each other in a group situation. Other responses to this interview question include students talking about the time and effort needed to produce this show. “The show requires more of our time and we don’t know when is the last time to perform,” said one student. At another school, one student believes, “One-Act is how others see our department. Our OAP has to be top level to show other schools that fine arts matter to us.” Echoing that sentiment, a student at another school said, “This is the show that everyone sees, it is what our school is known for. We are bringing our art to the world.” Another students believes OAP is “statewide recognition, it is prestigious. This is what we are judged by throughout the state. We are seen by multiple audiences.” Finally, students also described OAP as a different experience
because it was “an opportunity to grow as an actor, person, student....it is about performing shows and the love of theatre.”

Czikszentmihalyi suggests that students should undergo both sensory and emotional experiences in order to learn about the aesthetic. As they described the differences between OAP participation and that in other shows, students emphasized an awareness of heightened emotion. The competition itself plays a large role in intensifying the amount of work and discipline required to create the show. Further, students shared the feelings associated with family as a difference with the OAP contest company. The students repeatedly discussed their feelings throughout the focus interview.

Protocol Question 2: What does it feel like to participate in the One-Act Play? Is this experience different from other things you do at school? Why?

Two common themes emerged from the students’ numerous in-depth responses. As in the first question, the theme of Family was prevalent, and related to the first question theme of Hard Work is the theme of Honor. Students expressed “Being a part of OAP, not competing or winning, is the greater feeling,” “This is teamwork,” and “OAP is different because we spend time together, we get closer, we get along.” Another student said, “You have to put aside yourself, put aside personal feelings. This is more family...you care about each other.” Following up, another student added, “In football there is more competition within the organization, but in theatre you set differences aside, you can’t bring it onstage. This helps keep our closeness. You are proud of each person, really happy for others, true happiness.” Students believe that participation in
OAP is an “honor.” “You learn to make sacrifices,” and “This is stressful and time consuming.” One student says that an added level of “commitment” is required for OAP, “over other shows or even clubs or organizations.” The emphasis in these responses is on the emotional benefits of participation in OAP, one criteria used by Csikszentmihalyi to assess an aesthetic experience.

For students, being in the One-Act Play contest provides social benefits. A subset of the Family theme is the aspect of Group Safety. “I feel safe in theatre. There is support for each other in the group.” Another student added, “There is an intensity of emotion. You have to be 100%, all or nothing….But these relationships transcend the stage, everyone has the same level of commitment...you care.” “This show requires more trust,” which enables students to feel safe and accepted. One student shared, “Outside of theatre I’m not that cool, but in theatre, this is where my friends are.”

Following up, another student added, “Friends outside of theatre don’t understand what OAP is, they don’t get the process.” Within the safety of the group, students believed they had “a lot more fun than athletics” and cited “bus trips” as one activity different from other school events. [Students often travel several hours on a charter bus to reach a contest site, and then stay in a hotel upon arrival.] One student’s comment seemed to sum up the discussion, “The rest of school is not colorful. In theatre you do your thing.”

As with the first protocol question, students depicted the intensity of emotion associated with OAP participation. Feelings of honor and safety highlighted the responses to this question and the students thought these were experienced more acutely during OAP than with other shows or school events. Students were aware these
differences were meaningful to them and provided benefits beyond learning about traditional theatre.

Protocol Question #3: What emotions do you experience when you participate in One-Act Play?

As a follow-up question targeting a more in-depth understanding of student perceptions, the third interview question required students to think deeply about how they felt about their experiences. While some response sets overlapped between at least two schools, no common theme emerged. Students did reflect on previously discussed themes of Family, Hard Work, Safety, and Stress, but they also described physical feelings as well.

The students at one school described feelings of “true happiness,” “frustration,” and “caring.” These students gave explanations of how they related to one another. “When I am here [in theatre], people seem to care about me. Over a couple of months you learn to deal with 22 others in almost a closed space. Like when we were looking for props [laughter among group] and [another student] came to help me because everything I did just didn’t work. [more laughter]. I don’t know, people just care more.”

Students described “frustration” and “helplessness” along with “pride and joy.” One student explained, “You care more about the whole group....you want to give applause for your friends who win an award.” These students also discussed the physical feelings associated with contest performance. “Your stomach does a flip,” or “At the awards ceremony, my stomach is in a knot. None of the awards matter, who advanced is important, most important. You are ready to cry, hysteria.” Other physical
reactions include, “Winning an award is like a shock,” “The contest is exhilarating,” “I feel the adrenaline,” and “In rehearsal it’s invigorating.” But one student added, “You have to act professional, you have to try not to show your emotions. You can’t get testy or short with others because you are worried.”

Students at one school continued to describe the relationships in greater detail. “Our troupe is different. We are like a family. We went to ITS [the UIL Superconference] this year. We were like outcasts. We advance and we do well, so that’s OK, but when we go to places like that, we are together, we’re tight. We’ve worked together for so long. We’re different because we all do something else other than theatre. We make more sacrifices. We have agriculture, journalism, football, Christians. We are the mutt breed of theatre people. We pull from other things and bring it to this program.” As they talked about their feelings, one student described a “roller coaster.” These students were the only students to talk about feeling “self-conscious.” One student did not “like being judged.” But this comment was followed by another student feeling pride when “others recognized the talent we have.”

The students at one school talked of “frustration,” “tension,” and “pressure” which were primarily caused by the feeling that the school and the community had high expectations. One student said he felt stress when “one judge said bad stuff.” But the overall physical feelings on contest day were nervousness and excitement. One student described the experience of the state contest, “This will be big. It’s a big theatre. People buy tickets.” At the contest, the students look forward to the time when the teacher “puts on music to help us focus...gets us in the zone.” During the awards
ceremony, students said, “We hold hands while we wait for the results.” At the end of the contest day, several students talked of “being tired.” “This contest is tough,” said one student, “You feel the full circle of emotions.”

Protocol questions two and three both sought responses to assess student senses and emotions. Students expressed physical feelings, such as queasiness, as well as emotions such as nervousness. These feelings were associated not only with the higher levels of stress due to the competition, but also with the intensity of the emotional experiences of advancing or receiving awards. Students also described feelings related to being a member of the OAP troupe. The students recognized that participation is limited to a select group of students and thus the group was different from other school groups (or even other theatre groups) by nature. Students described this as “honor” and recognized that participation meant not only certain “sacrifices” but also numerous rewards. Rewards for students could be tangible, such as taking a bus trip or missing class, or they could be intangible, as they described the “family” aspect of the group frequently. The student discussion of family included references to social emotions such as acceptance and caring. The students described how participating in the OAP troupe alleviated adolescent fears of fitting in with others. Several students described themselves as “weird” or “not cool” when they were in school, but they did not feel this way when with their friends in the OAP theatre group. As the students formed strong bonds, they experienced a sense of belonging and meaning. The students were able to describe this during the interview as an emotional event.
Protocol Question 4: What have you learned by participating in the One-Act Play contest?

The dominant theme that emerged from the analysis is Working with Others. Students at all of the schools described situations and instances of what they had learned about working with other students in a group. Comments included, “You learn about people, about reactions, what people are thinking,” “You get out of your comfort zone and meet diverse people, learn about people,” “You see how to be a company, how to learn to work well together and not let personal things get in the way,” “You learn to sacrifice your opinions and feelings...when everyone clicks with professionalism, you ask yourself, ‘how am I going to be like them,’” “The biggest thing is the feeling of family, you hate and love, people get on your nerves,” “You learn how to be professional,” “You learn how to work well with other personalities,” “You don’t have to do it alone,” “You learn to be tolerant,” “You learn good sportsmanship, like at the contest you have to be polite, clap, don’t scream, and dress appropriately, we know how we are supposed to act,” and “You learn to work together as a group well.”

