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Urban Teachers Program: Culturally Responsive Middle School Teachers Describe Their Competencies

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URBAN TEACHERS PROGRAM: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL
TEACHERS DESCRIBE THEIR COMPETENCIES

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BA (University of North Texas) 2008
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In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
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TEACHERS DESCRIBE THEIR COMPETENCIES

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to document ways that Urban Teachers' candidates enact culturally responsive teaching practices in an effort to combat the opportunity gaps in education and increase students' achievement rate. This study focused on documenting responses to the questions: How do Urban Teachers enact culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms? How do teachers in the Urban Teachers program describe overcoming perceived barriers to implementing culturally responsive teaching in an urban school district? The problem of the study was a lack of evaluation of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices of those Urban Teachers once they entered the classroom. Teachers' responses were described within the Culturally Responsive Teaching framework authored by Muniz and the organization New America.

The research was conducted as a pilot case study. There were five participants who volunteered. Out of those five participants, three also completed both surveys and interviews. Data were collected using a self-assessment survey and one on one interviews. Based on the data collected, the participants had the greatest confidence in their commitment to relationship building, lesson planning, and creating a student-centered environment. Lesson planning had the lowest self-efficacy scores on the survey but was strong in the interview portion.

Based on the data collected, participants described that aspects of the program provided culturally responsive training through a focus on relationship building, growth mindset, real

world connections, and modeling respect for differences. They faced barriers to enacting culturally responsive teaching including a lack of resources and comprehensive implementation of the pedagogy.

Keywords: Culturally Competent, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Quality Training, Pre-Service Teacher, Student Achievement

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Raising student achievement in lower income areas with a high number of minority groups is a focus in education. The focus of the research literature examined is high quality instruction, teacher preparation, and strong leadership. It is the interconnected dynamic of the previously mentioned ideas that will potentially lead to truly successful academic outcomes for students in the urban setting. The achievement gap represents a persistent disparity between different groups of students where one group is a minority population (Education Reform Glossary, 2013). Developing an understanding of how the achievement gap persists means being able to develop a plan for how to eliminate and combat this gap found in a large percentage of urban education classrooms. The achievement gap is a highly researched topic (Beard, 2008; Black 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2014), however it is important to identify specific factors that need more attention. Culturally responsive teaching practices create environments where students are represented in the instructional practices and thus are able to make more connections and find greater understanding. Culturally responsive teaching practices create environments where students feel safe which leads to greater achievement. The purpose of this study is to document ways that Urban Teachers' candidates enact culturally responsive teaching practices in an effort to combat the opportunity gaps in education and increase the achievement rate.

Teachers are people that come from different backgrounds with different perspectives. These biases can be seen in pre-service teachers and can be attributed to learned fear and stereotypes. The pre-service teacher may not realize that they have certain biases and operate under certain stereotypes until they are put into certain situations. This is called an unconscious bias (Bonfeld & Dickhauser, 2018; Dee & Gershenson, 2017). Racial and ethnicity bias in teachers can manifest in grading practices and the way that teachers or counselors recommend or

schedule classes for students (Bonefeld & Dickhauser, 2018; Dee & Gershenson, 2017). These behaviors are not isolated to just white teachers, but statistically white teachers make up the majority of public-school teachers. Understanding how bias can play a role in the relationship between student and teacher is important to understanding divergent achievement rates. When factoring in teachers' ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices, it is important to understand the specific dynamic between white teachers and minority students. Currently in the United States, students of color make up the majority of the K-12 population at 51% (Minero, 2020). Minero (2020) projects that this is a figure the U.S. Census data that will increase over the next several decades. These changes in the student population are not reflected in the teaching population. In 2017–18, about 79% of public school teachers were White, 9% were Hispanic, 7% were Black, 2% were Asian, and 1% were of two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). A common mentality among White classroom teachers is the idea that if I treat all students the same, I am being equitable in my teaching (Yost, 2018). The idea that just treating everyone the same creates an equitable environment ignores the very existence of difference. When a student walks into the classroom the first thing teachers see is their physical attributes. The color of their skin is the biggest and most obvious physical attribute that a student has. When teachers claim they can ignore the color of a student's skin, it is to claim that one has an ability of selective sight also known as being "color blind". This "color-blind" or "colorblind racism" perspective has led to the misconception that culturally responsive instruction is that teachers must teach the "Asian way" or the "Black way", which does more damage and creates learning environments that are neither productive nor culturally aware (Rajagopal, 2011). This idea that there is a way to teach that is associated with race and ethnicity

plays even more on the bias that teachers bring into the classroom because what would be expected that a teacher would bring into the class if they were going to teach the “Asian way”.

Teachers often get intimidated by the words “culturally responsive” because of the incredible number of cultures and mixes of cultures in modern classrooms. The intimidation stems from the misconception that students of different races need to be taught differently (Rajagopal, 2011). Gay (2002) defines culturally relevant pedagogy as the use of “... cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students” (p. 106). Culturally responsive teaching has been a topic of multiple studies that span multiple decades. In 1989, Irvine examined the lack of cultural connection between teachers and African American students, and more than a decade later, Irvine was still studying the effects of cultural differences and teaching. In the later study, Irvine looked at how the connection between teachers and students of different cultures impacted academic achievement (Irvine, 2001). Irvine described culturally responsive teaching, “...as student-centered, having the power to transform the curriculum, fostering critical problem solving, and focusing on building relationships with students, families, and communities” (Irvine & Armento, 2001). This definition created the lens through which he looked at how impactful culturally responsive teaching is in the classroom. Understanding culturally responsive teaching means leveraging the students’ background and culture to elevate their learning experience (NCTE, 2018). Through culturally responsive practices, teachers have the ability to create classrooms that emphasize respect for all people and experiences (NCTE, 2018).

Another important contributor to culturally responsive pedagogy is Banks (1999), who created an integration of a multicultural content model that showed teachers an approach to transformative teaching and social action. Banks described four ways or approaches that could be

taken to adapt curriculum to being multicultural. He identified them as the contribution approach, the additive approach, the transformation approach, and the social action approach. In each approach, the goal is to create an opportunity for students to engage in learning from different perspectives and with different lenses than their own, to try to understand people better. According to Ford (2010), this model “can and must be used in teacher preparation programs so that educators know how to develop curriculum that is multicultural.” Pre-service teacher education programs now include coursework about the role of classroom teachers in creating more inclusive classroom environments and how to create environments where students are able to connect to the learning in an authentic manner.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)(2012) identified that 14.6% of teachers leading classrooms in public schools entered teaching through an alternative pathway. In Texas alone, there are over 200 approved certification programs (NCES, 2012). The Urban Teachers Program has been approved in Texas for almost 5 years, and as a relative new teacher preparation program to Texas, it aims to create a program that stands out from the other 200+ programs by preparing culturally responsive teachers that are prepared for classrooms with the most vulnerable students (<https://urbanteachers.org>).

My personal interest in this topic stems from the inequity that I have seen in public education because of a lack of teacher effectiveness. Working as a classroom teacher, inclusion teacher, math tutor, and finally as a teacher educator, I have seen the differences in classrooms that have pedagogically strong teachers and those that do not. Researchers identify connections to teacher success in the classroom seen through student gains and a more supportive campus structure. It will be interesting to see if there will be significant data showing that teachers felt they had to choose between their training in culturally responsive teaching practices and campus

demands or expectations. Education and children are my passion. Teachers are the most impactful part of the education system (Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement, 2012). Training a teacher so that they have a high self-efficacy and to be in an environment where they have the ability to make decisions that are in the best interest of their students, creates a classroom environment where culturally responsive teaching can be implemented in an effort to increase growth and achievement among all students.

Statement of the Problem

In the United States, the gaps in academic achievement between African American, Latino/a, and low-socioeconomic status (SES) students compared to their affluent White peers are substantial (Rowan, Cohen, & Raudenbush, 2004). The average White 13-year-old student reads at a higher level and performs better in math than the average African American or Latino/a 17-year old student (Carter, 2013). Even after 50 years, the gap in achievement between White students and Black students has barely changed or decreased (Camera, 2016). These gaps contribute to declines in graduation and in college and career-readiness for minority students and students that are considered low socioeconomic.

Middle school achievement gaps significantly lower the likelihood that students will graduate at all. For those who do graduate, over 40% must take a remedial English or math course before they are eligible to begin college credit-bearing coursework or certificate programs. (Rutherford, 2018, para 9)

Children are supposed to have access to free appropriate public education; education that is appropriate creates an environment that provides all students with all the elements needed to be successful in the classroom. In the requirements for education preparation programs in Texas, in section 228.35 of the Texas Administration Code, Program Coursework and Training, cultural

development is identified as an expectation of the teachers' training as well as demonstration that the teacher can capitalize on the cultural knowledge and strengths of students in the classroom. However, if the current programs were truly successful in this area there should be evidence in the learning within the classrooms. In May 2019, Texas was ranked 34th out the 50 states for strength in the public education system (Baker, 2019). Urban Teachers Educator Preparation Program's mission is to help close the opportunity gap through placing more culturally responsive teachers in the classroom. At this point, there have been no data collected to see if the mission of Urban Teachers EPP has truly manifested in the classrooms of teachers through a more culturally responsive teaching practice. The problem is a lack of evaluation of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices of those Urban Teachers once they enter the classroom.

Once one is admitted into the Urban Teachers program, they are making a commitment of 4 years. The first year of the program is called the residency year, it is akin to student teaching. Participants are placed in the classroom with a host teacher and they are given responsibilities on a gradual release system from the Fall to the Spring. Starting in year two they are hired as teacher of record on the campus and continue in that space to complete their 4 years of commitment. The participants earn a Master's degree in Education during the first two years, and they receive three years of individualized coaching, adding up to about 90-100 hours of coaching. During the fourth year they are still part of the program but are not assigned a specific coach. This commitment to training is done because the program leaders want to make sure they are developing culturally competent teachers. The goal of the program is to keep culturally competent teachers in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to document ways that Urban Teachers' candidates enact culturally responsive teaching practices. Understanding the historical nature of traditional curriculum and how that creates an opportunity gap for certain minority populations of students is an important first step. This understanding makes the connection for teachers to provide a learning experience that is intended to close the gap. For example, since the inception of textbooks there has been a limited and most times skewed version of the history of Black Americans in this country. These glaring inaccuracies in the beginning of formal education environments gave people like Edward A. Johnson, a Black lawyer, in 1890, motivation to offer a more accurate account of history. Mr. Johnson wrote a textbook and, in his preface, described current textbooks as an "omission and commission on the part of white authors, most of whom seem to have written exclusively for white children" (Greenlee, 2019, para. 23). These texts that have been given to all children and held as a standard of fact and truth.

The exclusion of other ethnic, racial, and gendered perspectives continues to create gaps of cultural awareness for students and teachers when teachers are not trained to look beyond the textbook. Texas is on the list of states that have used textbooks with great creative liberty when describing the slave trade (Greenlee, 2019). In 2015, Texas was using textbooks that referred to slaves as immigrant workers. It was not until 2018 that the Texas state school board decided that slavery should be identified as a primary cause of the civil war (Greenlee, 2019). Texas is not alone. When looking at all authors of textbooks, there are few authors of color. That omission leads to curriculum continuing to be Eurocentric perspective and lacking cultural inclusiveness (Greenlee, 2019). If a person writes solely from their perspective and their background it leaves

out the experience and perspective of every other person that is different from them. That gap creates a disconnect in curriculum and learning.

Once more, the purpose of this study is to document ways that Urban Teachers' candidates enact culturally responsive teaching practices. Understanding how to effectively configure and build a positive classroom culture that is built on a pedagogy of inclusion and closes gaps within student populations. This study looked at the practices of Urban Teachers candidates in the classroom and how those practices represent culturally responsive teaching.

Research Questions

The study aimed to address the questions:

1. How do Urban Teachers enact culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms as described by the Culturally Responsive Teaching framework authored by Muniz and the organization New America?
2. How do teachers in the Urban Teachers program describe overcoming perceived barriers to implementing culturally responsive teaching in an urban school district?

Conceptual Framework

Delpit believed that knowing one's students, more than just the work that is submitted or completed in class, allows a teacher to accurately determine their strengths and weaknesses (Delpit, 1995; Delpit, 2006). This understanding of the student is how teachers establish a culturally responsive classroom. Culturally responsive teaching has been described as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 382). In partnership with the classroom teacher is the school leadership. Educational reformers have frequently identified school leadership as a crucial component of any reform of education.

Leadership is important, but it is second to the act of teaching itself (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The data from their research also indicates that good teachers will eventually leave schools where there are ineffective school leaders, especially in urban educational environments. Leaders that have a vision for improving academics among minority populations will understand the need to recruit and sustain culturally responsive teachers. Culturally responsive teachers have shown to be better equipped to meet the needs of students from low income and minority backgrounds (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). The Urban Teachers Program wants to ensure that their new teachers are up for the challenge because candidates are purposefully placed on high needs campuses.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

The assumptions for this study are pulled from reflection on the topic under examination. While all participants will have successfully completed the requirements that Urban Teachers outlines for their program, it is an assumption that participants will complete honest reflections and answer questions within the interview honestly and to the best of their knowledge. It is also an assumption that institutions that are culturally responsive and that systematically affirm, draw on, and use cultural formations of the students and will produce exceptional academic results from students (Perry et al., 2011).

