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Book Review:

Drama-based Pedagogy: Activating Learning Across the Curriculum

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Kathryn Dawson and Bridget Kiger Lee. *Drama-based Pedagogy: Activating Learning Across the Curriculum*. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2018. pp. 356.

Drama-based Pedagogy: Activating Learning Across the Curriculum, Kathryn Dawson and Bridget Kiger Lee's (2018) comprehensive approach to performance-based education, occupies an *educational* space in the Performance Studies universe. Rather than examining the dramas, presentations, and rituals that constitute human experience which are often characteristic of the field, it provides educators with a means to introduce drama into educational settings that traditionally lack theatrical elements, from kindergarten to college, from STEM to History.

In these venues, Dawson and Lee present a compelling, much-needed alternative to lecture, discussion, and web or print-based learning. In an era of Artificial Intelligence, where educators are concerned about students losing critical and analytic thinking skills, Dawson and Lee's drama-based pedagogy (DBP) provides an innovative means to stimulate students' creativity as a means to foster learning that sticks, cultivating brains that retain information.

Drama-based Pedagogy is divided into three sections. Part 1 asks "Why Use DBP?" and answers by highlighting the enhancement of student learning through *Active* and *Dramatic* ensemble processes that support a range of *Academic*, *Aesthetic*, and *Affective* outcomes via *Dialogic Meaning Making* (DMM). DMM encourages interactive exchanges where community members listen, respond, and build on each other's ideas. Dawson and Lee note that DMM stresses the importance of participation rather than seeking a singular "correct" answer (26).

Part 1 concludes with a systematic learning design, outlined in five steps (31-43): 1) The authors ask educators to "Consider Stakeholder Intentions" and the "central goal for learning" (31); 2) "Identify What Students Need to Know" (33); 3) "Define Relevant Student Connections" to the accessible "big ideas" they will encounter throughout their education (35); 4) "Choose Strategies and Performance-based Assessment" to align with learning goals (37); And finally, 5) "Engage in a Design Plan that Engages, Explores, and Reflects" encourages educators to concretely outline the design process—from learning goals to classroom action to reflection and assessment.

Part One is by far the most theoretical and methodologically robust section of the book, while Parts Two and Three offer a comprehensive account of how to do DBP. Part Two presents a detailed collection of drama-based classroom strategies divided into four chapters: “Activating Dialogue,” “Theatre Game as Metaphor,” “Image Work,” and “Role Work.” A useful chart provides a snapshot of each category, including brief summaries to answer essential questions such as: 'What is it?', 'Why use it?', and 'When is it used?' (49). This format allows educators to easily choose the most suitable category and corresponding drama-based strategies for their specific teaching goals.

Dawson and Lee then go on to outline the processes for each strategy within each category. They begin each section by crediting the practitioner responsible for developing the exercise, offer a comprehensive account of the strategy—what it is and why it is useful—and follow up with directions, guidelines for student reflection, “side-coaching tips,” and possible “variations/applications.” Unlike in Part One, educators can skim through these sections in search of the specific strategies that make sense to their pedagogical needs.

In Part Three, Dawson and Lee offer four comprehensive scenarios of “DBP Learning Design in Action” (275 -321). Here, they recount DBP's implementation, throughout each step of the design process, as well as advance its interdisciplinary capabilities. These real-world accounts vary across educational levels, from kindergarten through to high school, and cover a range of subjects, including mathematics and history. The book concludes with a section discussing “Further Considerations for DBP Learning Design,” a comprehensive glossary, an epilogue, and finally a range of print, web-based, and video resources (325-349).

While at times, the book's text-based format does the work a disservice, the authors valiantly take the readers through the theory and method step-by-step. Although this can, in certain instances, feel unwieldy, watching the video resources, book in hand, renders the theory and method more tangible.

That said, my copy of *Drama Based Pedagogy* is the most dog-eared text on my desk. In close to twenty years of teaching, I've witnessed embodied learning—from active note-

taking to physical class activities—creating memorable student experiences and activating meaningful knowledge transfer. This book systematically organizes and comprehensively articulates the “how-to” of drama-based learning, making it an invaluable resource for educators invested in experiential and active pedagogy, across disciplines and educational levels.