A second theme common to all groups was the idea of learning to handle stress and pressure. One student commented, “You learn how to handle stressful situations and organize life. You put things in perspective.” “Before you perform,” one student explained, “you have to be calm, especially about the time limit. Freaking out is not productive.” To help combat this pre-show stress, one director has students take “naptime,” which “is the best part of the day” (multiple students agree and nod). Other student responses were, “I have learned how to recover from high stress situations;” “I have learned to be impromptu;” and “You learn to be calm.”
Students also described how they learned skills to use in the real world after having participated in the OAP. “I think this helps prepare me for the real world. There are lots of people working together, I know how to be diplomatic,” remarked one student. “I have learned new skills, especially in tech theatre,” said one student, and another quickly added, “In theatre you use life skills, you learn how to build a house.” Other academic skills students learn how to “analyze literature” and better “acting skills.” Students walk away with a sense of “pride,” “patience,” and “accomplishment.” They learn about “humility” and “how to take criticism.” “I have learned how to take the good with the bad…get a new perspective.” “I have learned to be emotionally stronger and that a good show is not about winning or advancing, it is to be proud of what you did.” The variety of these comments shows that students are learning much more than the stated UIL goals, which is another outcome associated with experiencing the aesthetic, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1997).

Protocol Question 5: Are you a better student or better person because you took part in the One-Act Play Company? Why?

Students from all four schools agreed that they became both better students and better people. As students, they earned “better grades” and “learned more about English.” One student remarked, “Theatre is the only thing keeping me focused at school.” Having to juggle the demands of class work, homework, rehearsals and contests helps students to have “better organization” or be “better at getting things done.” One student felt that he was in rehearsal “25-8” [exaggerating twenty four hours a day, seven days a week]. Other student comments included, “I am a better
student because I have to prioritize all the activities and I miss class a lot, I have to make up tests and work;” “With OAP, now I work harder at school;” “Most teachers are lenient, they want you to succeed so they help you get the work done;” and “There is little time to do homework, I am very disciplined.” Having a busy schedule has helped these students learn how to manage time wisely.

Students also agreed that they became better people. “I remember the fun times, like playing guitar and getting yelled at,” [students laughing] recalled one student. “It wouldn’t be fun without all these people, it’s camaraderie,” added another student. As students learned to work with other people, they also found that this experience made them become better people. “I am a better person because I now have people skills. I am dealing with frustrating feelings and dealing with difficult people;” “I am a better person because I am learning to be compatible with people” were other student responses. One student offered, “We are definitely better people, we smile a lot.”

The students discussed new skills and ideas they learned as a result of participation, citing new and heightened abilities both academically and socially. Protocol questions four and five asked students to describe new learning. Responses revealed that students were aware of the academic and social nature of their experience. The students mentioned they learned about theatre, but they also could link this learning with other courses (English, history, and psychology). But more than acquiring knowledge in academics or even stronger theatre skills, students believed they learned about real world experiences. Not only did acting and play creation require
them to mimic real world situations, but students also learned about relationships and developing social skills. The students described a variety of social situations and how they had learned to respond appropriately. For example, several students mentioned the influence of stress on relationships. They had learned that it was not productive to become irritable with others when reacting to one's own personal stress. During rehearsals and on contest day, tension and stress were at high levels and students described techniques they had learned to reduce personal (and ultimately) group stress. Working with others, learning about different personalities, and learning to accept differences were all common responses when students discussed what they had learned about relationships. Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) work indicates that new thoughts and having a sense of personal growth are the result of an aesthetic learning experience.

Protocol Question #6: Why theatre?

I added this question during the first student focus group interview to determine why these students preferred theatre arts to other extracurricular activities. The responses reflect the themes of Family and Group Safety, but new themes were added to deepen the understanding of the topic. Students described the family atmosphere, saying, “Here you are accepted, you can be yourself, you are not judged;” “In theatre, everybody knows your name;” “We are a bohemian family;” “People don’t judge, everyone is weird,” and “We’re like family.” Students again described aspects of feeling safe within the group, “When my world was falling apart, I could come here and have fun;” “I feel safe, part of a group that will accept me;” “We’re the ‘good’ kids;” “When I
am here, I don't get into trouble;” “Theatre is a safe house, it gets me through the day protected, you can be yourself;” “In theatre I drop my inhibitions and let loose;” “People in theatre are protective, I feel very safe;” “People will be there for you;” “Even on the worst of days [these people] give you good feelings;” and “Theatre people are devoted.”

A new theme from this question is Love of Theatre, which describes how students feel about performing in theatre. Student responses include, “Where else can you be someone else?” “There is no feeling like being onstage, not like this in other clubs;” “I love performance, its intensity;” “It is fantastic to have a common love for art;” “Being someone completely different teaches you about the real world;” “Theatre reflects the real world, it requires skill;” “You can express yourself creatively;” “We are all performers;” “I get to be someone else, you need to get out of yourself and be someone different from your life;” “The relationship between actor and audience is very special;” “I love performance, love the intensity;” “Theatre is a reflection of life;” and “It is the coolest thing to pull it all together and make a great show, it is a cool experience.” These comments show that students see how theatre art is different from other activities and how they recognize the increased learning associated with participation.

Students credit their teachers with bringing them into theatre. One student said, “The teachers are good,” and another one followed with, “The teachers inspire students, they set high expectations in theatre and in life, they want students to get the message.” Another school called their teacher, “cool” and “cute.” “I was drafted into
theatre, but I had a blast,” recalled one student. Students also credit the teacher with making theatre “exciting” and “intense.” Perhaps one of the most apropos responses to the question, “Why theatre?” was, “Because I love it!”

In previous questions in the interview protocol, students identified new learning, especially in the realm of relationships, as a cornerstone of personal growth. Students recognized that developing key skills in working with others successfully would be integral to future success. A common strand among student stories was the understanding that learning to relate to others required an insight into one’s own emotions. Students recognized a key relationship between these two and described how participation in OAP provided the context through which they learn strategies to negotiate feelings within themselves and the feelings of others. The students acknowledged this skill would benefit them throughout life.

Summary of Student Focus Group Data

The most prevalent response from the student focus group was the aspect of family. The students described numerous ways in which participating in the OAP gave them a sense of family and bonding with other students and with the teacher. Students believed they felt safe within the group and learned skills when working with others, especially with personalities different from their own. The second aspect students cited most often was the element of hard work. Putting together a quality show for competition was viewed as more difficult than other shows. The students described feelings of stress as well as a sense of honor that participation in OAP provided them.
The third most common response set was a discussion of learning about the real world—people, relationships, and the joy of creating theatre.

The students in the focus group expressed all of the elements required for aesthetic experiences according to Csikszentmihalyi. They experienced heightened emotional situations, developed new skills and knowledge and exhibited a sense of personal growth due to playing a part in OAP. Students chose to participate in theatre rather than in other extracurricular activities and they described the benefits of the encounter in terms of creativity, intensity, and imagination. Students reflected upon the theatre experience as being different from anything else at school. Theatre allowed students to become another character and learn about life. For other students, the act of performance was empowering. Creating theatrical art allowed students the freedom of expression they did not seem to experience in other places or events. Through the art form of theatre and participation in the One-Act Play contest, students could describe the elements that make up an aesthetic experience. Smith (2005) states:

Aesthetic education [should] cultivate students’ capacities to derive satisfaction and insight from works of art that express the meaning of the more complex and subtle forms of human experience. In short, aesthetic education…was to provide the context for students acquiring both creative and appreciative skills. (p. 24)

Based on the responses of the students in the focus groups, they learned not only creative, theatrical skills, but also the skills to appreciate the nuances of relationships and self-awareness.