Limitations of a study are those things that are out of the control of the researcher (Labaree, 2009). All data might not be transferable outside of the participant population. Human bias and perceptual misrepresentations are also potential limitations. People are products of their environment which means implicit biases exist within all people. Teachers may not realize they are acting in a biased manner until it is explicitly pointed out to them. Interviews and self-

assessed questionnaires are potential limitations to the study because they are people-driven and people have different perspectives and perceptions.

The scope of this study is quite small, in that the study was conducted in urban public middle schools in Texas. The schools have a Title 1 designation, a high English language learner population, and a majority of students who qualify for free or reduced lunches and services mainly minority populations. The study utilized 5 middle school teachers who teach in sixth through eighth grade. The teachers had between 1- 5 years of classroom experience and are participants in the Urban Teachers program.

Rationale and Significance

Teachers' understanding of and value for what it means to have a culturally responsive classroom may make the difference between success and failure for minority students. There are many misconceptions about what it means to be culturally responsive, and those misconceptions create wider gaps between students in the classroom. If teachers are not properly trained around a pedagogy of what culturally relevant and responsive teaching looks like in the classroom, there is the potential they may continue to operate within misconceptions. For instance, multicultural teaching is not the same as culturally relevant teaching. Multicultural education according to Hammond (2017), is "the celebration of diversity, what we usually see in schools" (para. 6). Multicultural education gives students an opportunity to see themselves in the lessons, but it is not meant to expand on their current understanding. This is why it is not enough to just have a multicultural perspective. Culturally Responsive Teaching "is about building the learning capacity of the individual student," (Hammond, 2017, para. 9). School districts pay for Urban Teachers to place teachers at their campuses. When the district partners enter into this agreement, they are trusting in the mission and vision that Urban Teachers has claimed. The Urban Teachers

program claims that they are creating culturally competent teachers, the data collected in this study provide insight into the level of success that the program has had in this claim.

This study documents how culturally competent teachers show respect for multiculturalism. Creating culturally competent teachers who understand the idea of multiculturalism is an important part of the training to make sure that the quality of education for students in urban populations is improving but also to make sure that Urban Teachers is delivering the academic experience that their partner districts are expecting. School districts are making significant financial commitment to the program based on the belief that the teacher who emerges will have the training and support to close opportunity gaps through a culturally responsive pedagogy.

Definition of Key Terms

Achievement Gap: This term refers to the disparity between the academic performance of ethnic groups, as well as that between English learners and native English speakers; socioeconomically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students; and students with disabilities as compared with students without disabilities (Nieto, 2010).

Colorblind Racism: The belief that racism is no longer a problem and that we all have equal opportunities. People who subscribe to colorblind explanations claim they do not see the color of people's skin and believe everyone to be equal. Colorblindness prevents us from seeing the historical causes of racial inequality and how racial inequality persists in our society (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Neville, Gallardo, & Wing Sue, 2015; Study.com, 2020).

Culturally Competent: The ability to understand and interact effectively with people from other cultures (Preemptive Love, 2020).

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) acknowledges a student's cultural background; it builds on a student's experiences and affirms his or her cultural identity to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes, thereby empowering them intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Williams & Woods, 1997).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A theoretical model that focuses on multiple aspects of student achievement and supports students to uphold their cultural identities. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy also calls for students to develop critical perspectives that challenge societal inequalities. A pedagogical framework coined by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings in the early '90s, rests on three fundamental pillars, academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (TFA, 2019; California Department of Education, n.d.).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP): Teaching and learning that seeks to perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change. CSP takes dynamic cultural and linguistic dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive, rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits (Ladson-Billings, 2014; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014, 2015).

Education Debt: Gloria Ladson-Billings reframes the achievement gap as the educational debt. Ladson-Billings identifies four dimensions within the education debt: historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral. The historical debt is defined by a historical lack of access to formal public education for certain groups of people. The economic debt is defined by historical and contemporary inequities in school funding, and income disparities related to different levels of education. The sociopolitical debt is defined by the disenfranchisement of

people of color at local and national levels. The moral debt is defined by the disparity between what we know is right and what we actually do (Ladson-Billings, 2007).

English Language Learner: Students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses (edglossary.org, 2013).

Highly Effective: Improve instruction, and raise student achievement.

High Quality Training: Training that produces teachers who know their subject, who know effective instructional practices and who value their students (Intercultural Development Research Association, 2020).

Opportunity Gap: This term refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, and other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students (Jerald, 2006).

Pre-Service Teacher: Those who are in a teacher-education program in order to pursue teaching credentials in public schools or private sectors domestically or internationally (Lee, 2015).

Student Achievement: Refers to the extent to which a learner has attained their short or long-term educational goals. Individual differences in academic performance are strongly correlated with differences in personality and intelligence. As well, students' levels of self-efficacy, self-control and motivation also impact levels of achievement (Top Hat Glossary, n.d.).

Title 1 Designation: Title 1 provides federal funds to schools with high percentages of low-income students. These funds pay for extra educational services to help at risk students achieve and succeed regardless of any disadvantages through no fault of their own (Spivey, n.d.).

Urban Teachers: Educator Preparation Program (Urban Teachers, n.d)

Urban School District: A district is classified as major urban if: (a) it is located in a county with a population of at least 950,000; (b) its enrollment is the largest in the county or at least 70 percent of the largest district enrollment in the county; and (c) at least 35 percent of enrolled students are economically disadvantaged. A student is reported as economically disadvantaged if he or she is eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program (Texas Education Agency, 2016).

Conclusion

There are studies that have focused on teacher preparation (Demie & McClean, 2015), teacher self-efficacy (Watson & Wiggan, 2017), and leadership (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Mombourquette (2017) found that to close the achievement gap, there has to be strong leadership in schools that have a vision for the future. Challens and Mgadla (2018) found that teachers must be trained and determined to be highly effective. Highly effective teachers implement a culturally relevant pedagogy, and high self-efficacy. These characteristics are central to teachers that are prepared to teach all students. This study will evaluate if the training completed by teachers who are part of the Urban Teachers program leads to them having strong culturally responsive teaching practices that engage students and close opportunity gaps. In Chapter 2, research that has been conducted on the literature about teacher pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching will be presented.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will examine the different perspectives on what leads to the statistical gaps in achievement across public education. The review starts with a discussion of the achievement gap as a whole with ideas of social class and access included and how opportunity plays a role in the achievement potential of students. Then it will examine different components of what high quality teaching involves, both the training which is external and the self-efficacy that is internal. Finally, it will wrap up with the idea of leadership in the classroom,

Achievement Gap

The term “achievement gap” was once used just to explain the difference in test scores of minority and low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers only (National Education Association, 2019). Currently, this gap represents the disparities and inequalities perpetuated in the public school system for minorities, language learners, students that have Individual Education Plans, gender differences, and families with lower incomes. It also persists past just test scores and is also reflected when comparing dropout rates and college enrollment (Abramson, 2018).

There are various sub-populations that are affected by the achievement gap. Previous data collected have identified gaps between genders, as well as racial and ethnic backgrounds. According to National Education Association (2019), the differences in backgrounds, ethnicity, race, gender, disability, and income, are apparent on SAT, ACT, state-wide standardized testing, and college entrance exams. These gaps can predict how successful students will be as they continue in school through college and even predict the types of jobs that will be available to these students.

In 1966, the first study on the achievement gap was released by James Coleman. This report focused on the disparities between Black and White student achievement. The report was very extensive, including 4,000 schools, 66,000 teachers, and 600,000 students, ranging between third and twelfth grade (Hill, 2016). This research identified outside factors including home life, neighborhood, and peer interaction as causes for the achievement gap. In 50 years of research on the achievement gap, there are many studies that have sought answers to the same question about its persistence. Little progress has been made in closing it. Since the 1960's, researchers have agreed that the achievement gap grows because of the lack of opportunity or less opportunity for one group than the other (Ansell, 2011). The lack of resources provided to a school because of inequitable education funding increases the gap in opportunity. Other research has proven that teachers are a factor in the achievement gap. The Teaching Commission (2004) proved that "good teaching" matters. The Texas teaching Commission (2012) has done research that indicates that effective teachers share many of the same characteristics, regardless of school resources or student population. They found that teachers who have in-depth subject and pedagogical knowledge and several years of experience are key to improving student growth and achievement.

Fowler and Brown (2018) found that equity in education is vital and mandatory for improvement in urban education. This research recognizes that numbers do not tell the whole story and that there is more to education than test scores to make students successful. Studies have examined how equity and access is vital to closing the achievement gap. Equity is not the same as equal and that has to be recognized as well in order to start to close the gap. Black (2010) found research that saw a direct connection between socioeconomic status and achievement. The data collected showed in general the "working class" was told to conform and

the middle class was expected to have more autonomy. This created more of a gap after factoring in the lack of exposure that a student may have. It may be argued that the social and human capital possessed by the middle-class families gives them access to the information needed in their choice-making, and they are more likely to take advantage of the school market system. (Yang-Hansen, 2008, p. 522). This dichotomy between expectations of the working class and the middle class further widens the achievement gap. The idea that one must conform to the other is another reason why inclusive curriculum is vitally important for progress.

Closing the achievement gap means having different approaches to classroom instruction that will improve minority and low socioeconomic achievement at twice the rate of their counterparts (Porter, 2015). Porter (2015) also identifies similar inequalities in access to high-quality teachers and resources and identifies this as an opportunity gap instead of achievement gap. Using the phrase *opportunity gap* instead of achievement gap implies that a solution would be to provide more equitable funding for resources and teachers. There are many variables to this problem. Abramson (2018) cited Welner from the Washington Post, who posits that it may be time for educators to rethink how to measure achievement in the first place. Figure 1 below shows the trend in reading scores among different ethnicities from 2017 to 2019 (NAEP, 2019). Figure 2 below shows the gap in reading scores between white and black students from 1992 to 2019 (NAEP, 2019).

Trend in eighth-grade NAEP reading average scores, by selected student groups

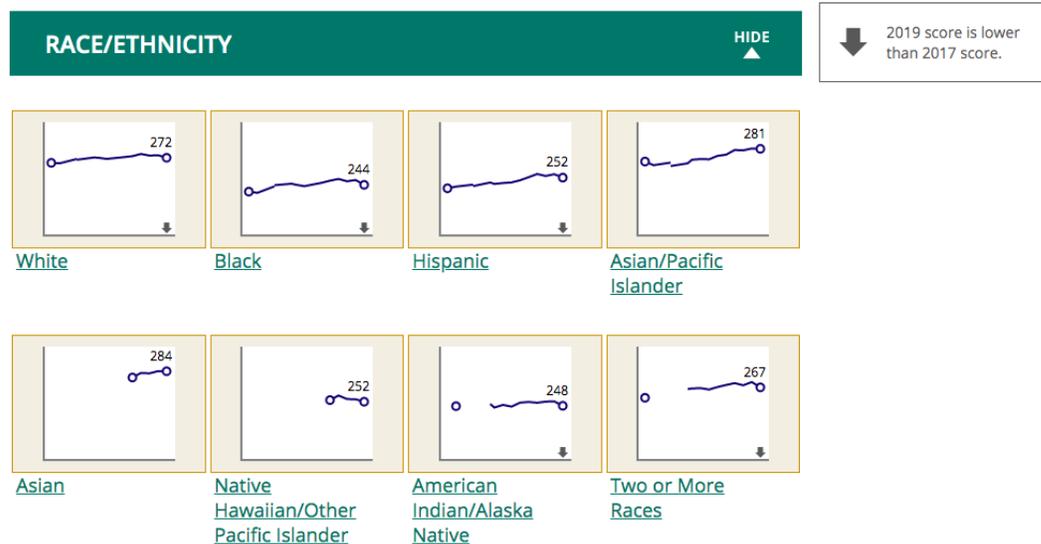


Figure 1. Trend in eighth-grade NAEP reading average scores by selected student groups

Trend in eighth-grade NAEP reading average scores and score gaps, by race/ethnicity

DISPLAY AS GRAPH | TABLE

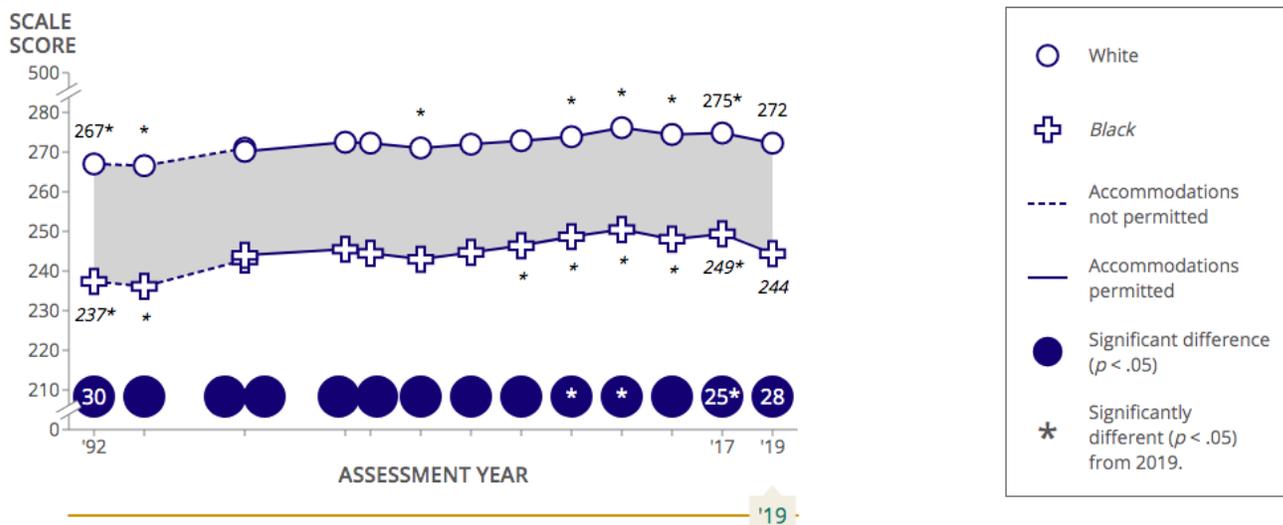


Figure 2. Trend in eighth-grade NAEP reading average scores and score gaps by race/ethnicity

