**How is *Dramatic Learning* different from reader’s theater?**

**Narrator:** So did you know anything about *Hamlet* before Ms. Gorman said you were going to do this?

**Child 1:** No. The only thing I knew about William Shakespeare was *Romeo and Juliet.*

**Narrator:** And so how did you learn about *Hamlet* then? Did you just learn from reading the script?

**Child 1:** I learned from reading the script, I learned from watching the kids do it, and when I did it, I thought I did a better time each time because I knew more about him. And then last night, I watched one of the versions of *Hamlet*, so now I know a little bit more about it.

**Narrator:** And how do you think your character compared to the movie version of him?

**Child 1:** I bow more deeply than he does.

**Dr. David Almeida:** Most of the time you will hear people refer to the type of teaching methodology that you’re seeing here as “readers’ theater” and there are elements of readers’ theater with a dramatic learning concept. There are minor differences in the two. Readers’ theater is often done from a student’s seat. Sometimes the teachers will line them up at the front of the room and they read from a script and they might read the script once or twice and then we move on. The goal of readers’ theater tends to be less about content learning and more about learning about theater, about the elements of theater, about taking turns, about plot structure, characterization, those kinds of things. *Dramatic Learning* takes that a step further. What we do with *Dramatic Learning* is we take readers’ theater and we add to it. And what we add to it are components of really task-engaging pedagogy. Things that students identify with and run with. Children of all ages want to do three things. They want to move, they want to pretend, and want to question or challenge. With readers’ theater, there isn’t always the opportunity to move. There is that opportunity to pretend, but the challenge piece isn’t always there because students don’t always get a chance to question why the lines are written the way they are, why they should stand here and not move around. Sometimes students in a readers’ theater play will say, “Can I move from here to there? Can I attack him with a pretend sword?” And often the teacher will say, “No, no, no, we’re just going to read the play.” And that is fine for reading the play, but with *Dramatic Learning*, we let students go that one extra step. We let them actually move, pretend, and question. And what that does is it helps them to internalize the content and it helps them to take ownership of the academic task on hand. Rather than simply following a lesson written by the teacher, they see it as something that they take a part in. The plays in *Dramatic Learning* are always organic. That is, the students have a very strong role in how the play ought to evolve. So you will see us throughout this week asking students, “How do you think you should stand? How should you say that? Do you feel comfortable with those lines? What would be better for you?” If there’s a word that they’re stumbling over, we might take it out. As a matter of fact, we would take it out. With *Dramatic Learning*, it’s all about the learning that is inherent within the process rather than the product. We’re not looking for a polished play, what we’re looking is for a student who becomes very task-engaged.