Chapter Summary

The structure of the UIL One-Act Play system allows theatre teachers in the state of Texas an opportunity to develop curriculum that is soundly based in providing
experiences to expose students to the aesthetic. The teachers in this study, whether they can articulate the goals or not, engage in a daily exploration of the aesthetic with students. When directing the OAP, teachers in this study focus on two primary activities. First, they do everything they can to create a high quality performance, using the tools and skills necessary to create a work of theatrical art. Second, directors focus on each student, developing relationships and taking care to create a context in which the students understand that the focus should be on the theatre art, not on the contest proceedings. These activities are the heart of Eisner’s (1992) definition of aesthetic education, which he describes as “the practice of developing the students’ ability to see or generate a satisfying and coherent feeling, coming from the process of engagement and perception” (p. 39). Students who practice the art of theatre eventually learn to pose questions about their own life and as Greene (1978) explains, that process will lead to an ability to study those “feelings of powerlessness” and domination that have led us to become numb in society (p. 44). Through participation in theatre, students learn the skills necessary to question and have a “conscious engagement with the world” (p. 162). Individuals who have the ability to “attend to and absorb themselves in particular works of art are more likely to effect connections in their own experience” (p. 186). To make connections and engage with the world is, in Greene’s words, to be awake and thus understand the aesthetic, and ultimately break free from the constrictive elements of society.

In this study, the students described these actions in their own words. They consciously chose to participate in theatre rather than in other activities they could have
done. And through the OAP experience, they directly connected their joy of performing and practicing the art of theatre with creating positive relationships and learning about the world around them. The students described the family aspect of the theatre experience, noting feelings of acceptance and caring. Student recognized qualities of functional relationships and could identify these as existing with the people they met in the rehearsal hall.

Reflecting on Csikszentmihalyi’s research for student outcomes of aesthetic education, the students in this study demonstrated an awareness of the aesthetic. The students described participation in terms of feelings and emotions, characterizing authentic engagement with the material. The act of creating theatre moved students as other school activities had not. In addition to making theatre, the students described the added benefit of discovering positive relationships with other caring individuals. Students experienced the discipline of the artistic endeavor and could see real world applications for their work. Student awareness about their own experiences and the world around them became heightened, an essential quality in understanding the aesthetic.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This study examines teacher and student participation in the Texas University Interscholastic League (UIL) One-Act Play (OAP) contest system and the implications for teaching and learning. The following discussion explores the ramifications of the results and provides inference as to the implications of the findings. Overall conclusions are included as well as consideration of the assumptions and limitations. Contributions to the current literature and recommendations for further research on theatrical competition complete the discussion.

The critical question to be addressed in this study is, “How do theatre teachers who participate in the One-Act Play contest system address the goals established by UIL guidelines?” The study examined the situation from three approaches—assessing teacher attitude about winning, inquiring about teacher mechanics in the classroom and rehearsal hall, and determining student perception of the aesthetic related to participation in one act play contests. An assumption of the study is that the accomplishment of the UIL goals would lead to the aesthetic.

To more fully understand the teacher perspective on preparing a group of students to compete in the OAP, consider the following metaphor. In this section of the chapter, a virtual play, the OAP Dinner Party, with characters, sets, plots, and action. The story line of the play leads through the life, times, and struggles of OAP directing toward the aesthetic. As the lights begin to darken in the theatre, the audience waits
for the one-woman show to begin, and without further ado, the narrator commences
the evening's enchantment.

The One-Act Play Dinner Party

Ever hosted a dinner party? Ever spent time pulling together the perfect menu,
the perfect ingredients, stressing over the right mix of guests, serving a beautiful
Chateaubriand, only to discover one of your guests was a vegetarian? If you have had
this experience, you can understand something about the students and teachers who
participate in the yearly ritual of the One-Act Play contest. Every year, the teacher must
prepare an inspired, delicate, and tasty meal for the toughest critic of all, the OAP
adjudicator, all the while hoping that the rules of etiquette have been applied and
praying that the judge isn’t allergic to shellfish.

At first, the OAP director begins with an idea—what to serve at this party. What
will be the perfect menu, that ideal blending of tastes, colors, and textures? As a chef
would consult the cookbooks and the traditions and even flirt with a new take on an old
favorite, such as Asian Fusion, the director must consider the vast traditions of theatre.
Should the play be a comedy, a tragedy, modern, a classic? With what plays has the
director had success in the past? What did the judge like last season? As a chef
examines the recipe books, so does the director—reading and examining a variety of
plays and authors to find the perfect story to bring to life on stage. Chef Jeff Smith
(1984) says, “When I plan a meal, I think about the nature of the event....that special
celebrative eating in which we attempt to remember something that is important to our
As it is in the kitchen, the theatre director must also consider the purpose or the desired emotional outcome of the theatrical piece. The director must consider carefully what feelings and emotions the play will evoke.

As important as choosing the right menu and setting the mood of the party, the hostess must also consider the guest list carefully. The right mix of personalities, backgrounds, and expectations can help create a lively party or contribute to an early departure as soon as the meal is over. Chef Natalie Dupree (1990) says, “If you have the single most important ingredient of a dinner party—the right guests—nothing can go wrong, because they will laugh through the worst of disasters, from fallen soufflés to burnt dessert, and somehow it won’t matter to you, either. But the wrong dinner list will make even the perfect menu a miserable experience.” (p. 77). For the theatre director, the invited guests actually participate in the creation of the party. The guests are the actors and technicians, who make up the play company and carry the success of the party on their shoulders. The director must consider the talent, experience, and personality of the students when choosing the right group of students to participate in the play. The selection of the group occurs during the audition process, but the director must also rely on past experiences with the student and consider the needs of the individual and the group. As Chef Dupree says, the selection of the guests will create the experience—one in which laughter and good memories are important.

Once the menu has been selected and the guests invited, the party planner heads to the market to select the ingredients. Freshness, color, and aroma blend to
allow the chef to choose the best ingredients to ensure a creative and good tasting meal. Celebrated chef Michel Roux (2000) says, “A good market is the essence of a good menu. And a good menu should always be market-led....The end result will be better for the palate and more satisfying for all concerned” (p. 33). For the theatre director, the key ingredients are the talents and experiences of the actors. The director relies on the ability of the student to portray the character and story. The students’ desires must be balanced with their needs as well. The director reacts as a teacher first, considering the holistic experience of the student first, then the needs of the play second. Perhaps the student needs to be placed in a secondary role, even if they have the skills to succeed in the lead role. The teacher will consider these factors, as well as talent, when casting students in a play, much as the chef allows the market to help in the decision-making process. As the chef recognizes, the experience will be better for everyone, so does the director.

Once the selection of the key ingredients has taken place and the chef has outlined the menu, the real work begins: preparation. Here, the chef aligns the materials needed, selects the appropriate knives, cookware and serving ware. Great care is taken in creating a workstation, with the emphasis on organization. In the theatrical realm, the preparation is the rehearsal process, where student actors and teacher director combine talents, energies, and hard work to create a masterpiece. The director must pay attention to every detail, as does the chef. When cooking, the size of each julienned carrot must be precise and equal. In theatre, the energy and timing of each moment must contain emotion and feeling, to evoke the synergy necessary
between the actor and audience, which is the essential element that separates theatre from the other art forms. As the chef combines the ingredients to form a celebration of taste, the director must pull together elements of blocking, timing, and characterization to create moments of a story that will resonate with the viewer. As the dinner guest arrives at the table and is greeted by the smell and sight of a tastefully done meal, the theatergoer revels in the lighting and visual effects of the costumes and settings, often being transported to another time and place.