Social Class

Garcia and Weiss (2017) found that extensive research concluded that a child's social class is one of the most significant predictors of their educational success. They also found a number of studies that showed the strong relationship between social class, which is directly connected to socio-economic status and test scores, educational attainment, and college attendance and completion (Duncan, Morris, & Rodrigues, 2011; García, 2015; García & Weiss, 2015; Lee & Burkam 2002; Mishel et al. 2012; Putnam, 2015). In 2016, there were around 3 million teachers that were tasked with educating the nearly 50 million public education students (Center for Education Reform, 2016). Within those 50 million students there were different socioeconomic backgrounds, English language learners, Special Education recipients, transient students, foster children, abused, neglected, and the gifted and talented. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2018 there were 56.6 million students in elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

Equitable Access

Public education is funded through property taxes. What happens when there are few properties to be taxed for the neighborhood school? Students need to have access to resources because those resources help to broaden their horizons and make connections to what they are learning. Access to high quality schools steadily closes the achievement gap and at a continued rate (Mehdinezhad & Arbabi, 2015). All students should have access to the same learning materials and equipment but more importantly, students need access to high quality teachers. The more money and resources dedicated to classrooms and schools, the higher the student achievement (McCreary, Edwards, & Marchant, 2015). Teachers are a vital resource in closing

the achievement gap and socioeconomic status should not limit a student's access to high caliber instruction. This is why it is so important to understand the roots of inequity within education.

The causes of the achievement gap are well documented. Educators can't control all those factors, but they need to identify steps in closing the gap and correcting the policies and procedures that may be unwittingly contributing to it (NAEP, 2020). There is a combination of needs that have been identified in the various research that has been conducted. Those needs have been identified as access to resources that includes high quality teachers, culturally responsive curriculum, and strong leadership (Porter, 2020 sources). An isolated focus on one contributing factor ignores how other factors are connected to the widening gap.

Understanding how to effectively configure and build a positive classroom culture is within the partial control of teachers and will have continued positive effects on the education system. Teacher training expectations could be impacted if there is a better understanding of how to best serve the needs of the children from diverse backgrounds. If a teacher preparation program identifies ways to train teachers in the creation of classrooms that are culturally responsive and respectful and that leads to documented gains in academics, then the standard for training would potentially spread to other programs.

Achievement Gap in Middle School

The achievement gap is evident as soon as children enter Kindergarten (EPI, 2015). While many reformers focus on secondary education, others state that lack of success in school before high school is as important. Some reformers focus on middle school classrooms as a problem that needs to be addressed. Research has shown that, in middle school, the gap in achievement among minority students grows particularly rapidly (Bjorklund-Young & Plasman, 2019). Bjorklund-Young and Plasman posit that, if a school is able to reduce gaps in the middle

years the school is implementing reforms in a positive and effective way (2019). Rutherford (2018) identified middle school success as a key predictor of success in high school. The middle school years are foundational, but many students leave middle school underprepared for the rigors of high school work. Apex learning institute found that students who leave middle school unprepared will continue to struggle throughout high school (2018). Middle school is meant to provide students with the foundational work to be successful in high school and if those skills are weak students are at risk of failure (Apex Learning, 2018). The widest gaps can be seen in math and reading language arts or ELA (Rutherford, 2018). “Nationally, 33 percent of eighth-grade students performed at or above proficient on the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics assessments; 35 percent performed at or above proficient on 2017 NAEP reading assessments” (Rutherford, 2018, para. 6). The gaps that are seen can be directly connected to declines in graduation and in college and career-readiness. Middle school operates as a gatekeeper. The gaps seen in middle school significantly lower the likelihood that students will graduate at all (Rutherford, 2018). Consistent experience with failure affects student motivation and desire (Apex Learning, 2018). Statistics show that, even when students that are able to graduate, there is still over 40% that will end up having to take a remedial English or math course before they are eligible to begin college credit-bearing coursework or certificate programs (Rutherford, 2018). Children are supposed to have access to free appropriate public education. In a traditional model, a classroom teacher would venture to treat all students the same meaning that the pacing and modality of instruction does not have to vary. However, many students have gaps in foundational information which means there are different levels of mastery (Apex Learning, 2018). Education that is appropriate would create an environment that provides all students with all the elements needed to be successful in the classroom.

High Quality Teaching

The Teaching Commission (2012) also reviewed research completed by Teach for America. Teach for America found that the most effective teachers have a deep belief in the potential of all students, a commitment to expand opportunities for students, demonstrated leadership ability, superior interpersonal skills to motivate others, perseverance in the face of challenges, ability to adapt to changing environments, excellent critical thinking skills, superior organizational ability, and respect for individuals' diverse experiences and the ability to work effectively with people from a variety of backgrounds (Teaching Commission, 2012). Breaden (2008) conducted a comparison study of forty-six industrialized countries and found that the United States ranked 42nd in providing equitable distribution of teachers. There are many factors that affect a student's academic performance. According to *Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement* (2012), researchers suggest teachers matter most. It is estimated that teachers have two to three times the impact compared to other school factors. Thus, proper training for teachers and providing students with teachers that are highly trained are instrumental in student achievement.

Teacher Retention

The U.S. Department of Education (2018) estimated 90% or about 50 million students were in public school setting. Redding (2018) found that an average 16% of public school teachers change schools or leave teaching every year, this calculates to over half a million teachers nationwide. Redding and Henry (2019), suggest that supporting teachers in their first few years in teaching through mentoring or support from their principal may reduce the rate at which they leave teaching.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

There are many studies on the relationship between a teacher's belief in themselves, which is also known as self-efficacy, and their effectiveness in the classroom (Berger et al., 2018; Fullbeck 2019; Protheroe 2008). A study reported in *The Elementary School Journal* found that teacher self-efficacy had a greater effect on the reading outcomes of 5th-grade students than teacher experience or teacher education (Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig, & Morrison, 2012). Teachers who believe in their abilities were able to provide better support and maintained a more positive classroom culture. The research and articles that I have read discussed and concluded from their studies that there is an association between teacher self-efficacy and student achievement. The U.S. Department of Education (2019) acknowledges that the most important school-based factor impacting academic success is the quality of teacher followed by school leadership. The American Institute for Research (2019) identified that effective teachers have to be supported by effective policies and procedures. Hattie (2012) established that high teacher self-efficacy has a greater impact on achievement than home, parents, and relationships (2008). Anita Woolfolk is a researcher in the field of teacher efficacy, Protheroe used her findings to describe teachers with high self-efficacy. Those teachers who set high goals, who persist, who are willing to try another strategy when one approach does not work out, have a high self-efficacy and that allows more opportunity for student growth and learning (Protheroe, 2008). Hoy (2000) believes that the development of teacher efficacy happens through mastery experiences during student teaching and the induction year.

Collectively, research shows that teachers need to be confident in themselves and their abilities. The task is to make sure that teachers understand this and implement best practices in the classroom and utilize their training to promote student growth and learning. It is important to

highlight the effect of quality instruction and growth that students have when they are given the opportunity to relate to the curriculum in a meaningful way.

Teacher Autonomy

Education Reform Glossary (2014) defines teacher autonomy as the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make autonomous decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it. Teachers need more autonomy in the classroom to be effective at responding to student needs in the classroom (Sandoval, 2018). Teachers have the most direct effect on student learning because they are in the classroom every day working with the students. Teachers understand what needs students have and are better prepared to provide them with the tools to be successful. One of the biggest reasons teachers quit is a lack of autonomy in the classroom. As veteran teachers are starting to leave the profession from lack of autonomy in the classroom and respect for their knowledge, younger teachers are coming into the profession which means that the experience level in the classroom is decreasing and the ties to the community are lacking (Lamb-Sinclair, 2017).

Transformational School Leadership and Effective Teaching

Teacher quality is one of the most impactful components to student achievement and outcomes (Nyhus, 2019). The quality of the teacher has more impact on student learning than race and socioeconomic status (Nyhus, 2019). Hanushek et al. found that having consistently high quality teachers could eliminate achievement deficits in students (Hanushek, Rivkin & Podgursky, 2004). Leadership is tasked with recruiting these high quality teachers at a time when there is a continued shortage of people entering the field. In 2019, Garcia and Weiss projected that there was potential to have a teacher shortage of almost 100,000 by 2020. A 2018 Gallup survey of K-12 superintendents found that, in general, public school superintendents identified

finding and retaining highly qualified teachers as their top two challenges (Nyhus, 2019). This is in part because, on average, only about half of the graduates from teacher preparation programs take jobs as new teachers. When partnering that statistic with the overall decline in university programs of education enrollments, high quality teachers are harder and harder to find (Nyhus, 2019). In order to combat this shortage, school leaders have to allocate time and resources to create new solutions and develop new plans for recruitment (Culbertson, 2017). Effective leaders know that strategic recruitment creates avenues for increased teacher quality, higher retention, and reduces the need for more professional development (Graf, Partelow, & Benner, 2016). These high caliber leaders are put in a position to implement transformations within their schools.

Schieltz (2019) identified attributes of transformational leadership and suggests that transformational leaders act as role models and influence others to want to become more like them. Transformational leaders have the ability to provide inspirational motivation. This refers to the leader's ability to inspire confidence, motivation and a sense of purpose in their followers. In addition, transformational leadership values creativity and autonomy among the leader's followers. Teacher autonomy improves teacher efficacy which contributes to improved achievement in the classroom. Transformational leaders may challenge teachers to examine their assumptions about their work and to rethink instructional process; such leaders may establish expectations for quality pedagogy and support teachers' professional growth (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008).

In addition, Louis et al. (2010) concluded that leadership practices targeted directly at improving instruction have significant effects on teachers' working relationships and, indirectly, on student achievement. Further, when principals and teachers share leadership, teachers create

better partnerships which create more achievement opportunities for students. Strong leaders create strong teams and they effect student achievement (Louis et al., 2010). On a school campus administrative leadership and teacher leaders have to function as a team to see success.

Leadership Theories to Support Instruction

Beard (2018) conducted a case study that used flow theory and applied it to educational administration. He combined flow theory and Dantley's purpose-driven leadership to an administrator's practices. Beard (2018) had two guiding questions in the study: (a) is purposefulness integral to closing extant gaps in achievement, and (b) are the elements of flow found in successful educational administration? The results of Beard's study were that all nine elements of flow were found. Also found in the study were the tenets of purpose-driven leadership in the work experience of an administrator's success in closing the district's achievement gap (Beard, 2018). The nine tenets of flow theory are setting goals, providing feedback, balancing the challenge with the skill, having both action and awareness, avoiding distractions, not letting the fear of failure stop the progress, no worries of self-consciousness, and sometimes doing things for enjoyment and nothing else. Identifying the tenets helps educators understand the significance that the finding has on the importance of strong leadership in education. School administrative leadership has a direct relationship to teacher effectiveness. It is imperative to understand that effective leadership styles have characteristics that develop an environment that allows teachers to be leaders in their classrooms. There are different styles of leadership that can produce effective high quality classrooms.

Leadership Culture

Demie and Mclean (2015) concluded that strong leadership, high quality teaching and learning, inclusive curriculum, data usage, one on one support, and intervention are successful in

closing the achievement gap. This is a heavy lift for leadership. Data show that there is a need for high quality educators and high quality leadership. School administrators that follow the theory of flow understand the challenging nature of education and are able to rise to the challenge and be successful. These leaders create goals that are both active and engaging. There are clear parameters for the development of success. Finally, these leaders demonstrate motivation that is intrinsic. A successful leader is internally motivated to educate students of all levels. The research done on the achievement gap has highlighted the importance of leadership. A successful leader has a vision for their school. Transformation leadership means the people in charge have a vision of what they want to have happen and how they will improve situations. Wynder (2013) as cited in Kim (2018) found:

Not only that individual teacher responsibility is significant in the improvement of the school's student achievement, but also that the principal's belief system played a major role in the development of school culture. (p. 142)

Culture is affected by the leader, and when staff needs were met safely, positive change was possible.

Pitron (2008) says that the leader-follower exchange approach implies a system of teamwork, and in this case, it is the teachers and principals that are working together. Historically leadership has been more top down in positionality. Gilbert and Matviuk (2008) state that, within a productive leader-follower relationship, the parties move past the singular view of subordinate and manager and into a relationship where the focus is on growth and innovation. This type of relationship of give and take provides better communication within a school. Being able to influence followers is key to leadership (Foster, 2010). Winston (2002), highlights that leaders have to have the ability to humble themselves and be able to learn from

the people that they lead at times. In order to improve student growth and learning there has to be changes made to the system. Foster (2013) states “to best become a transformational organization, one could argue that we must break from the traditional state of ‘this is the way we’ve always done it’ and look to other possibilities” (p. 3) A leader-follower understands that acknowledging the strengths of those around them and giving opportunity for those strengths to be utilized develops in people the desire to invest in their job and community (Foster, 2010).

Principals have seen success when they have the ability to understand what it takes to be an effective teacher (Kim, 2018). This connects back to the understanding that teachers have to be properly trained in order to be effective in closing the achievement gap. Darling-Hammond (2014) found that teachers need to be supported equitably in the classroom and outside the classroom in order to perform at their peak and improve student learning. That is the job of the administrator to facilitate. The mission then becomes getting students access to high quality and well trained teachers.

Teacher Practices

Strand (2014) found that the gap between specific groups of students reflects both their economic circumstances and teacher preparation. This section will focus on teacher preparation and later will look at the economics and how it connects. The idea that teacher preparation is vital is not a new idea but becomes more relevant as more studies look at what good teaching really means. Kiemer, Gröschner, Kunter, and Seidel (2018) investigated whether productive classroom discourse in the form of instructional and motivational classroom discourse helped to develop a sense of student autonomy. This is an important finding, because this skill can be strengthened within a teacher professional development program, and therefore improve the quality of teachers’ instructional level. Researchers are starting to recognize that teacher

preparation and ability to teach highly effective lessons are directly linked to their overall effectiveness in the classroom. They found that when teachers were better trained to facilitate the learning process, students were more comfortable taking control of their learning (Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers & Swanson, 2011; Learning Forward, 2018; Tucker and Stonge, 2005). This type of instruction creates environments where students can push their thinking.

Watson and Wiggan (2016) conducted research from what they referred to as a more “asset based” lens that was focused on Black student achievement and they found similar overall findings: that high quality education means students perform at higher levels. There is a clear correlation between teaching excellence and student excellence (Watson & Wiggan, 2016). It is important that teachers display excellence in their practice. The best way to ensure such excellence is to make sure that they are highly trained. Madimetsa, Challens, and Mgadla (2018), also concluded that teachers need to be better trained in their discipline. Singh (2017) found that the clinical experience as part of the teacher training process is vital to the success of a teacher. That confidence in their training helps teachers to have a more positive impact on their students. Students in classrooms with high quality, researched-based instruction have greater opportunity for gains. High quality instruction means that a teacher is able to recognize and engage the differences of each child in an equitable way.

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Culturally relevant teaching practices are vital as urban classrooms become more and more diverse in nationality, race, and language. Ford and Moore (2013) concluded that there needs to be constant focus put into addressing the factors such as language, tradition, and culture that cause achievement gaps. Black (2012), found that educators’ inability to understand the

difference between learning differences and learning disabilities caused over identification of minority students to Special Education. A teacher's inability to prepare, plan, and teach to different learning styles that are linked to cultural background attribute to a widening of the achievement gap. Highlighting culturally responsive teaching practices in teacher training will potentially assist in increasing achievement of minority students (Matias, 2016).

When teachers neglect to acknowledge the different backgrounds of students and how those backgrounds affect learning, they start to engage in a practice that leads to urban students having a level of cultural poverty (Matias, 2016). Minority students are not provided an opportunity to engage in, practice, or display their culture because curriculum is written and developed with from the perspective of the dominant culture. Garcia and Chun (2016) found that higher teacher expectation and diverse teaching practices had positive effect on self-efficacy and academic performance. Students need self-efficacy to achieve autonomy of learning. Teacher education programs have a lot of responsibility to be proactive about exploring and confronting whiteness in order to truly be successful with urban students (Matias, 2016). Teacher education programs have the responsibility to prepare teachers to be confident in the curriculum (Madimetsa et al., 2018). This confidence is required in order for them to be able to manipulate the curriculum to meet the needs of all their students. Ensuring that there are high quality teachers with the bandwidth discussed in the classroom is the job of leadership.

Culturally Sustaining Teaching Practices

Expanding on the idea of a culturally relevant pedagogy, Django Paris (2012), introduced the idea of culturally sustaining pedagogy. Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) utilizes the basic premises of culturally responsive and relevant teaching and takes into account the multiple ways that culture and identity evolve in and outside the classroom. In 2014, Paris and Alim,

proposed that a teacher that implements culturally sustaining practices looks at how historical culture and evolving culture interact in the classroom. The idea is that teachers are able to engage students in positive sense of self and being, while also engaging in the basic principles of teaching math, reading, writing, etc. The difference between the ideas of culturally relevant teaching and culturally sustaining teaching is that it moves past finding the relevance in curriculum alone as the key but to supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism both in practice and perspective for students and teachers (Paris and Alim, 2014). Current policies and practices create a mono-cultural and mono-lingual society which creates inequitable access to the curriculum for students from diverse background (Paris, 2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy extends the asset based approaches that are developed in culturally relevant and responsive teaching and pushes for teachers and educators to use culture in a broader sense in the classroom (Machado, 2017). The implementation of this pedagogy further creates environments where students are given the opportunity to succeed.

High Quality Teaching Requires Resources

Access to resources is important for students to make academic gains. Teachers are the largest resource that is used in the classroom. Strand (2014) found that the gap in achievement stems from both economic advantages or disadvantages and teacher preparation. The classification of low socioeconomic status affects a student's educational experience on many levels. Teaching is a profession and, as such, professionals may seek to be employed in places that will make it easier to be successful. Low income, urban populations historically do not get the same funding or materials as suburban school settings. Mehdinezhad and Arbabi (2015) examined a charter school and conducted a social experiment that looked at the causal impact of charter schools on educational outcomes. Mehdinezhad and Arbabi (2015) determined that

access to high quality schools steadily closes the achievement gap. “High performing” schools get there with high quality teachers (Mehdinezhad & Arbabi, 2015). This was one more example of how high quality teaching year after year will continue to decrease the gap. This research study provided examples of how access and resources are partners in education. McCreary, Edwards, and Marchant (2015) looked at factors influencing student achievement and found a relationship between resources and achievement. Schools are funded by both federal government and state government. When a school is surrounded by low income housing and apartments, it affects the amount of funding that the school receives because there is little money coming in from property taxes. That limits the amount of money for educational resources.

Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogy

Pridham et al. (2015) looked at the correlation between culturally inclusive curriculum in higher education and culturally responsive teaching. When teachers are better equipped to develop the curriculum to be inclusive, there is higher achievement in their classrooms. In order for teachers to attempt to be more inclusive with curriculum they were given a framework to use. It was a framework of reflection that teachers can walk through to make sure that they are incorporating the cultures of their students. Ladson-Billings (2014) identified the attainment of academic success and the development of cultural competence as primary outcomes of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). Higher teacher expectation and diverse teaching practices had positive effect on self-efficacy and academic performance (Berebitsky & Salloum, 2017).

Diverse teaching practices include differentiated instruction as well as implementing a culturally responsive pedagogy. In order to implement diverse teaching practices, teachers have to have a level autonomy in their classroom. Teachers also need support from the administration, in the form of trust to implement these practices. Chunoo and Callahan (2017) developed a guide

for becoming culturally competent in leadership. It is important for leadership to understand the importance of being culturally relevant because administrators typically choose teachers who embrace the same mindset. Humans find comfort in similarities and historically have preferred to work in homogenous environments. Black (2017) identified principles for cultural competence found in administration. Two of these principles are a need to be self-aware and understand the diversity of children. Access means access to resources, highly qualified teachers, highly qualified leadership, and culturally relevant pedagogy. The literature and the research support that these identified approaches to education affect student achievement rate and can either lead to decreased or increased achievement.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework establishes the reason for the research that is being done. It gives a historical perspective and highlights any gaps there may be in the current research. The conceptual framework is primarily a compilation of what research is in place that can be studied (Maxwell, 2013). The function is assess previous work and to inform the rest of the research. It provides an opportunity to develop realistic and relevant research questions and select appropriate methods. Maxwell (2013) describes a conceptual framework as “something that is constructed, not found. It incorporates pieces that are borrowed from elsewhere, but the structure, the overall coherence, is something that builds, not something that exists ready-made” (p. 35). When establishing the conceptual framework, it is important to pay attention to the existing theories and research that are relevant to what one plans to study (Maxwell, 2013). It allows the reader to understand why this work is important to the researcher and why the question is important to not only ask but also try to answer. Ravitch & Riggan (2016) state there are three parts to the conceptual framework. The personal interest which is the catalyst for the

question because it is from personal experience and understanding that the initial question is formed. The topical research, which is research that is similar in focus and can sometimes be what leads to the new research question. Finally, the third part is the theoretical framework (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016). The theoretical framework is used to establish where the research could go. From the theoretical framework the researcher can develop new questions or hypothesis. The theoretical framework is where the new research is anchored.

This study identified trends that can be seen in the classroom when new teachers have training in implementing culturally responsive practices in the Urban Teachers program. Delpit believed that knowing one's students, more than just the work that is submitted or completed in class, allows a teacher to accurately determine their strengths and weaknesses (Delpit, 1995; Delpit, 2006). This understanding of the student is how teachers establish a culturally responsive classroom. Culturally responsive teaching has been described as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 382). In partnership with the classroom teacher is the school leadership. Educational reformers have frequently identified school leadership as a crucial component of any reform of education. Leadership is important, but it is second to the act of teaching itself (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The data from this research also tell us that good teachers will eventually leave schools where there are ineffective school leaders, especially in urban educational environments. Leaders that have a vision for improving academics among minority populations will understand the need to recruit and sustain culturally responsive teachers. Culturally responsive teachers have been shown to be better equipped to meet the needs of students from low income and minority backgrounds (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Urban Teachers wants to ensure that their new

teachers are up for the challenge because of the high likelihood that they will be hired in areas that are serving low income families and children of color, as most teachers new to the profession start in urban schools (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2006; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

Conclusion

Studies have been completed on supports for and hindrances to increasing student achievement. There are studies that have focused on teacher preparation (Demie & McClean, 2015), teacher self- efficacy (Watson & Wiggan, 2017), and leadership (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Mombourquette (2017) found that, to close the achievement gap, there has to be strong leadership that has a vision for the future. Challens and Mgadla (2018) found that teachers must be trained in a highly effective way, which means they should have strong pedagogical practices, culturally relevant pedagogy, and high self-efficacy. This is what is needed to be ready for all students. Finally, Strand (2014) found that economics impact achievement as much as teacher preparation. That means that a lack of resources or access to resources directly affects students' level of achievement.

Teachers and administrators have the most regular contact with students. Teachers need to feel confident in their teaching practice and teachers need to feel supported in the classroom. Leadership needs to be strong but also supportive. This study looked at how teacher training can empower teachers to implement a culturally responsive pedagogy.

The research was conducted as a qualitative study that used interviews and surveys. Chapter 3 addresses the elements of the methodology.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The previous research conducted on culturally relevant teaching practices has a relative consensus that culturally responsive practices make the students' culture a primary part of the classroom environment (Byrd, 2016). Culturally relevant practices involve having high expectations, promoting cultural competence, and promoting critical consciousness (Byrd, 2016). Providing students with a culturally relevant education is critical in improving student engagement, achievement, and college readiness, especially for racially diverse students (Knight-Manuel, Marciano, & Milner, 2019). Student engagement is critical to educational reform because engaged students also are more likely to perform well academically. Culturally relevant practices and pedagogy are essential in closing the opportunity gap. The opportunity gap refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, English proficiency, and learning disabilities can perpetuate gaps in academic achievement for certain groups of students (Education Reform Glossary, 2019).

The Urban Teachers Program mission is to improve educational and life outcomes of children in urban schools by preparing culturally competent, effective career teachers who accelerate student achievement and disrupt systems of racial and socioeconomic inequity (urbanteachers.org, 2019). By focusing on culturally responsive or relevant teaching practices this case study, I sought to examine if teachers coming out of the Urban Teachers program are being prepared as culturally competent. There are many elements of the Urban Teachers program that are meant to provide high-quality training for pre-service and new teachers. One main focus of the Urban Teachers program is to prepare culturally competent teachers. Examining what specific components of the program can be directly linked to this goal is key in identifying whether the program is being successful in this goal.

Research Question & Design

The design of this study is an exploratory case study. This type of case study posits research questions that have no single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). There are advantages to using an exploratory case study. The first advantage is the flexibility within exploratory research that is adaptable to change. This flexibility within the research structure is important for research done in education because no two teachers are exactly the same. The way the teachers interact with the tools and training that they have received from the Urban Teachers program will show up in different ways. This study was a launch pad for further work in the field of culturally relevant teaching, not only in the Urban Teachers program, but in urban classrooms. That makes the fact that exploratory research is effective in laying the groundwork for future studies even more important.