During the process of preparation, the chef might refer to the cookbook as a guide. The cookbook may suggest an alternate method of preparation or provide assistance with complex cooking methods. The cookbook could give ideas for variations to a standard recipe or advise a wine or dessert selection. The chef may read and utilize these ideas to improve the dining experience of the party guests. The director has a similar resource available. In the One-Act Play contest, the UIL has provided the structure of the clinic—the opportunity for the students and teacher to present their unpolished performance for the purpose of seeking guidance and ideas. An outside source presents ideas about the techniques of playmaking, the character work of the actors, or the insight of the judge. The clinician can help the director answer the questions, “How can I make this play better? What is it missing?” The clinic helps the director and students improve the quality of the performance, the way a cookbook might be the necessary resource for a chef.
As the food preparation is continuing, the chef must turn his attention to the presentation of the meal. As Chef Smith suggested, every meal should have a purpose. When considering a party, Chef Dupree (1990) proposes a theme:

There are several choices of menu themes that will set the tone for the occasion, and ensure as delightful and evening as possible. The ultraformal menu will usually tame the worst situations, but it also augurs a fairly tedious evening and entails a good deal more expense because it requires a staff and mountains of china and silver. (p. 78)

Should a chef choose such a theme, the host and guests must adhere to the formal rules of etiquette, and be aware of the placement of forks, spoons, water glasses and stemware. The host must know the difference between a canapé and an appetizer and know with which course to serve red wine.

Though on most occasions, the director of the play can choose the theme for the play, the OAP contest is much like the formal dinner. The rules of engagement are carefully printed in the handbook, and as with rules for the placement of the dessert fork and coffee spoon, they prescribe for the director the amount and style of fabric, the placement of plants, and the location of furniture. The rules govern the length of the performance and limit the time a troupe has to set up and strike the setting. As at the formal dinner, the rules extend to almost every aspect of the event. When a dinner mistake is made, the other guests consider it a faux pax and attribute it to the youth or inexperience of the offending partygoer. However, at the OAP contest, an infraction of the multitudinous rules garners disqualification of the entire group, who must sometimes suffer the consequences for the offense of one. The majority of OAP troupes
do not make such infringements and the teachers do take time to teach the young actors the guidelines associated with the contest.

As the dinner party in coming together, the hostess must consider her own presentation. The selection of eveningwear and accessories is important in setting the tone of the evening. Greeting the guests with aplomb and being organized to complete the preparation of the meal and put everything on the table requires skill and forethought. For the One-Act Play company, presentation is also important. When greeting the judge during the critique time, each troupe member wants to present the air of professionalism. The director spends time during rehearsal to prepare students for the critical moments after the play has been presented and the group awaits the final results of the contest.

For the party planner, the guests' arrival at the dinner table signals the moment when the cooking aromas and the presentation of the meal reach the pinnacle. As the guests sit down to partake in the culinary delights, the host/chef must relinquish control and allow the fruits of her labor to reach the recipient. The enjoyment of eating and celebrating must take focus. For the One-Act Play troupe, the experience takes place within a forty-minute window. The contest manager looks into the audience, to ensure the arrival of the judge, the honored guest. After the judge takes a seat, he turns on the small overhead lamp in front of him to enable him to take notes during the performance. The contest manager gives a short introduction of the play's title. The director, who has been with the cast and crew until this moment, finds his seat in the house, alone for the first time of the day, separated from the cast and crew. Realizing
that this is the moment he must relinquish the control of the play and surrender to the training, the rehearsal, the ensemble building, and the talent of the students. The lights in the auditorium dim, and the journey of the characters begins.

Upon completion of the play, the honored guest departs the auditorium to make notes on acting, directing, and technical elements. This is the moment when the judge will savor the hard work of the director and actors and determine whether the tastes blend and the sampling is better than the other offerings on the table that afternoon. As the chef awaits the first sighs of contentment from the dinner guests, the cast and crew must wonder how the judge enjoyed partaking in their performance. For the director, the time between performance and awards is a time to help students reflect on the benefits of the experience, rather than focus on the outcome.

Chef Dupree (1990) explains, “A party takes creativity, compassion, joy, vitality, graciousness, a desire to bless and enrich others. If you don’t want to share those qualities with the people you want in your home, you won’t have a good party. You won’t even have a good guest list” (p. 103). This statement is true of the theatrical director as well. The director must build the relationships between the actors and herself and concentrate on those components that seem to have very little to do with traditional playmaking, but as in cooking, are truly the heart of the activity. Dupree continues, “What then, makes old friends remember a particular moment in their lives? What makes a party stand out in the memory as a star? We figured it out—it’s laughter, not booze, money, pretentious food, or prestige. Pure and simple. Laughter” (p. 251). And as the teachers and students in this story have described over and over again—it is
the relationships, the acceptance, and the laughter that made the experience rich and memorable.

Lights up, curtains closed, and the next play begins to ready for the stage.

The Dinner Party OAP points out the amount of detail and painstaking effort teachers take to prepare for the OAP, leading to a deeper understanding of the results of this study. Organizing students for the contest is an emotional activity for teachers. In addition to the desire to create a quality performance, teachers impart life skills in responsibility, goal attainment, leadership, good sportsmanship and treatment of others to students. Teachers do everything in their power to provide an atmosphere in which students feel safe and comfortable—a place where they can take risks and explore the world around them.

Question 1: How does the theatre teacher’s attitude toward winning the contest relate to the accomplishment of UIL goals?

Teacher attitude toward winning is integral to helping students attain UIL goals. In this study, teachers demonstrated a desire to win. They also wanted to advance. In this study three of the five teachers advanced to the state contest. Overall, teachers felt happiness with the result of their contest season and the performances of their students. The work of Feltz et al. (1999) suggests that winning (among athletic coaches) provides motivation for both teachers and students. Additionally, winning is related to effective instructional practice. For theatre teachers, advancement to the next contest did provide motivation for students to continue through a difficult rehearsal.
Teacher Z, however, did not advance out of the first contest. Examining her experience, many things can be learned about how teachers deal with loss and how they express this to students. Every teacher in the study described the feelings associated with loss (failure to advance). They detailed past experiences and the difficulties of keeping student attitude positive about the OAP contest. Teacher Z, when interviewed shortly after the loss at the zone contest, described her feelings of loss and hurt. This event marked the first time she had ever lost at the zone contest. Most contest seasons, she advanced at least to the second contest, most often to the third and fourth rounds. To assuage her bruised ego, she discussed the quality of the other shows she had competed against as well as the arbitrary nature of the judging, as if assigning blame to aspects of the contest beyond her own control. She described the experience in personal terms, saying, “It’s hard to have one person say you’re not good enough.” Her reaction embodies the typical response of teachers after they fail to advance at a contest. Teachers look at their own work with feelings of failure. This introspection and fear of disappointment is a powerful motivator when helping students prepare for the OAP contest. These feelings provide the basis for an attitude of success and sharing with students what is required to win (advance).

Question 2: How do teaching, rehearsal technique, and external support systems affect the teachers’ contest preparation and the achievement of UIL goals?

In her lectures at Columbia, Greene (2001) directs teachers to help students “break with the dailyness…the plain ordinariness of things” (pp. 22-23). Greene asks teachers to create situations through which students can acquire new knowledge and
experiences. The second question posed in this study examined teachers’ activities during the rehearsal period. The actions of the teachers were divided into two primary categories—those related to teaching and those specifically used for rehearsing. But regardless of whether the action was labeled teacher- or director-related, every action taken by every director in this study focused on student learning, particularly when associated with UIL goal attainment. During the OAP rehearsal process, teachers focus on creating an environment that sustains the aesthetic, teaches the OAP goals, and confirms Greene’s philosophy. Teachers set high expectations for students and provide opportunities for them to learn life skills that reach beyond the classroom walls. As students strive to achieve these high expectations, they are forced to move beyond the traditional schoolhouse experience. They are forced to “break with the dailyness” and they begin to encounter the intersection of art and aesthetic.

One teacher activity, labeled as director-related, actually taught students much more about life in general. Each teacher in this study required students to dress up for the awards ceremony. Though other schools did not practice this, each teacher in this study had students pack a dressy outfit (dress and nice shoes for girls, shirt and tie for boys) to change into after the performance. Teachers explained this practice as one of their high expectations only, without providing a rationale for the activity. However, students understood the importance of it, when they talked about acting in a professional manner during the critique, as the expectations of behavior were different. The activity of dressing up helped students to be aware of the surroundings during the entire contest day, which reflects a director-related action. However, dressing up
teaches students about appropriate behaviors and social skills in public situations. The students have pride in themselves and their accomplishments regardless of the outcome of the contest. The activity of dressing up is both director- and teacher-related and is an example of how teachers create situations in which students are learning more that traditional playmaking alone. Instead, teachers enrich each situation with opportunities for students to go beyond normal classroom conditions.

Focusing on student’s attainment of the UIL goals requires teachers to develop relationships and rapport with the students. Throughout the data collection, this theme emerged. Directors commented that the OAP is the time to focus on producing a quality performance, usually with fewer actors. The opportunity to work closely with a small group allowed for different types of interaction with students and fostered meaningful relationships. It also allowed for students to understand the nuances of personal relationships and working with other personality types. Both teachers and students highlighted these goals. Creating ensemble is paramount in the creation of a successful OAP. By focusing on student relationships and experiences, teachers could downplay the aspect of winning or advancing, by reinforcing that a trophy cannot replace the human interaction gained during the rehearsal time of the OAP. When teachers say they that winning isn’t everything, they instead focus on building rapport.

As teachers set high expectations, create environments that support the exploration of the aesthetic, and produce a quality theatrical performance, they exemplify Dewey’s “life is art” concept. Dewey (1934) discussed that art is not just the resulting product (the painting, the play, or the photograph). For Dewey, art is the
culmination of the experience between people and the artistic materials—it is about cooperation, collaboration, and the creative moments between ideation and presentation. The OAP teachers in this study worked toward meeting the UIL goals. However, each one provided a setting for students to learn about and experience the art form of drama that moved beyond the traditional rehearsal hall.

Question 3: In what ways do students perceive the aesthetic, as a result of their OAP experience?

Students in this study perceived the aesthetic as a result of their participation in the OAP contest. During the group interviews, these students identified each of the characteristics identified by Czikszentmihalyi. The students perceived sensory and emotional moments throughout the process of the OAP. They identified new learning as a result of participation. The students also described a sense of personal growth.

Students described the hard work, dedication, and stress it takes to prepare for the contest. These emotions demonstrate the artistic discipline required to rehearse, perform, and compete for a lengthy time period. As teachers are focusing on each detailed moment of the show, students learn the nature of the rehearsal process. Students are required to learn new material and constantly tweak it until it is perfect in the eyes of the director. These skills are at the heart of understanding the art of theatre. The students’ ability to adjust a look, a move, or the delivery of a line is fundamental to understanding the rehearsal process and play creation.

Student perception of the aesthetic relied on the development of personal relationships. Students explained the importance of a safe and accepting environment.
Students’ comments about family and the relationships that developed during the OAP season illustrated the bonding that occurred with other students. Understanding personal relationships is the essence of the human experience described by Smith (2005). Learning about the aesthetic requires an appreciation of human nature as experienced through an artistic endeavor. The OAP contest system provides such an experience. As students move through the rehearsal process, they work with their director and a small group of peers. This group bonds over the course of the season, through shared experience and emotional moments, punctuated by laughter and tears. The frenzy of last minute details, the stress associated with contest day, the endless waiting for the result from the judge, all provide a time for students to feel excitement, nervousness, and accomplishment.

After the contest season, after students graduate from high school, those feelings associated with the OAP participation remain. They become an indelible part of the students’ fiber. Some students develop lifelong friendships with their director and cast mates. Others move on to perform in college, amateur, and professional theatres. The high school OAP contest provides an experience in the aesthetic that remains with the student for years to come. Students engage with the teacher, peers, and with the material in an emotional and rational manner. The synergy created in the OAP rehearsal hall far exceeds what their peers experience sitting in a desk in a classroom. The synergy is the aesthetic and students have new tools to explore their world through emotion and see beyond the ordinary, becoming “awake” to the possibilities of the world around them (Greene, 1978).
How do Theatre Teachers who Participate in the One-Act Play Contest System Address the Goals Established by UIL Guidelines?

Teachers in this study could not list or describe the UIL goals for the One-Act Play contest, yet they worked to achieve them. The first goal is to “satisfy the competitive artistic spirit...emphasizing high quality performance.” Every director strived to create a high quality performance. While each employed a variety of teaching and rehearsal techniques, the directors all highlighted the goals of creating a solid performance. Each director provided fuel for the competitive fire by bringing students to clinics so they would be able to listen to an outside director give them ways to improve the show in order to gain an advantage over other performances on contest day. Students were encouraged to watch other schools perform as well so they might discuss script choice and acting technique.

The second goal is related to the first and the quality production is broken down into an “appreciation of good acting, good directing, and good drama.” When students watch other shows during clinics or contests, they are exposed to a variety of scripts, technical elements, and directing choices. Teachers in this study also provided opportunities for their students to see performances in a variety of other ways too. One school teamed with a neighboring school to have a public performance. These schools were in different classifications, so they would not be competing against each other. Further, as the show time is limited to 40 minutes, the audience could enjoy two performances back to back. During this event, students can enjoy another school’s performance without the competition aspect. Directors want to expose students to the
art of theatre in an effort to help them experience different venues, styles, and play scripts.

Directors, in their effort to expand a students’ understanding of theatre through exposure to as many shows as possible, also feed the students’ interest in theatre in the future. Goal three expresses a desire for students to participate in theatre as adults. The research indicates that students who have training and participation in the arts during school do continue to attend plays in the future. Although the purpose of this study did not examine the long-term effects of OAP participation, the teachers do provide opportunities for students to consider how they will interact in the theatre environment in the future. While some teachers bring students to the TETA convention to audition for college scholarships, other teachers simply demonstrate how to attend a professional theatre, buy a ticket, and reinforce appropriate behavior at the event. Both of these activities work to help students realize they can continue in theatre in the future, whether it becomes their major in college or whether they just attend and enjoy a local performance.

The fourth UIL goal is consistently applied in the classrooms and rehearsal halls of the directors participating in this study. The directors take care to explain to students the parameters of the contest and the guidelines associated with the contest. They take care to teach the expectations of behavior on the contest day. They take students to mock contests when they participate in clinics. But for all of these preparations, the director must work hard to teach the element of graceful loss, placing in perspective a contest resulting in non-advancement. Balancing the line of “winning, but not
advancing” seems to be the single most important task of the director. They accomplish this through creating solid relationships and focusing on the quality of the performance.