Research Methodology (2019) outlines some of the disadvantages of exploratory case study research. The data generated from exploratory studies are qualitative data, and interpretation of such type of information is subject to bias from the researcher. The sample size of the studies tends to be small and has the potential of not adequately representing the target population. Finally, it is hard to generalize to a wider population because of the sample size and qualitative data (Research Methodology, 2019). These disadvantages were somewhat offset by the unit of analysis and bounding the case of the research focus.

In this exploratory case study, the questions that were examined are:

1. How do Urban Teachers enact culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms as described by the Culturally Responsive Teaching framework authored by Muniz and the organization New America?

2. How do teachers in the Urban Teachers program describe overcoming perceived barriers to implementing culturally responsive teaching in an urban school district?

Site Information, Sampling, & Population

The study was conducted with teachers from urban public middle schools. The schools have a Title 1 designation, high English language learner (ELL) populations, they serve majority minority populations, and most students qualify for free or reduced lunches. It was important to use schools with these designations because schools with these particular characteristics tend to have the largest gaps in student achievement. The partnership with Urban Teachers allowed access to teachers for the study. It also allowed for minimal disruption both for students and teachers.

The participants for the study were chosen using criterion sampling. Criterion sampling was used because the study included teachers that are part of the Urban Teachers Educator Preparation Program. Criterion sampling is a common method used in qualitative studies. It allows the researcher to obtain basic data and trends regarding the study without the complications of using randomization. The sample consists of 5 middle school teachers between grade 6-8 that are members of the Urban Teachers program. By utilizing 5 teachers in the study the representative student population was around 600 students who were served by these 5 teachers. The teachers were selected after a conversation about the expectations of the study and their role in providing data. The teachers then had the opportunity to volunteer to be a part of the study. As part of the sample criteria, each teacher also had to have at least one year of teacher of record experience in the classroom. In this context, the term “teacher of record” means they are responsible for the primary teaching of all the students on their roster and the assigning of grades on all documents and reports. Being a teacher of record for at least a year is important because it

means that they have had a chance to practice and revisit some of their pedagogical decisions and make changes where they felt it would improve student outcomes.

Instrumentation & Data Collection Procedures

There were two ways that data were collected and analyzed in this study. Multiple means of data collection are key in qualitative studies because it allows for a more holistic view from the participants (Austin & Sutton, 2014). It also allows for the research question to be examined from different angles. The methods of data collection for this research study were interview and survey.

A survey is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions gathering information from respondents for the purpose of analysis. They can be carried out face to face, by telephone, computer or postal. Surveys generate data that can be collected relatively quickly because the researcher would not need to be present when the surveys were completed. Surveys can be an effective means of measuring the behavior, attitudes, preferences, and opinions (DeFranzo, 2012). The survey completed was the Survey of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices (Rhodes, 2016). I used this data to develop a picture of each teachers' teaching practices as it relates to culturally responsive pedagogy. This was taken at the beginning of the study.

Interviews collect a richer source of information from a small number of people about attributes, behavior, preferences, feelings, attitudes, opinions and knowledge. They help explain, better understand, and explore research subjects' opinions, behavior, experiences, and phenomenon (Virginia Tech Library, 2018). The interviews for this study were done through virtual platforms. The interviews took no more than 30 minutes. The questions were developed from New America's Culturally Responsive Teaching Guide by Jenny Muniz. The researcher acted as the interviewer. The objective of the interview was to gain insight into the teacher's

experiences enacting culturally responsive teaching practices with students from diverse populations. The protocol was based on the 8 competencies of culturally responsive teaching developed by Muniz. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed by otterai.com. Three teachers participated in one interview for the study. The interviews were semi structured to allow for flexibility in the process and allow more organic communication with the teachers and researchers. All interviews were kept confidential by using pseudonyms in the conclusion and data analysis.

Interview Protocol

The researcher developed questions that aligned with the research questions identified above. It is important that the interview questions align with the research questions in order to maintain validity (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The interview was semi structured to allow for participant elaboration as necessary. The interview lasted no more than 30 minutes to be respectful of the participant's time. Participants provided consent for the interview to be recorded. The interview was conducted using a virtual platforms such as google hangouts, flip grid, or zoom. All platforms allowed for recording interviews and conversation. Participants were provided a transcript of the interview.

The researcher made sure to take the necessary measures to protect the privacy of the participant by removing any identifying information. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcript and add any additional information and to ensure that the information is accurate. All information collected was stored in a way that only provided the researcher access. The interview instrument collected some background and demographic information on the participant but maintained confidentiality of the participant.

Data Analysis

Due to the fact that there are different types of data collected, there are different methods that were used to analyze the data. The first analysis method was content analysis. This was applied to the interviews. Once transcribed, the researcher was able to identify categories of analysis within the interviews to highlight commonalities. Then the rules for coding were applied and the themes were coded and interpreted. The researcher used statistical descriptive analysis for the results of the survey.

Limitations of Research Design

In this study, sample size was a limitation because only a small number of teachers were able to participate in the study. Another potential limitation was the data collection methods. Some of the ways that data were collected could highlight gaps that additional questions could close. Some of the data collection methods are self-report. A limitation with surveys is that they can create oversimplification of the actual reality because the researcher is taking the answers and turning them into statistics (Pedersen, 1992). Survey data can also provide inconsistent information (Pedersen, 1992). Another limitation highlighted is cultural bias. All humans have bias. The bias could show up in the participants, but it could also show up in the researcher. The reflection process can elevate these possible limitations and there was a plan in place to check for them. The final limitation of this study was the data collection phase occurred during a pandemic, caused by COVID 19. This pandemic shut schools down and increased the difficulty of connecting with teachers even in a virtual setting.

Credibility

This study maintained its credibility by implementing triangulation of data. Triangulation means that there are multiple methods or data sources used to develop an understanding of

phenomena (Patton, 1999). Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) identified four types of triangulation. This study used method triangulation. Method triangulation uses the methods of data collection to find the trends in the data. I also triangulated the sources which means an evaluation of consistency of different data sources within the same method will take place (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The data were collected using interviews and participant surveys. The interviews were one on one and the surveys were completed independently by the teacher in a given a window provided by the researcher. This allowed for the researcher to collect data in different environments and in different settings that are comfortable to the teacher. In addition to these data collection methods, all participants received a transcript of their interviews. This allowed the participant to review and possibly add more information or context (Statistics Solutions, 2019). All of these measures were put in place to make sure that the study's findings were credible.

Transferability

The level of transferability is the degree in which a qualitative research study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2006). I made sure to follow specific interview protocols and cite surveys. This allowed for proper analysis as well as making sure that trends were identified accurately. The goal of providing as much descriptive data as possible is to allow readers the ability to transfer the findings to contexts that are applicable to them.

Dependability

After research is completed, the findings were reviewed by members of the committee for dependability. Dependability is about the consistency within the findings and the level that the results can be trusted (Statistic Solutions, 2019). Dependability is important in making sure that

there is not anything missed in the research study (Statistic Solutions, 2019). This type of study does not benefit from a formal external audit. There are both positives and drawbacks to this method. A researcher can gain valuable insight from an external audit, but it is not mandatory to include (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Confirmability

Confirmability examines the degree to which the results of the study can be confirmed and/or corroborated (Trochim, 2020). In this study, the research documented all the procedures taken for checking and rechecking data in the study. There may also be the opportunity for another researcher to review the data for areas that could be identified differently. This is just one more element to increase trustworthiness in the data.

Ethical Issues

The research-participant relationship in this study was unique because there is an established connection to the participants. It was important to make sure that there was not crossover of roles for the me as the researcher. It was important to remain in the stance of the researcher and not cross into the realm coach by providing feedback. The participants understood the role and purpose of the study. The participants were asked questions, so it is important to make sure that the proper consent was given to use their answers but also to keep their identities confidential. Finally, working with different teachers within the same building and possibly across campuses, it was important that the teachers had a level of knowledge about all aspects of the study to make sure they knew what information was kept confidential and what information could be shared. Within this study there was no conflict of interest that needed to be addressed.

Conclusion

According to United States Census Bureau projections, the nation will become markedly more diverse by 2060 (US Consensus, 2012). “Educators with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to value the diversity among students will contribute to an educational system designed to serve all students well” (National Education Association, 2019, para. 1). Urban Teachers has set a programmatic goal to put teachers in the classroom that are culturally competent and aware. Research has also identified that having cultural competence is a big predictor of a teachers’ ability to relate to all students in the classroom (NEA, 2019).

Using a qualitative study, this research aimed to identify the ways in which the Urban Teachers believe they are enacting culturally responsive practices. Participants were volunteers who are also part of the Urban Teachers teaching preparation program who now teach middle school. Middle school, 6-8, was chosen as the focus because studies show that middle school years are pivotal to students’ education trajectory. The data collected highlights teaching practices and student interactions. This chapter reviewed the methodology of the research study to make sure the steps taken to perform the research and complete the data analysis were clear and aligned with the goal of the study before transitioning into Chapter 4, the findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the data collection and analysis for the research on culturally responsive teaching practices within Urban Teachers Educator preparation training. The purpose of this study is to document ways that Urban Teachers' candidates enact culturally responsive teaching practices. During the process of data collection, COVID-19 caused a state-wide shut down of schools which prohibited face to face meetings and restricted my access and ability to make connections with teachers for the purposes of data collection. Due to the shut down and health concerns, along with schools and teachers having to deal with uncharted territory, the number of participants included in the data collection was reduced. The first chapter of this dissertation offered an introduction to the question: how does culturally responsive teacher training affect teachers and their self-efficacy in the classroom? The second chapter was a review of the literature surrounding culturally responsive teaching and the methodological design was undertaken and led to the focus of the study. Chapter 3 described the methodology plan.

A qualitative research design utilizing the method of exploratory case study was conducted with data collection from a self-assessment survey and completion of interview questions. Pseudonyms for the participants were created to ensure their identities were kept confidential. The demographic backgrounds of participants were presented, see Table 4.1. Data collected from each participant were presented separately from one another within the chapter, followed by an analysis of the data leading to the development of themes. All data presented serve to answer the following research questions for this study:

1. How do Urban Teachers enact culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms?

2. How do teachers in the Urban Teachers program overcome perceived barriers while implementing culturally responsive teaching in an urban school district?

Table 4.1: Participant Characteristics

	Subjects	# students	Years of Service	Race
Alice	Special Ed Self Contained all subjects	8	4	Black
Crystal	Math	180	4	Black
Stacy	ELA	130	5	Black
Steven	ELA	130	4	White
Sarah	ELA	150	4	White

All the participants were certified through the Urban Teachers Program. They all speak English as a first language. Finally, they are all middle grade, 6-8, teachers in Urban school districts.

In the following table, Table 4.2, the survey prompts have been grouped together by common topics of the questions. Questions that focus on relationship building are first, questions that focus on lesson planning are second, and the third group includes questions that highlight a student-centered classroom environment. Within each section, the overall responses are ranked by level of confidence. The range of responses are: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = usually, 5 = always.

Table 4.2: Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Assessment Survey Results

Question #	Alice	Crystal	Stacy	Steven	Sarah	Total
10 I encourage students to speak their native languages with other children.	5	5	5	3	5	23
4. I make an effort to get to know my students' families and backgrounds.	4	3	5	4	4	20
5 I learn words in my students' native languages.	5	4	5	3	4	21
9 I elicit students' experiences in pre-reading and pre-listening activities.	4	1	5	4	5	19
8 I use surveys to find out about my students' classroom preferences.	3	2	4	4	3	16
12 I spend time outside of class learning about the cultures and languages of my students.	4	2	3	4	3	16
2 I examine class materials for culturally appropriate images and themes.	4	2	5	4	5	20
6 I use mixed language and mixed cultural pairings in group work.	5	2	5	4	3	19
15 I ask for students input when planning lessons and activities.	5	3	4	2	3	17
17 I provide rubrics and progress reports to students.	4	4	3	4	2	17
14 I supplement the curriculum with lessons about international events.	4	1	4	2	3	14
1 I include lessons about the acculturation process	1	1	3	3	1	9
13 I include lessons about anti-immigrant discrimination or bias.	1	1	3	3	1	9
16 I encourage students to use cross-cultural comparisons when analyzing material.	2	1	5	4	4	16

7 I use peer tutors or student led discussions.	3	3	3	3	4	16
3 I ask students to compare their culture with American culture.	3	1	4	4	4	16
11 I have students work independently, selecting their own learning activities.	3	3	3	1	4	14

Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey Analysis

After completing the data collection of the self-assessment surveys, I organized the survey responses by specific topics. The three main topics identified were relationship building, lesson planning, and student-centered classroom environment. These three main topics have been identified as core elements to a classroom that is culturally responsive and has high levels of engagement from the students. The chart above has been broken down into the three sections and divided by color but within each section the responses are listed from strongest response to weakest response. The survey data were used for further analysis later in the chapter.

Relationship building

The survey included six questions that were put into the topic of relationship building. With 5 being the highest a participant could score themselves, the highest number of possible points would be 30 for relationship building. Within the questions that were identified as relationship building, Stacy scored herself a total of 29 out of 30 points for the highest individual score. Crystal scored herself 17 out of 30 points for the lowest individual score.

For each question, the total group response range is between 5 to 25 potential points. Question number 10, “the teacher allows students to speak their native language in the classroom,” received the strongest across all responses with a score of 23 out of a possible 25. Question number 8, “the teacher uses survey data to find student preferences”, and question number 12, “the teacher utilizes time outside of class to learn about student background and culture.”, tied for the lowest score across all participant responses with 16 out of a possible 25. For all the questions grouped with in relationship building across all participants there was only one “never” marked in the data set. Relationship building questions also had the highest number of “always” marked within the data set.

In general, all the participants had a high level of confidence with integrating different languages into their classroom. There is also a generally strong response from the participants on making efforts to get to know their students' backgrounds. A requirement of the Urban Teachers program is that the participants take an ESL seminar and pass their supplementary ESL certification. The training they receive was developed and implemented by Urban Teachers and aligns to the high level of confidence the participants expressed when rating how often they in engaging their students in the students' native languages. As part of the Urban Teachers coaching treatment the participants complete an activity called community engagement. Community engagement is when the coach and the participant learn about the school community and their students' communities. The goal of this coaching activity is to create a stronger connection between the teacher and the community that they serve. This aligns with the strong response received when asked about learning about students' backgrounds.

Another part of the program is evaluative observations conducted by the participants assigned coach. The observations are conducted multiple times throughout their three years of coaching received through the program. That means they are observed both as a resident teacher in someone else's classroom and once they become teacher of record for their own classroom. In each observation the participant was rated on how well they demonstrated to the students they were valued members of the classroom community. A "mastering" in this category meant, "There was strong evidence of the teacher building a welcoming inclusive community. The physical environment, words, and actions consistently place value on the personal or cultural background of the students. There are consistent attempts to build personally relevant relationships with students in an asset-based, bias free manner" (TPR, 2021). Looking at both the

evaluation component and the coaching treatment, it makes sense that there was a strong response for the value of learning about student backgrounds.

Lesson planning/development

From the survey, there were seven questions that address the topic lesson planning. With 5 being the highest a participant could score themselves, the highest number of possible points would be 35 for lesson planning. Within the questions that were identified as relevant to lesson planning, Stacy scored herself a total of 27 out of 35 points for the highest individual score. Crystal scored herself a total of 14 out of 35 points for the lowest individual score.

For each question, the total group response range is between 5 to 25 potential points. Question number two, “the teacher examines material for culturally appropriate themes”, was the highest overall question with 20 out of 25 points. Questions number 1 and 13 were the lowest across all participant responses. Question number one, “teachers include lessons about the acculturation process” and question number 13, “teachers have lesson plans about anti-immigration discrimination bias”, had a total of 9 out of 25 points. Lesson planning had the most “nevers” or “1” across all three topics with seven total.

Lesson planning had the largest range both in group total and individual total. The strongest response from respondents was reviewing materials for culturally appropriate images and themes. The weakest responses were the two questions that explicitly named lesson planning. All Urban Teachers participants are not only getting certified to teach but they are also earning a Master’s degree in Education. Part of the master’s program is that the professors model behaviors they expect to see in the classroom from the participants. The instructors model utilizing material in class that is culturally appropriate and then name that as such for the participants during debriefs. In addition to the modeling that is done in the coursework taken by

the participants, when the participants are observed and evaluated, they are also rated on the materials that are utilized in the classroom. In order for a participant to receive a “mastering” from the observer, Urban teachers must present “lesson tasks are fully authentic, tasks are consistently reality-based, personally, or culturally relevant to students” (TPR, 2020). For the two questions that were scored the weakest by the group, there is no direct evaluative component from the Urban Teachers program. These specific topics of immigration bias and acculturation are more discussions that could happen but are not as regulated, which might indicate why they were the lowest scored.

Student centered environment

From the survey, there were four questions that focus on the topic student centered classroom. With 5 being the highest a participant could score themselves, the highest number of possible points would be 20 for student centered environment. Within the questions that were identified as student-centered environment, Stacy scored herself 15 out of 20 for the highest individual score. Crystal scored herself 8 out of 20 for the lowest individual score.

For each question, the total group response range is between 5 to 25 potential points. Within the section on student centered environment, 3 out of 4 questions tied for the highest score, each receiving a score of 16 out of 25 points across all participants. The questions were number 16, “teacher encourages cross cultural comparison”, question number 7, “teacher utilizes peer tutors and student lead discussion”, and question number 3, “teacher asks students to compare their culture with American culture”. The fourth question in this section about creating a student centered environment was survey question number 11, the “teacher allows students to work independently and select their own learning activity”. Question number 11 was scored with an average of 14 out of 25 points across all participants responses. The student-centered section

had the lowest number of “always” or 5 selected, with a total of only one five in the entire data set.

The three questions that all scored 16 out of 25 involved direct student participation and engagement during the lesson. On the Urban Teachers’ evaluation rubric there is a whole section about discourse in the classroom. The area that the participants are rated on is labeled “structured opportunities for students to talk”. In order for the participant to receive “mastering” the observer must see, “the teacher consistently effectively orchestrating talk to ensure that all students have the opportunity to make their thinking written or verbal public by sharing directly with their peers and consistently offering appropriate opportunities for students to share their thinking with the whole class” (TPR, 2020). The other piece of this section was student choice in learning. Urban Teachers participants are also evaluated on their ability to implement classrooms that are universally designed. A “mastering” in this category means that the observer is able to witness “flexibility options for representation, expression, and engagement to reduce barriers to learning for all students and it is evident that flexibility in the lesson is a consistent practice in the classroom” (TPR, 2020). Both these areas are historically lower performing areas for the participants. The average rating in these two categories is emerging to proficient. The ratings on the TPR are beginner, emerging, proficient, and mastering. The participants do receive targeted coaching in these areas and implementing these practices. In their evaluative observations, they are also rated on these practices. The struggle from the participants is seen in the area of implementing with fidelity. The comfort level the participants have is higher in the area of relationship building.

Vignettes

Three of the five respondents to the survey were also able to participate in an interview, and their school sites and responses about the 8 competencies are included in the vignettes below. The interviews were conducted using the competencies for culturally responsive teaching from *New America* by Jenny Muniz (2019) as the main focus of the interview. The questions were framed as, how does the participant implement the following competency in their classroom and what barriers do they face in the implementation? The competencies are:

8 competencies for culturally responsive teaching (Muniz, 2019)

1. Reflect on one's cultural lens
2. Recognize and redress bias in the system
3. Draw on students' culture to share curriculum and instruction
4. Bring real-world issues into the classroom
5. Model high expectations for all students
6. Promote respect for students' differences
7. Collaborate with families and the local community
8. Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive way

Participant Alice

Alice is a middle school self-contained special education teacher, and she is responsible for teaching all course subjects including math, science, social studies, and language arts to students with disabilities that range from autism high functioning to nonverbal. Alice works at a large charter district in Dallas, TX. The school population consists of 63% Hispanic and 34% African-American. In addition, 92% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged, 9% of the students receive special education services, and 27% of the students are English

language learners. After completing the interview with Alice, the transcript was analyzed. Coding that was conducted indicated there were recurring ideologies about her teaching philosophies that developed, which were relationship building, having a student-centered focus, and modeling behaviors that one holds as expectations.

When asked about how she reflects on the cultural lens of her students, she highlighted that communicating with parents and talking to the students is her primary source of information. Alice stated,

I've been just like asking scholars or asking parents, if you're comfortable (answering). Where are you from? What can you tell me? Do you know about your culture what are things that you guys do at home? (I am) trying this year to actually have those conversations.

Alice is trying to take a more proactive stance on learning about the students in her classroom. Although her students range in their ability to communicate, she is not using that as an excuse and instead using it as a way to build stronger connections with the family by going the extra mile to talk to the parents and seek out information.

In order to redress bias in her school and classroom, she engaged in conversations with the students directly. She asked her students what they liked and did not like. Her goal was to move past assumptions based on student appearance and actually get to know them as people. She then took active steps to implement the ideas and the responses she received from her students into the classroom. Alice made a direct connection to the training she received from the Urban Teachers program when discussing how to address bias in the classroom. She stated,

One of the interesting things that the district just did is we had a culturally responsive teaching professional development for a collaboration day which was something that Urban Teachers has done with us, but something I had never expected the district to do.

Alice highlighted that the training she received from Urban Teachers was not standard for all teacher preparation programs and that she had been given access to an understanding that other teachers had not. This helped her to engage her students at a higher level in her classroom faster. She also made note of the importance of putting herself as the teacher in the learner stance as well and modeling the behaviors that she wanted the students to engage in.

When addressing how she draws on students' culture to share curriculum and instruction, she talked about the activities she had put together in the classroom. The example she gave was

Being able to teach kids how to cook these foods from different cultures and it was a really good introduction of different places do different things differently and that's ok.

Then connecting it to, so now what we've been talking about this year is rules and government and how different places make different rules...

She believes that a teacher creates higher engagement and better crossover when they connect fun cultural learning activities like, learning about the food from different countries to more traditional activities, such as learning about different governmental policies.

When asked, "how do you bring real-world issues into the classroom?", Alice started with the importance of modeling behavior. She talked about ensuring that students understood what was happening and having conversations around current events. For example, she noted that

The curriculum was talking about DNA and genetics and how you inherit DNA from my parents and genetics, and I said ok (how can I make connection) and we turned it into

three weeks of learning about the difference between bacteria and viruses and why has Corona been able to spread so quickly and why do we have this personal protective equipment and is it actually being affective.

The next question was about modeling high expectations for students. Speaking from the lens of a Covid classroom, she acknowledged that some students are virtual, and some students are currently face to face. That being said, her goal is to create a forum or platform that allows for students to engage at high levels by being flexible and going the extra mile to make connections. Alice was speaking about technology struggles that a student was having. The student's sound was not working on the computer. In response to the tech issues and wanting to make sure that the student was included and engaged she told the student, "I'm just going to call you when we're having discussion and put you on speaker and put you next to the computer so that you can actually participate." This is an example where she prioritized building relationships. The extra mile taken are what makes the students want to engage in the learning. When asked to address how she promotes respect for student differences, Alice talked about celebrating those differences and modeling for the students how to be supportive of each other. An example she gave was

We're axing the, picking on each other, as soon as it happens, then in terms of accepting other's differences, we've really leaned into celebrating when somebody overcomes the challenges that are a facet of their disabilities at the beginning of this year... They're no longer diminishing the things that make them different.

Alice acknowledges that she has always had active parents, all of her students require support with special needs, so she tends to have parents that are more hands-on in the classroom, which means collaborating with the families becomes easier. When it comes to community

collaboration, she is hands-on, and reaches out to different people to try to invite guests into their classroom as much as possible whether it's face-to-face or virtual. When discussing communication and having culturally responsive communication, the biggest highlight was to be mindful of overgeneralization of language, for example there are many different types of Spanish speakers in the classroom and to be mindful of that. She also said that it is important to remember to be mindful of the tone in which used to speak to parents, especially if they are second language learners. Finally she is taking time to actively listen to the parents and check in with the parents outside of interactions with their child.

Alignment to UT Curriculum. There are multiple aspects of this teacher's philosophy that can be directly connected to the training that she received through Urban Teachers. Within the interview, she explicitly named an Urban Teachers' training she received about recognizing personal bias. Her commitment to modeling is seen continually in the way she addresses these competencies throughout the interview. Modeling is a core component of the Teacher Practice Rubric used to evaluate participants, in the Urban Teacher's program, as well as a core component of the clinically based education and training received for her Master's degree. In addition, Urban Teachers' program is a student-centered program, the students are the core of everything the organization represents that is reflected in Alice's teaching style. Alice shows a continuous effort to connect the students' learning to the real world by incorporating news and current events into the lessons. She takes pride in the fact that the students have grown to respect each other in their strengths and areas of struggle. She also models valuing the different cultures that are in her classroom through the way that she communicates with parents and creating an environment that is welcoming.

Participant Stacy

Stacy is a middle school English language arts teacher with a large public school district in Dallas, Texas. The school population for the school was 65% Hispanic and 22% African-American. The school has 71% of their students considered economically disadvantaged, 16% of their students receive special education services, and 36% of the students are English language learners. After completing the interview with Stacy, the analysis suggested there were recurring ideologies about her teaching philosophies that developed; those ideologies were relationship building, modeling behaviors, and real-world connections.

When asked about reflecting on one's cultural lens, the initial response was, "I don't assume". She identified asking questions and opening up personally to build connections. She highlighted the importance of finding out who her students outside the four walls that she teaches in. She believes that this helps the students and teacher be better connected in the classroom. When asked, "how do you recognize and redress bias in the system?" Again, she took the time to highlight the importance of communicating with her students on an honest level. She stated, "I had very candid and frank conversations with my children because I realize that these children are going to be adults that one day will affect society." Stacy values honesty and that is what she models when talking about bias with her students. She also pushes students by asking "why" questions when their actions are not aligned to her expectations of positive classroom culture. She noted, "a lot of the biases that children have are based off of misconceptions or things they learned out of context so, I just try to re-address those." The next interview question asked, "how do you draw on students' culture and share curriculum and instruction?" She discussed that she values learning about her students and their interests, then implementing things that she has learned into the classroom. An example she gave,

So, K Pop I don't really know that much about K Pop. My kids are obsessed with it, so in the morning time I'll just play a little K-pop music in class. Or if we read a story (with Spanish words) I'll be like can you help me say these words, Abuelita, how do I say it correctly?