Goal five seems to be the hardest goal to emphasize or accomplish for the average theatre teacher. In fact, only two of the teachers even demonstrated or discussed any actions to support this goal. The goal asks teachers to “increase the number of schools which have adopted theatre arts as an academic subject in their curricula.” Every director in this study taught theatre at least one class period a day, with some schools utilizing two full-time theatre teachers. While this was a function of the size of the school, each school in this study had adopted theatre as an academic subject. However, two teachers in this study did actively work to increase theatre in schools around them. One teacher directed the middle school students in their One-Act Play. The other director invited the middle school students to perform for a public audience on the same evening as the high school. These actions allowed for a strengthening of the relationship between the middle school students and the high school students, enabling the high school theatre teachers to recruit students for future productions. The actions allowed the middle school students to experience the high school theatre arts program in a limited way, while encouraging more students to become involved in theatre at the middle school level. By increasing interest prior to high school, these actions help maintain theatre arts as an academic subject at the middle school level. The other directors in this study benefited from strong middle school programs already in existence in their feeder schools.
Assumptions and Limitations

In the beginning of the study, I made the assumption that teachers may or may not be familiar with the goals. All of the teachers in the study had access to the UIL OAP Handbook and all of the teachers recalled seeing the goals written in the guide. However, none of the teachers could identify the goals from memory. The Handbook provided a more concrete purpose—explanation of the rules and as such, teachers consulted it for that reason primarily. Interestingly during the data gathering of this study, though the teachers were not consciously aware of the goals, their actions and descriptions during interviews did indicate that the goals were being addressed in their teaching and rehearsals. For example, the action of spending time with students during rehearsal to discuss contest day procedures demonstrates that the teacher wants the students to understand how to win and lose with grace and honor (UIL Goal 4). However, at no time did any of the teachers actually refer to the goals as stated objectives for their teaching.

Another assumption at the beginning of the study was an acceptance of the different levels of education, experience, teaching philosophy, and teaching field certification by each participant. The range of experience in teaching in this study varied from three years to twenty years. However, by the end of the study every teacher who completed the study had attended the state contest as a director. Each director held contest advancement as a personal desire (if not personal goal) regardless of years of teaching or previous levels of contest achievement.
The third assumption of this project recognized that each director may have differing access to external support systems. In actuality, all of the participating directors had equal opportunity to participate in the UIL sanctioned external support services and each director chose to do so. The four directors were all TETA members, they had all attended Student Activities Conferences, and they each hired at least one clinician during the One-Act season to review their work. While the access remained equal among the participants, the level of engagement with each activity differed and was influenced by previous experiences. For example, the AAAA school and the AAAAA school both responded negatively to the Superconference experience, believing that their students found little benefit to participation. The teachers from the small schools, AAA and A, both thought their students learned from other directors and other students while at the event. This study did not address the causes for these differences; however the size of the school and the experience of the students are factors worthy of attention in future research.

Contributions to the Literature

This study has contributed to the literature of competitive theatre, educational theatre, and aesthetic education. Very few studies have discussed the outcomes, positive or negative, of competitive theatre at the high school level. The current study followed four schools through the process of one state contest. A particular focus of the study was examination of the implications of an aesthetic curriculum with secondary students. The findings in this study show that positive outcomes do occur when
students participate in a theatre contest. Teachers focus on creating strong working relationships and developing ensemble with students. The directors provided experiences that related to real world situations and helped students to make connections outside of the rehearsal hall. By emphasizing those activities rather than the outcome of the contest, teachers hoped students would remember their participation in the OAP long after the final curtain. These teachers provided a context in which students could learn the nature of the aesthetic in real life and use those experiences to develop the students’ understanding of the world.

Another contribution of this study is to provide additional contexts for understanding aesthetic curriculum. In this study, the curriculum is the contest and each teacher found ways to work toward accomplishing the goals of the UIL organization in his or her own classroom and rehearsal hall. The teachers in this study chose a play title and style suitable for their students and provided a welcoming rehearsal space to create a production. And each teacher relied on the vehicle of the contest and its inherent rules to create the play. Between the times that the teachers chose the script to the final closing of the curtain at the last production, they worked to attain the UIL goals as well as to provide an opportunity for students to learn about the aesthetic in art and in life. Broadening the scope and definition of aesthetic curriculum to include a variety of modes such as the UIL OAP Contest will enhance future research in the field of aesthetics, as currently many researchers are only looking at classroom activities. Expanding research possibilities into programs such as UIL OAP will enable
future research in the field of aesthetics to identify the range of ways students’ lives are enhanced through the study of art and aesthetics.

Recommendations

The noted lack of studies and research in the field of OAP rehearsal and performance as related to the aesthetic prompted this study. The possibilities for future research exist in the areas of competitive theatre, teacher attitude toward winning in competitive artistic endeavors, and student perception of the aesthetic in the theatre classroom. The current study initiates an understanding of how teachers and students interact within the rehearsal hall, under the strict conditions of the One-Act Play Contest. Future researchers may be able to look specifically at the nature of the rules and judging, which clearly affect preparation for the contest.

This study reveals the effect of competition in theatre arts on aesthetic understanding of students involved in the program. The emotionally charged moments, before, during, and after the competition contribute to the effect. Winning and losing, long rehearsals, family building, soul searching, and the myriad of experiences associated with the OAP experience prompt often poignant responses from the adolescents involved. A vigilant teacher harnesses the energy of the players to create both the opportunities for aesthetic experiences and the development of the synergy required to perform at high levels, which in turn, foster appreciation for the theatre that lasts beyond the performance. Future research could explore specific teacher practices that help students deal with the emotions of competition such as the elation of
advancing through the system or the disappointment when the contest participation ends at the first level. Additionally, a central theme for these students was the concept of safety. Students described how the theatre experience provided them with a tight-knit group of friends where they could relax and feel safe. Further studies could examine this phenomenon in the theatre classroom and rehearsal hall.

As the trend in theatre leans towards competition, future studies could consider the efficacy of theatre directors in the realm of competition. For example, future research, modeled after coaching efficacy studies, could investigate the similarities and differences between traditional coaching and theatrical coaching. Likewise, further study in this area could provide guidance to future directors in competitive environments. Moreover, future research could examine the feelings of failure that teachers have when they do not advance in the One-Act Play contest. In this study, three of the five teachers advanced to the state level contest. Such an outcome is not typical for most teachers who participate in the OAP process. Of the more than 1100 directors who embark on the OAP journey each year, only 40 will reach the state meet in Austin in May. Examining the experience of the typical high school theatre director and identifying their methods for handling feelings of loss and failure may highlight a variety of issues within the One-Act Play Contest.