She models being in the learner stance by asking students about vocabulary that she does not know in an effort to show them that their skill set is valuable. She attempts to build connections to the students and between students through both exploring common interests and learning about new interests. When asked, "how do you bring real world issues into the classroom?" She identified using the news and engaging the students in current events as primary sources. She stated, "I always ask the kids, have you been watching the news, have you asked what's new in the news?" An example she gave of incorporating real life into the classroom was the Inauguration. She also watched the insurrection that happened with her students and had conversations with them about what they saw. When asked, "how does she model high expectations for all students?" Stacy, said, "I admit that I'm wrong sometimes. I apologize. I say thank you and I say yes ma'am. All the things I want my children to do I do it first." She put an emphasis on everything she expects from the students she models first. She wants to show students how to both be respectful of differences but also hold each other to high expectations. When asked, "how do you promote respect for student differences?" Stacy broke down how she teaches students the difference between equality and equity. She states, "I love to frame things like this I don't believe in equality I believe in equity; equality means you all get the same thing equity means that you get what you need." She makes sure that the students understand that her goal is to give them what they need as an individual and that people need different things, but no one is better than the next. When asked, "how do you collaborate with families in the local

community?” She started with acknowledging the value in the families and their connection to the classroom. She brought up the changes in collaboration and community since COVID and how that has restricted the visibility of parents at school, but they have adapted and still work together. There is mutual respect and support, which creates healthy learning environments.

Final question, when asked, “how do you communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways?” Stacy clearly stated, “so I am who I am. I talk to adults the same way I talk to children.”

She wants students to recognize that she is a person just like them. She will use both formal and informal English in class, just like the students, to model code switching. She said, “Code switching is a skill. It’s a skill set.” There is a time and place for all language. Her goal from day one is to build the classroom culture of learning, respect, and community and she does that through her vulnerability of being herself at all times.

Alignment to UT Curriculum. As with the previous interview, there are multiple aspects of this teacher’s philosophy and style that can be directly connected to her Urban Teachers training. The first one that can be directly attributed to their training is the work around equity and equality. All Urban Teachers participants take a course on equity in the classroom before they become teachers of record as part of their coursework for their Master’s degree. The focus on equity from her training allowed for her to design a classroom that respects the different cultures the student bring. As before, the work around relationship building can be connected to the work that is done with their coaching within the community engagement coaching treatment, as well as the commitment of multiple years of coaching from Urban Teachers. She models showing respect to her students by communicating with them in both formal and informal ways. She also puts herself in a learner’s stance. This commitment to both modeling best practices for her students as well as incorporating real world and current events a part of the training and

philosophy of Urban Teachers. This is why modeling is a part of the Teacher Practice Rubric (TPR), as well as real-world connections. During her three years of coaching she has been rated on these skills being a part of her teacher practice.

Participant Crystal

Crystal is a middle school Math teacher with a large charter school district in Dallas, Texas. The school population for the school was 83% Hispanic and 11% African-American. The school has 85% of their students considered economically disadvantaged, 8% of their students receive special education services, and 44% of the students are English language learners. After completing the interview with Crystal there were recurring ideologies about her teaching philosophies that developed; those ideologies were relationship building, modeling behaviors, and curriculum.

Crystal was asked, “how you reflect on one's cultural lens?” She had to think about the question for a second. Then she said, “because I have to immerse myself constantly in the environment that I’m in and constantly being willing to listen and understand other cultures.” She identified the need to take a conscience step back and not let the administrative pieces of teaching control the classroom culture. She said that she asks questions to learn more about the students. She said, “...making sure that I’m listening to other people, other than what I believe in and probably just talking to other people is probably the best one.” When asked, “how do you recognize and redress bias in the system?” Crystal talked about a specific meeting, “one year, they said, the Black students are doing way too well, and the White suits aren’t really doing well enough so fix it.” This meeting left a lasting mark because she acknowledges that is a moment she reflects on consistently and it motivates and focuses her to redirect negative energy. Stacy said that from that experience when she is in a meeting, she tries to model keeping the focus on

the teacher's and school's locus of control and not placing blame on the parent. When asked, "how do you draw on students' culture to share curriculum and instruction?" She focused on the school's high population of Spanish speaking students. She said that she will attempt to learn certain words and ask students for help. When creating presentations for the students she "has had half the PowerPoint in English and half the PowerPoint in Spanish. This is an attempt to integrate both Spanish and English. She stated in the interview that she allows space for the students to speak in their native language. Crystal also acknowledged that she does her best to respect the preferred language of the parent. For example, if Spanish is the preferred language, they are communicating in email, newsletter, or phone in that preferred language. When asked, "how do you bring real-world issues into the classroom?" Crystal gave a couple of examples of math lessons with real world connection. She acknowledged the importance of bringing in current events into the classroom for discussion but also the importance of teachers being able to stay in a neutral mindset and neutral space when they are addressing children about current events. One example that she gave was a teacher she was working with, who clearly showed bias. She said,

I was teaching with another teacher and he asked the question, so why do you think Trump is racist? Or something, like you know I'm saying something but I'm asking a question but I'm telling you something while asking the question.

She said that in private she provided feedback on a better way to implement the particular question as to not lead the answers or alienate any students. However, for her the important part, is giving students a space to not only discuss current events but also to provide lesson plans that allow for them to experience real life decision making. When asked, "how do you model high expectations for all students?" Crystal had a similar philosophy to Stacy. Both clearly believe in

modeling respect and a proper behavior. Crystal said, “I mean you have to do it consistently if I say I want full sentences, I have to model what I want for complete sentences.” It was clear that it is important to Crystal to create a classroom environment where students know that the teacher is open to feedback from the students. Crystal gave an example of a time when she was not acting in accordance with her own classroom expectations on respect and she saw how it negatively affected the students and classroom. “I remember one time they are not allowed to say shut up in the room and I was with a bunch of kiddos and I told them to shut up. The next day they started being disrespectful to each other calling each other stupid and I knew right then and there that I had to apologize because I had broken the expectation that I had set.” She went back and reset by apologizing to the class and that reset also reset the students. When asked, “how do you promote respect for students’ differences?” Crystal said, “stay neutral and stay kind.” Crystal explained that the goal is for students to understand that everyone could have a different opinion. In her class, students have to respect those differences and respect the fact that people have a right to their own opinion. When asked, “how do you collaborate with families and the local community?” Crystal initially said she did not collaborate. She brought up some of her coaching from Urban Teachers. She said,

Urban Teachers had us go out and talk to the local community but then how do I incorporate the local community? I went to random places and said hello, but I have never seen it done so I don’t know what you’re talking about with this collaboration.

However, as she kept talking it was very clear that she does collaborate with the community. Crystal goes to PTA meetings, takes part in events that are scheduled at the school, provides feedback to leadership about parent concerns. Crystal provides time on the weekends for students to be able to come to the school and get extra tutoring time and she communicate with parents

about grades and student performance. Final question, when asked, “how do you communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways?” Crystal said, “I’ll ask teachers for help that speak Spanish. The one biggest thing is making sure linguistically, whatever it is that I’m doing makes sense. She identified ESL training that was provided both by district and Urban Teachers. Crystal said that she tries to respect language by using Google translate when possible, implementing the use of pictures in presentations when necessary, or possibly utilizing interests of the students when it comes to creating math problems in class to garner engagement. Her final thoughts were that she tried to use the curriculum to make connections to the world in multiple ways.

Alignment to UT Curriculum. There are multiple points in the interview that Crystal’s teacher moves can be tracked back to her Urban Teachers training. The first piece that can be connected to Urban Teachers is the acknowledgment of her ESL training. She referenced ESL training she received when talking about lesson planning and community connection for linguistic and cultural differences. Her ESL training gave her a solid foundation for being able to communicate with her parents in culturally responsive ways, it also provides a foundation for her to be able to model respecting student differences by incorporating students’ native languages into her lessons. Crystal referenced the community engagement coaching treatment that was completed with their Urban Teachers coach. The community engagement opened the door for effective collaboration with parents and the community. Crystal clearly valued the coaching received around lesson planning because there were frequent times when she anchored her actions in the curriculum presentation. As an Urban Teachers participant, she received coaching around real world connections within math lesson plans. All participants who are getting a secondary math certification go through very specific coursework that trains them to use a workshop model for teaching math. In this workshop model it highlights real world connections

and high cognitive demand. Finally, the skills related to relationship building are a central part of every piece of the program from the nonevaluative as well as the evaluation of coaching and Crystal uses that training to promote respect and model high expectations.

Alignment of strengths in culturally responsive teaching to UT curriculum

Muniz (2019) identified eight competencies for culturally responsive teaching practices. Those competencies were reflecting on one's cultural lens, recognizing bias in the system, drawing on students' culture, bringing real world issues into the classroom, modeling high expectations for students, promoting respect for student differences, collaborating with families and community, and communicating in culturally responsive ways. Overall, the strongest areas for all three teachers interviewed were modeling high expectations, connecting the classroom to the real world, and respecting differences. In each interview the teachers gave multiple examples of multiple ways that these competencies were enacted in their classroom. The areas that were the least evident in their interviews were reflecting on their own cultural lens and recognizing and redressing bias. Although there are things that the teachers brought up that could be connected to these two competencies, there was not the same level of explicit implementation in their classrooms as with some of the other competencies. When the participants were addressing communicating in culturally responsive ways, the answers were very similar and very specific to an English to Spanish crossover. This can be attributed to a large portion of their student population being native Spanish speakers. All the teachers provided evidence of implementing culturally responsive practices in the classrooms.

Identified Barriers to enacting Culturally Responsive Teaching

The barriers that were identified by the 3 participants who completed interviews were very similar. The barriers identified were curriculum, school administration, school culture and the effects of COVID on the school.

Curriculum was brought up as a barrier for multiple reasons. One reason that curriculum was brought as a barrier was due to districts constantly changing the curriculum. If it's constantly changing it is hard for teachers to grasp it well enough to implement it in a way that is engaging the students. Another barrier with curriculum is that it is not written to engage students of color at all and the references or examples given do not fall within the interest level for urban students.

School administration was brought up as a barrier to culturally responsive teaching by the participants. If a teacher has an administration that is still learning about being responsive and respectful of cultural differences there is the chance that a teacher can run into pushback and walls when they try to adapt lesson plans or lessons to meet the needs of the diverse student population. Administration can also have a very linear focus on what achievement means and equate it simply to test scores. This idea of achievement is detrimental to a culturally responsive classroom because research has already shown that standardized testing lacks cultural sensitivity.

School culture was identified as a barrier to culturally responsive teaching practices. If a campus, department, or grade level are not filled with teachers that share the desire to create culturally responsive classrooms, those teachers that do see the value have an uphill battle to convince their colleagues. In connection with school culture, another barrier is workload. The teacher workload is part of the school culture because if a teacher does not feel valued and they do not feel appreciated that will affect the culture and climate of the school. Workload was brought up multiple times because teachers have even more work to do in an environment where

half the students are virtual, and half the students are face to face. Before COVID, teachers had a heavy workload with all face-to-face students because teachers are expected to wear many hats at the same time. Before COVID, teachers were expected to teach the curriculum, mentor students and sometimes other teachers, coach, be a listening ear and counselor, and sometimes nurse. Now they have to do all that with half the students face to face and half on a computer.

Finally, 2020 brought the barrier of a pandemic to teaching. Due to COVID shutting down schools, it removed a certain amount of access that was once there for teachers. By students not being on campus or in school for an extended period of time teachers no longer have the ability to monitor students' mental and physical health the way they could before COVID. Teachers do not have the same ability to provide reteach opportunities, provide small group teaching, or additional tutoring. All of these impact the ability to build strong relationships with students.

Summary

Munoz (2019) identified 8 competencies for culturally responsive teaching. Those competencies were reflecting on one's cultural lens, recognizing and re-dressing bias in the system, drawing on the students' culture within curriculum and instruction, bringing real world issues into the classroom, modeling high expectations, promoting respect for student differences, collaborating with families and community, and finally communicating in linguistically and culturally responsive ways. Through the Urban Teachers' coaching program, participants are exposed to collaborating with both peers as well as parents and community. They are trained on creating lessons that promote cultural competence. The participants are evaluated on embracing diversity in the classroom, utilizing student voice and student choice, and modeling respect for

differences through the teacher practice rubric. The training received however is limited when it comes to preparing teachers on addressing bias outside of their classrooms.

Chapter 4 presented descriptive findings from exploratory qualitative case study using middle school teachers in urban districts and their culturally responsive teaching practices. All the teachers completed their training through an educator preparation program called Urban Teachers. All the teachers are middle school grades, 6-8, teachers. There were 5 participants that completed the self-assessment and of those 5 participants, 3 of them completed the interview. The following will provide a summary of findings.

The self-assessment survey data was broken into three topics relationship building student centered experience and lesson planning. In general, lesson planning had the lowest self-assessed scores and relationship building had the highest self-assessed scores. Across all topics, Crystal scored herself the lowest and Stacy scored herself the highest. On the survey the number 1 represents “never”, ones were selected the most in questions related to lesson planning. The topics relationship building, lesson planning, and student-centered environment were identified as primary focus points because the Urban Teachers program highlights as well as targets, building relationships, solid lesson planning, and putting the student first. Since these are primary focus points for the program it is important to see where the teachers are rating themselves after finishing their training with Urban Teachers.

For each interviewee specific ideologies were identified based on their responses to the prompts from the Munoz assessment framework. Alice’s identified ideologies were relationship building, student centered, and modeling. Stacy’s ideologies were relationship building, modeling, and creating real world connections. Crystal’s ideologies were relationship building, modeling, and curriculum. All three women had a focus on relationship building in their

classroom which also connects to the high level of self-efficacy in relationship building on the self-assessment survey. All three teachers also identified modeling multiple times throughout their interview as primary sources of engagement. Although each teacher named it differently, curriculum, real world connection and having a student-centered classroom can all fall under same umbrella. In both the interviews as well as the self-assessment survey, relationship building was a primary focus. In the interviews each teacher explicitly connected something from their Urban Teachers training to an interview answer.

In chapter 5 there is further discussion and connection made to the teaching practices, topics, and Urban Teachers. It will discuss the conclusions, limitations, as well as the recommendations based on the data collected.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the United States, the gaps in academic achievement between African American, Latino/a, and low-socioeconomic status (SES) students compared to their affluent White peers are substantial (Rowan, Cohen, & Raudenbush, 2004). Students of color and students from less affluent background do not have less of an “ability” to learn and achieve. Students of color and students from less affluent backgrounds suffer from a lack of culturally responsive curriculum and culturally responsive teachers. In order to close the achievement gap students need access to teachers that are well trained and well qualified to teach in diverse classrooms.

The purpose of this study is to document the ways that Urban Teachers candidates enact culturally responsive teaching practices. By increasing the number of teachers in the classroom that are trained in culturally responsive teaching practices, the gap in achievement between minority and white students or students of less affluent backgrounds should steadily decrease over time. This chapter includes discussion of major findings as related to the literature on culturally responsive teaching practices and their effect on student achievement.

This study included participants taking a survey of culturally responsive teaching practices and engaging in an interview that discussed eight competencies of culturally responsive teaching practices. The documentation was aligned with Urban Teachers’ teacher practice rubric. The rubric is broken into five sections, cultivating welcoming and inclusive classrooms, gathering and using student data effectively, planning and implementing high quality instruction, fostering academic discourse, and demonstrating growth mindset and professional behaviors. Within these sections there are specific practices that participants are evaluated on during every observation that align to the culturally responsive practices highlighted in both the 8

competencies and the survey. The items that align with the culturally responsive practices are demonstrating that everyone is a valued member of the classroom community, providing authentic tasks that immerse students in real world concepts, modeling appropriate strategies, implementing lessons that incorporate universally designed planning, and providing an opportunity for students to share their thinking with their peers. This chapter further highlights how the training from Urban Teachers prepares culturally responsive teachers.

Research Questions

The study aimed to address the questions:

1. How do Urban Teachers enact culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms as described by the Culturally Responsive Teaching framework authored by Munoz and the organization New America?
2. How do teachers in the Urban Teachers program describe overcoming perceived barriers to implementing culturally responsive teaching in an urban school district?

There are frameworks that can be used to anchor the work in culturally responsive teaching practices. Within the frameworks there are smaller and more specific practices that a person would expect to see from a teacher who is trained in culturally responsive teaching. In this study, relationship building, student centered classrooms, curriculum implementation, and teacher self-efficacy were examined.

Interpretation of Findings

Culturally responsive teachers put relationship building at the forefront

In all areas, both in the survey as well as the interview, all the participants recognize the value in relationship building and how that is a pillar of a positive classroom community. Urban Teachers puts a strong focus on building a positive classroom community and climate in their

training through both coursework and coaching. In order to achieve these elements, a teacher has to build positive relationships with their students. From chapter 2 it is evident that, in a study completed by Teach for America, it was found that the most effective teachers have a deep belief in the potential of all students, a commitment to expand opportunities for students and respect for individuals' diverse experiences and the ability to work effectively with people from a variety of backgrounds (Teaching Commission, 2012). Based on the data collected, Urban Teachers has a program in place that gives teachers confidence and trains them to build positive relationships with their students that are culturally respectful. That will lead to improved achievement in the classroom and continued work in closing the achievement gap.

Culturally responsive teachers have student centered views and classrooms

Based on the results from the survey as well as the interview the participants are semi-confident in their ability to give students autonomy in the classroom. There were many examples from the participants who engaged in the interview about learning and incorporating the students' native languages and putting themselves in a learner stance. Part of the training they received from Urban Teachers is to have a growth mindset. It is also part of their training to continue to always want to grow and learn professionally. Ford and Moore (2013) concluded that there needs to be constant focus put into addressing the factors such as language, tradition, and culture that cause achievement gaps. By putting themselves in the learner stance and making sure that the student understands they are important and valued in the classroom, the participants are creating an environment where students can shine thus increasing achievement.

Culturally responsive teachers implement and plan for lessons that are both engaging and meaningful with real world connections

Each participant interviewed had very specific examples on how they have brought real world into their classroom. Each participant was able to make real world connections that were meaningful to their students at their students' level. One participant is a special education teacher, one is a middle school math teacher, and one is a middle school English language arts teacher, and each participant was able to make connections with the curriculum and the real world. Pridham et al. (2015) looked at the correlation between culturally inclusive curriculum in higher education and culturally responsive teaching. When teachers are better equipped to make the curriculum inclusive, there is higher achievement. Urban Teachers has made it part of the evaluative aspect of the program that the participants learn how to include authentic tasks learning in their teaching and lesson planning. The responses from the teachers support a high level of training in this area.

Teachers need to believe in their abilities to be good teachers

The quality of the teacher has more impact on student learning than race and socioeconomic status (Nyhus, 2019). When only looking at the surveys, four out of the five participants showed a consistently high level of self-efficacy when answering questions about culturally responsive teaching. The fifth participant showed a low self-efficacy when completing the survey but a high self-efficacy when completing the interview. When looking at the three participants who engaged in the interview a common thread was the work each one did in their independent classrooms to make it their own and to make sure that they were modeling the high level of expectations they expect from their students, for their students. Hanushek and Rivkin (2004) found that having consistently high quality teachers could eliminate achievement deficits

in students. Urban Teachers is a clinical-based program which means that the participants learn through modeling both in coursework as well as in their coaching treatment. The participants learn how to engage their students from watching their coaches and instructors.

Limitations

The biggest limitation to the study was decreased sample size the original expectation was to be able to collect data from 8 to 10 teachers. That was the goal before COVID. After schools were shut down due to the pandemic, it became increasingly harder to get in contact with teachers. Once I did get in contact with teachers it was hard to get them to respond regularly. The teachers that initially agreed to participate found that their school expectations became too heavy. Due to COVID limiting my ability to get in contact with teachers there were more self-assessments then interviews. Only 3 of the 5 participants completed the interview portion. This affected the results by shrinking the sample size even further for part of the data collection. Due to the small number of participants this would be considered a pilot study, which means that the goal would be to use it as a launch pad for additional work. In general, the teachers who participated were consistently enacting culturally responsive practices and making direct connection to their urban teachers training.

An additional limitation to the study was utilization of self-assessment. Any self-assessment by nature has bias. That means there's potential for people who are stronger to have a harder or higher standard . That could in turn translate to potentially marking themselves lower. The vice versa can also exist, someone who may be weaker in certain areas could potentially mark themselves higher simply because they believe they are doing a good job.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are four recommendations for future research provided. Those recommendations are to have a larger sample size of participants, expanding the allowed grade bands for teachers involved in the research, including teachers with even more years of service past when the Urban Teachers coaching stops, and collecting data on the students' perceptions.

First a larger sample size would be ideal because although it was a good start in order to be able to say with greater confidence that the training from Urban Teachers is developing culturally relevant teachers, there needs to be more voices in the research.

Second, researchers should include elementary and high school teachers because culturally responsive practices will look different at all three grade bands. The way a teacher builds relationships with students that are between the ages of 5 and 11 will look different because of maturity and experience in the world. The way students interact with each other and how teachers communicate both with students and families looks different when a student is 5 years old versus when a student is 14 years old. Also, the way a teacher would bring real world aspects into the classroom changes because a 5 year-old does not have the same understanding of bias that a teacher would expect a 13-year-old to have. The same thing for a 13 year-old versus a 17-year-old, a 17-year-old would have an expectation of more experience and different connections.

Third, once the program has been around longer, there would be an opportunity to look at longevity and continuation of practices by including alumni with 5+ years of experience past completing the program. That would mean that the teacher would have at least 9 years in the classroom. This would be valuable to study because it would allow a researcher to see if the training received by the teacher has a lasting quality outside of implementing because they are

being evaluated on the implementation. The question of whether the teachers internalize the training and recognize it as best practices could be examined.

Fourth, a teacher may believe that they are effectively communicating their desire to include diverse opinions as well as be culturally responsive but that does not mean that it is being received the same way by the students. The data collected for this study did not include the perspective of the student but adding that perspective is crucial to growth. A study looking at how the student experiences the classroom and whether they understand or have a perspective into why the teacher is implementing some of the practices would also be valuable information to have for teachers to know if they are affective.

This research is needed because student populations are becoming more and more diverse and teacher populations are not growing in diversity at the same rate, which means that teachers in urban districts have a higher probability of a classroom full of children that have different cultural and social backgrounds than themselves. As a teacher, they have to know how to engage, connect, and teach the students in their classroom. Another reason that this research needs to be expanded is to check the validity of the program. Is the program doing what it says that it is doing? Programmatically, Urban Teachers is saying that they are developing culturally responsive teachers. It is important to see if all, the majority, some, or none of the teachers are continuing those practices once the hands-on coaching has been removed. It is also important to see how the training is being implemented immediately after being certified. Continued research will also allow the program to see what areas need to still be adjusted to maintain the claim of training culturally responsive teachers. For example, the survey questions on lesson planning had some of the lowest responses, were the responses low because of the phrasing of the question or programmatically is that something that needs to be addressed?

Conclusions

Based on the data collected the participants reported that the program is providing culturally responsive training through a focus on relationship building, growth mindset, real world connections, and modeling respect for differences. Participants reported that they believe in their abilities to be culturally responsive teachers based on their training from Urban Teachers. What this means for the organization is that Urban Teachers should continue the focused training on relationship building and real world connections. Based on the participant feedback, there should be more work done around the training provided for lesson planning and explicit training on recognizing and redressing bias. In addition, the tool used by the participants to complete their self-assessment survey could be used to provide beneficial data for the program, if used more broadly among the participants.

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[Follower_relationship_and_Its_Impact_on_Organizational_Effectiveness_printer.shtml](http://www.academicleadership.org/emprical_research/The_Symbiotic_Nature_of_the_Leader-Follower_relationship_and_Its_Impact_on_Organizational_Effectiveness_printer.shtml)

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Appendix A: Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey

Rhodes, Christy M. (2016). "Validation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey,"
Adult Education Research Conference. <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2016/papers/34>

Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey

1=Never 2=Rarely 3=Sometimes 4=Usually 5=Always.

1. I include lessons about the acculturation process.
2. I examine class materials for culturally appropriate images and themes.
3. I ask students to compare their culture with American culture.
4. I make an effort to get to know my students' families and backgrounds.
5. I learn words in my students' native languages.
6. I use mixed language and mixed cultural pairings in group work.
7. I use peer tutors or student led discussions.
8. I use surveys to find out about my students' classroom preferences.
9. I elicit students' experiences in pre-reading and pre-listening activities.
10. I encourage students to speak their native languages with other children.
11. I have students work independently, selecting their own learning activities.
12. I spend time outside of class learning about the cultures and languages of my students.
13. I include lessons about anti-immigrant discrimination or bias.
14. I supplement the curriculum with lessons about international events.
15. I ask for students input when planning lessons and activities.
16. I encourage students to use cross-cultural comparisons when analyzing material.
17. I provide rubrics and progress reports to students.

Appendix B: Semi Structured Interview

8 competencies for culturally responsive teaching (Muniz, 2019)

1. Reflect on one's cultural lens
2. Recognize and redress bias in the system
3. Draw on students' culture to share curriculum and instruction
4. Bring real-world issues into the classroom
5. Model high expectations for all students
6. Promote respect for students' differences
7. Collaborate with families and the local community
8. Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive way

Demographic Question:

1. What middle grade level do you teach?
2. What subject do you teach?
3. How many students do you have total?

Interview Questions:

1. How do you reflect on one's cultural lens?
 - a. What are the barriers to implementing this in the classroom?
2. How do you recognize and redress bias in the system?
 - a. What are the barriers to implementing this in the classroom?
3. How do you draw on students' culture to share curriculum and instruction?
 - a. What are the barriers to implementing this in the classroom?
4. How do you bring real-world issues into the classroom?
 - a. What are the barriers to implementing this in the classroom?

5. How do you model high expectations for all students?
 - a. What are the barriers to implementing this in the classroom?
6. How do you promote respect for students' differences?
 - a. What are the barriers to implementing this in the classroom?
7. How do you collaborate with families and the local community?
 - a. What are the barriers to implementing this in the classroom?
8. How do you communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways?
 - a. What are the barriers to implementing this in the classroom?