In this study, directors worked to attain the UIL goals that support the development of the aesthetic enrichment in adolescents. The Texas One-Act Play Contest becomes an example of an aesthetic curriculum. Until the current study, the connection between the value of the goals and the work of the teachers had not been
highlighted. An increase in the understanding of the value of the aesthetic curriculum by Texas theatre teachers ostensibly increases their use of the UIL to develop the aesthetic for their students. Teachers know innately the benefits of the artistic discipline and the theatre skills and knowledge they impart. However, continued research and development that leads to more directed staff development for theatre directors could provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between teaching the UIL goals and teaching the aesthetic. Teachers can describe the long-term results of their work and recognize and discuss the outcomes of the five UIL goals. They know they have created a high quality performance and have imparted knowledge in acting, directing, and drama (UIL goals 1 and 2). Teachers can identify students who have become theatre teachers or are pursuing careers in the art (UIL Goal 3). They can describe the experiences where they learned to better handle student disappointment (UIL Goal 4). And teachers discuss how their middle school feeder programs have increased and improved over the years because of their efforts at the high school level to increase participation (UIL Goal 5). Yet teachers have difficulty describing how they teach the aesthetic and may not even recognize that they do. Future researchers need to look closely at these relationships and provide information to teachers to help them learn more about building the aesthetic in the classroom and rehearsal hall. Further research in this area would provide a deepening understanding of the aesthetic as it occurs and how to apply that knowledge efficiently for the benefit of all students.
APPENDIX A

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
The interviews will be semi-structured, with open-ended questions.

Interview One:

1. What role does the OAP have in your season?
2. What types of shows do you generally choose to bring to contest? Why?
3. Where is your OAP Handbook? How often do you consult it?
4. What do you enjoy most about the OAP contest? Least?
5. Tell me about your experiences with OAP in the past.
6. Why did you become a theatre teacher?
7. What goals do you have for your students this season?
8. Are you a TETA member? Why or Why not? If yes, do you attend Convention?
9. Have you heard about the UIL Superconferences? Have you attended any?
   When? What did you think about it? Did you bring students? If yes, what was the quality of their experience?
10. Do you ever hire a clinician? If yes, explain those experiences. If no, why not?

Interview Two:

11. How often do you contact the League office? What are some reasons that you contact them? Do you usually write or call? What has been your satisfaction with those experiences?
12. Have you ever been to the state contest? What was that experience like?
13. Describe a typical “contest day” for you and your students.
14. Tell me what happens on the bus after a contest.
15. How do your students feel about winning and losing?

Interview Three (after the final contest):

16. How did the students do at the last contest? How do you feel about the outcome?

17. Could you or the students have done anything differently to change the outcome?

18. Will you have any more performances of this play? Why or Why not? Any thoughts about next year yet?

19. Anything else you would like to share about your OAP experiences?
APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Prior to the interview, students will answer the following demographic information:

a) Grade:_______

b) Role:________ (Actor, Technician, or Alternate)

c) How many times have you been in One-Act?________

1. What does it mean to be part of the One-Act Play company? Is it different from other shows you have done?
2. What does it feel like to participate in the One-Act play? Is the experience different from other things you do at school? Why?
3. What emotions do you experience when you participate in One-Act play?
4. What have you learned by participating in the One-Act play contest?
5. Are you a better student or better person because you took part in the One-Act play company? Why?
6. Why theatre?
APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE GOALS FOR THE ONE-ACT PLAY CONTEST
1. to satisfy the competitive, artistic spirit with friendly rivalry among schools, emphasizing high quality performance in this creative art;
2. to foster appreciation of good acting, good directing, and good drama;
3. to promote interest in that art form most readily usable in leisure time during adult life;
4. to learn to lose and win graciously, accepting in good sportsmanship the judge’s decision and criticism with a view to improve future productions; and
5. to increase the number of schools which have adopted theatre arts as an academic subject in school curricula (Murray, 2004).
APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Before agreeing to your child’s participation in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study:  A Case Study:  Theatre Teachers’ Attitudes toward the University Interscholastic League One-Act Play Contest

Principal Investigator:  Jennifer Gotuaco, a graduate student in the University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Education.

Purpose of the Study:

You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study which involves an examination of attitudes held by teachers, as they prepare for the University Interscholastic League (UIL) One-Act Play contest (OAP).

Study Procedures:

Your child will be asked to participate in a focus-group interview that will take about one hour of your child’s time.

Foreseeable Risks:

No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others:

This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to your child, however, the information collected will be of value to the field of education by providing understanding about educational theatre programs and the UIL OAP process.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records:

Interview notes from the focus group interview will be kept in locked storage in the researcher’s office. Only the researcher will have access to this information. The use of pseudonyms will mask the names of schools and participants in any presentation. Also, the confidentiality of your child’s individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

Questions about the Study:

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Jennifer Gotuaco at telephone number xxx-xxx-xxxx, or Dr. Jeanne Tunks, UNT Department of Education, at telephone number 940-565-2922.
**Review for the Protection of Participants:**

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 or sbourns@unt.edu any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

**Research Participants’ Rights:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Jennifer Gotuaco has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to allow your child to take part in this study, and your refusal to allow your child to participate or your decision to withdraw him/her from the study will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your child’s participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as the parent/guardian of a research participant and you voluntarily consent to your child’s participation in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

____________________________     ____________  
Signature of Parent or Guardian                                  Date

**For the Principal Investigator or Designee:**

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the parent or guardian signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the parent or guardian understood the explanation.

______________________________________                    ____  
Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee         Date
Child Assent Form

You are being asked to be part of a research project being done by the University of North Texas Department of Education.

This study will look at theatre teachers and how they feel about the One-Act Play contest. The researcher will be studying what teachers do and how they prepare students for the contest.

You will be asked to participate in a group interview that will take about one hour.

If you decide to help with this study, please remember you can stop participating any time you want. The interview will have no impact on your part in the One-Act company.

If you would like to help with this study, please sign your name below.

__________________________                                __________________
Signature of Child       Date

_________________________________                  __________________
Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee         Date

Waiver of Assent

The assent of ________________ was waived due to:

_________ Age

_________ Maturity

_________ Psychological State

_______________________________                         _____________
Signature of Parent/Guardian                                        Date
APPENDIX E

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of proposed procedures. It describes the procedures, benefits, risks, and discomforts of the study. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is important for you to understand that no guarantees or assurances can be made as to the results of the study.

**Purpose of the study and how long it will last:**

The purpose of this study is to examine attitudes held by high school theatre directors in a rehearsal setting for the University Interscholastic League (UIL) one-act play (OAP) contest. The study will begin at the beginning of the OAP contest season (early February 2006) and conclude at the end of each director's season (as late as May 2006).

**Description of the study including the procedures to be used:**

The investigator will conduct three interviews, each lasting 90 minutes, with the theatre director: before, during, and after the contest season. Additionally, the researcher will observe the rehearsal process for up to 10 hours. During the observation time, a log of director comments regarding UIL, the contest, and process or procedures, will be created. This log will form the basis for the interview questions. The study is designed to provide insight into the attitudes and perceptions theatre directors have about the UIL OAP contest.

**Description of procedures/elements that are associated with foreseeable risks:**

There are no foreseeable risks.

**Benefits to the subjects or others:**

The directors will be given an opportunity to discuss feelings about the UIL OAP process. Additionally, the information collected will be of value to the field of education by providing understanding about educational theatre programs.

**Confidentiality of research records:**


Data logs created during rehearsals and interview notes will be kept in locked storage in the researcher’s office. Only the researcher will have access to this information. Names of schools and participants will not be divulged in public presentations.

**Review for protection of participants:**

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (940) 565-3940.

RESEARCH SUBJECTS’ RIGHTS: I have read or have had read to me all of the above. Jennifer Gotuaco has explained the study to me and answered all of my questions. I have been told the risks or discomforts and possible benefits of the study.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time with no penalty. The study investigator may choose to stop my participation at any time.

In case there are problems or questions, I have been told I can call Jennifer Gotuaco, graduate student at the University of North Texas (UNT), at telephone number (xxx) xxx-xxxx or Dr. Jeanne Tunks, UNT professor, College of Education at (940) 565-2922.

I understand my rights as a research subject, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I have been told that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

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Signature of Subject       Date

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Signature of Witness       Date

**For the Investigator or Designee:**

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the person signing above, who, in my opinion, understood the explanation. I have explained the known benefits and risks of the research.

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Signature of Principal Investigator       Date
APPENDIX F

NODE STRUCTURE FOR CODING INTERVIEW DATA
Tree Structure for Coding Data

I. Demographic Data
   a. School
   b. Gender

II. Question 1A
   a. Wanting to win vs. winning isn’t everything
   b. Administration
   c. Long Term goals
   d. Contest Process
      i. Adherence to Rules
      ii. Judge
      iii. Travel
      iv. Clinics

III. Question 1B
   a. Teaching
      i. Metaphor
      ii. Rapport
      iii. Ensemble
      iv. Humor
      v. Praise
      vi. Discipline

   b. Rehearsal
      i. Quality Performance
      ii. Naturalism in Acting
      iii. Technical Elements
      iv. Trial and Error
      v. Moments
      vi. Attention to Detail
      vii. Pacing
      viii. Repetition
      ix. Rules
      x. Clinics
      xi. Contest Day procedures
      xii. Rehearsal times
      xiii. Theatricality
      xiv. OAP Process elements

   c. External Support
      i. Clinics
      ii. Other peers
iii. TETA
iv. Superconference
v. League Office
vi. Handbook

IV. Question C
a. Family or Group
b. Group Safety
c. Working with Others
d. Hardwork
e. Competition
f. Honor
g. Stress
h. Love of Theatre
i. Real World Experience
j. Caring
k. Teamwork
l. Put aside personal “stuff”
m. Professional
n. Responsibility
o. Discipline
p. Fairness/Unfairness
q. Frustration
r. Get to be “someone else”
s. Intensity
t. How others view or judge school
u. Miss time in school
v. Happiness
APPENDIX G

THE ONE-ACT PLAY FORMAT
A contest takes place between four to eight schools at a time. Each school has a maximum of forty minutes of allotted performance time and an additional seven minutes each to set up and strike their set from the stage. At the conclusion of all the performances, the judge makes a decision (which can be time-consuming), and then after an awards ceremony the advancing schools are announced. Finally, the judge is given 30 minutes with each school for an oral critique.

Each participating school is divided by enrollment into classifications (A-AAAAA). Then, each classification is separated into different regions, or groupings of schools based on location to facilitate ease of contest management. This process also reduces driving distance for schools to attend contests. Each region sub-divides into areas, districts, and zones. Schools compete at each level, with successful schools advancing to the next level of competition. Not all schools participate in the zone category, as the zone category is a sub-division reserved for large UIL districts. Due to the time involved in the play contest process, UIL districts with more than eight schools may opt to separate into two contests of four schools each.

The University Interscholastic League

Theatre programs in Texas have grown dramatically since the early 1920s when the UIL organized the first One-Act Play contest. At that time, few schools had theatre programs of any type, and most schools only offered one or two classes in theatre (Bedichek, 1956; Winship, 1953). Today, graduation plans in Texas high schools require students to have at least one unit in the fine arts, but the majority of high school programs offer much more. Typical high school theatre programs offer a four-year
course of study in acting and a three-year course of study in technical theatre. Programs include both curricular and extracurricular opportunities for performance.

Evaluation of high school theatre programs has been traditionally judged on the quality of theatre produced and the number of students involved in daytime and extracurricular events (Crocker, 2003; Winship, 1953). These categories represent the size and scope of a program. In Texas, extracurricular activities can vary according to the school’s UIL classification. Smaller schools (A, AA Conference) may not offer the types of opportunities that larger schools (AAAA, AAAAA Conference) can. Crocker (2003) studied high school theatre programs in the state of Texas and hypothesized that successful programs are determined by participation in the UIL One-Act Play competition. Specifically, Crocker found successful programs are those that reach regional and state levels in the competition.

Bedichek and Winship (1941) trace the simultaneous growth of high school programs and college offerings. In the first year of OAP competition, 89 high schools participated (Winship, 1953; Bedichek & Winship, 1941). By the time Winship published his report in 1953, the number of participating plays had grown to 561, and today that number has doubled (www.uil.utexas.edu). Winship credits the growth of high school programs to the UIL One-Act Play contest. By 1968, the number of participating schools was 769 (Pettigrew, 1968). Pettigrew documented the growth in high school theatre programs but discovered only 11% of those teaching theatre held degrees in the subject. Pettigrew also credits the UIL contest with the inclusion of theatre as a course of study offered in schools.
External Support Systems

The external support systems examined in this study include the Texas Educational Theatre Association annual state conference, the University Interscholastic League Student Activities Conferences, and the use of a rehearsal clinician. These resources provide OAP teachers with skills and knowledge useful for the creation of a more successful play.

The Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA) began in 1951 in response to the growing number of theatre teachers in the state (www.tetatx.com) who needed a professional organization. TETA has worked with state organizations to develop stronger standards in the state of Texas. In 1964, the organization began hosting annual conventions. Today, the convention offers workshops in directing, classroom lessons, backstage elements, and other rehearsal techniques. Keynote speakers and social events offer opportunities for teachers to network and develop professionally. Theatrical supply businesses and publishing houses that specialize in play scripts sell products in a large conference hall. Students are invited to the convention as well to attend workshops and audition for college scholarships. Texas high schools and colleges perform plays.

One-Act Play Critic Judges receive training and certification at the TETA convention. The Texas Educational Theatre Association Adjudicator’s Organization (TETAAO), a subgroup of the organization, provides preparation for individuals seeking certification as a judge for the One-Act Play contest. Prospective judges attend a two-day event that includes instruction in the judging guidelines. Students perform scenes
during the seminar and the participants discuss ratings and practice giving oral critiques. Upon successful completion of the workshop, participants are awarded certification as judges.

The University Interscholastic League offers mini-conferences throughout the state during the fall. These one-day events, called Student Activities Conferences, foster skill development in teachers and students, and offer instruction and workshops for all of the UIL academic teams. Theatrical workshop instructors, who are often university professors, teach acting, directing, and technical theatre skills.

A clinician observes a One-Act Play rehearsal and gives a critique to the director and students. The atmosphere at a clinic is similar to the OAP contest. Students practice all of the rules such as set up and strike times associated with the contest. When the performance is completed, the students take out notebooks and pens to write down information given to them by the clinician. The clinician, often a TETAAO judge, identifies possible weaknesses in acting, directing, and technical elements, and can suggest methods for improvement.

Although using a certified judge is not required by UIL, the governing organization placed limitations on the use of the rehearsal clinician. In order to hire a clinician, at least three high schools convene in the same location on the same day (www.uil.utexas.edu/policy/consitution/academics). These clinics occur prior to the contest season. To facilitate the clinics, schools coordinate schedules, clinician hiring, host, and number of schools involved. Clinics can serve as fundraisers for high schools and colleges, especially schools with nice theatrical facilities. A clinic can have as many
as eight or ten schools participate and may be held over a multi-day period. These larger events often cost schools a substantial entry fee, covering the clinician fees and administrative costs. The benefit for schools who participate in large clinics is access to a respected clinician. Because the clinic host commands a larger fee, many of the most sought after clinicians in the state attend and offer critiques. Clinicians can have reputations, often based on their work history and education. For example, a clinician who has been a high school director and who has performed in One-Act Play contests, and who has taken students to the state contest is a sought after commodity in the clinician world. Directors want to learn from those who have winning record and they are willing to pay more to have an opportunity to work with these clinicians.
REFERENCES


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